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Lived Experiences and Tuition Discounting of Private Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

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MPhil, Walden University, 2020

MAcc, Samford University, 2016

MBA, Samford University, 2002

BS, Miles College, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

There has been a decline in tuition revenue for some private historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs); an above-average tuition discount rate may impede the financial performance of private HBCUs. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate. The transcendental phenomenological framework guided the study. Individual semistructured interviews were conducted with seven participants who self-identified as managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs. Data were analyzed using Moustakas's modified van Kaam method. Six themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) connection, communication, and collaboration; (b) enrollment and retention initiatives; (c) advanced data management and information systems; (d) comprehensive budget balancing; (e) diverse sources of financial support; and lastly; (f) diverse, high-performing, and empowered teams. Findings showed the importance of collaborating with diverse teams and the need for management information systems to effectively manage the tuition discount rate. Findings may provide private HBCUs with a guide to managing tuition discount rates and fiscal solvency to continue their role in advancing academic excellence and social equity, leading to positive social change by empowering students from underrepresented communities.

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Dedication

Most things academically have come easy to me, but not this. This study took a time investment, a mental investment, a financial investment, and most importantly a faith investment. I thank God for my testimony and give God the glory. I dedicate this research to my grandparents and family who have transitioned, my family to come, and my family who has endured my time with this study; your support is unmatched. For my husband and best friend, Quinton L Brooks, and our children, Breonna, Quinton, Dahriel, and Montana, this investment is for you and your children. Our grandson, DaMoni, this is for you, kiddo; now you know you can do it if you desire. My parents, Angus Wright and Linda Brown, thank you for believing in me and helping me do whatever I so desire. My in-laws, thank you so much: Willie Leverette, best mother-in-law ever; my grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews. A special dedication to my cousin, Marlena Rucker; Bestie Tishante Farris; and Uncle Staley Brown who called me often to check on my progress, and my uncle, Dr. Demetrius Williams, husband of my aunt Mrs. Robin Williams, who gave me strategies along the way.

I would also like to dedicate this research to my church family, Faith Chapel; thank you for speaking into my life and directing me in my faith. I dedicate this research to my sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated. I appreciate my sisters' kind words of support. I want to also dedicate this research to my friends and colleagues; you keep me grounded. I dedicate this research to HBCUs and the Divine Nine; you gave me a template for success. Finally, I would like to dedicate this research to my students; I (WILL be) PHinistheD, and so can you!

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Table of Contents

List of Tables ... vi

List of Figures ... vii

Chapter 1: Introductiotn to the Study ... 1

Background of the Study ... 3

Problem Statement ... 6

Purpose of the Study ... 8

Research Question ... 8

Conceptual Framework ... 9

Nature of the Study ... 11

Definitions ... 12

Assumptions ... 13

Scope and Delimitations ... 14

Limitations ... 15

Significance of the Study ... 16

Significance to Practice ... 19

Significance to Theory ... 19

Significance to Social Change ... 20

Summary and Transition ... 21

Chapter 2: Literature Review ... 23

Literature Search Strategy ... 24

Conceptual Framework ... 29

Literature Review..31
Colleges and Universities in the United States 31
Private Colleges and Universities in the United States....................................... 33
Historically Black Colleges and Universities 35
Student Enrollment Reshapes Higher Education Administration........................ 45
Business Officers in Higher Education... 51
Role of Tuition Revenue in the Financial Stability of Colleges and
Universities 56
Tuition Discount Rate 57
Intersection of Private Historically Black Colleges and Universities,
Tuition Discounting, and Business Officers 59
Summary and Conclusions 62
Chapter 3: Research Method...64
Research Design and Rationale 64
Research Tradition 65
Research Design... 69
Role of the Researcher 72
Methodology..73
Participant Selection Logic 73
Instrumentation 76
Data Analysis Plan 82
Issues of Trustworthiness...87

Credibility 87
Transferability 88
Dependability 89
Confirmability 89
Ethical Procedures 90
Summary 91
Chapter 4: Results 95
Recruitment 96
Research Setting 100
Inclusion Criteria 101
Data Collection 102
Data Analysis 106
Evidence of Trustworthiness 112
Credibility 112
Transferability 114
Dependability 115
Confirmability 116
Study Results 116
Theme 1: Connection, Communication, and Collaboration 119
Theme 2: Enrollment and Retention Initiatives 122
Theme 3: Advanced Data Management and Information Systems 125
Theme 4: Comprehensive Budget Balancing 128

Theme 5: Diverse Sources of Financial Support ... 131

Theme 6: Diverse, High-Performing, and Empowered Teams... 134

Summary ... 136

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations ... 139

Interpretation of Findings ... 140

Category 1: Strategies ... 140

Category 2: Challenges ... 141

Category 3: Skills ... 142

Category 4: Resources ... 142

Limitations of the Study ... 143

Recommendations ... 145

Implications ... 147

Implications for Positive Social Change ... 147

Implications for Practice ... 148

Implications for Theory ... 148

Conclusions ... 149

References ... 152

Appendix A: Email Invitation ... 186

Appendix B: Social Media Invitation ... 188

Appendix C: Screening Questionnaire ... 190

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Private Historically Black Colleges and Universities Employees ... 191

Appendix E: Interview Guide 193

Appendix F: Member Checking Email 194

Appendix G: Research Design Alignment Table...195

List of Tables

Table 1. Review Literature Search Results 18

Table 2. Detailed Literature Review Search Results 26

Table 3. Recruitment of Participants 99

Table 4. Categories and Themes by Participant 118

Table 5. Theme 1: Connection, Communication, and Collaboration 120

Table 6. Theme 2: Enrollment and Retention Initiatives 123

Table 7. Theme 3: Advanced Data Management and Information Systems 126

Table 8. Theme 4: Comprehensive Budget Balancing 129

Table 9. Theme 5: Diverse Sources of Financial Support 132

Table 10. Theme 6: Diverse, High-Performing, and Empowered Teams 135

List of Figures

Figure 1. Data Analysis Flow Chart 112

Chapter 1: Introductiotn to the Study

This study explored the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) who manage the tuition discount rate. Tuition discounting is a pricing strategy among private colleges and universities to improve their rankings against the competition and increase enrollment. Tuition discounting is straightforward: the private college or university will publish tuition and gift the student an institutional scholarship in their financial aid package. The tuition discount appeals to many students and usually encourages them to enroll. Students are eager to earn an award into a college with a scholarship directly from the institution. The tuition discount strategy also aims to attract a racially diverse student population and fill seats in a season of low enrollment. Using discount rates has been effective for decades because the business officers forecasted the revenues after the average discount rate. However, from 2011 to 2022, the tuition discount rate strategy was overused, and the rates were at an all-time high (National Association of College and University Business Officers [NACUBO], 2022). According to NACUBO's (2022) annual tuition discounting study, tuition discount rates have grown over the last decade for first-year undergraduate students from 44.3% in 2011-2012 to 53.1% in 2021-2022, which was a problem because private colleges and universities are foregoing needed tuition revenue.

The current study was important for higher education in general, HBCUs, and the communities they serve. The study addressed the ongoing concern of HBCUs, which give educational opportunities to many students. Prior to this study, researchers had not explored the lived experiences of business managers or other employees managing the tuition discount rate at private HBCUs. I aimed to extend the literature and contribute to positive social change by exploring the lived experience of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs as they manage the tuition discount rate. Findings may have social implications including enhancing the understanding of individuals responsible for managing the tuition discount rate. This understanding may assist other private HBCUs in effectively managing their tuition discount rates.

Chapter 1 provides the foundation for the study. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study to provide context and an overview to frame the research within the existing literature. Next, the problem statement addresses the knowledge gap, providing an overview of the literature on the financial state of higher education, private colleges, universities, and private HBCUs concerning tuition discounting. Chapter 1 also includes relevant literature related to this study concerning the lived experiences of business officers and other employees managing the tuition discount rate at private HBCUs. Next, the purpose of the study and the research question are outlined, articulating the study's overarching goals. The conceptual framework is identified, followed by the nature of the study to clarify the research tradition of the study. Chapter 1 also includes the study's assumptions, scope delimitations, and limitations to ensure readers have a sufficient contextual understanding. Chapter 1 also provides the significance of the study by highlighting its potential contributions, implications, and value to private HBCUs, as well as its potential for positive social change. Chapter 1 concludes with a summary and brief introduction to Chapter 2.

Background of the Study

U.S. HBCUs, purposed initially to further the education of Black Americans, have contributed to the education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all (Escobar et al., 2023). HBCUs have had an economic influence and helped reduce the wage gap and inequality between racial minority and majority populations (Bonner et al., 2023). HBCUs have advanced scholarly research in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), graduating more Black students than well-resourced, predominately White institutions (Blackmon et al., 2021; Emerson et al., 2023). HBCUs provided a learning institution for Blacks when they were not allowed to attend PWIs until the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. HBCUs developed Black leaders and change agents for scholarly research, training, and data dissemination (Bonner et al., 2023). The Harlem Renaissance and Civil Rights Movement also involved leaders in HBCUs, addressing issues between racial minority and majority racial groups. HBCUs have been exceptional in their close relationships with students, faculty, and staff, as well as their commitment, and they continue to uplift the Black community (Bonner et al., 2023).

Although the HBCU literature has been increasing compared to the PWI literature, there was a gap in the literature; peer-reviewed research has addressed few topics except the contributions HBCUs have made to society. A general EBSCOhost search using “colleges or universities or higher education or postsecondary” and limited to full text yielded over 56 million articles. When the same search included search terms such as “HBCU” or “HBCUs or historically black colleges or historically black colleges and universities," the result was only 30,000, or less than .1% of the scholarly research. I also observed that studies related to private HBCUs and employees' lived experiences were minimal. More research was needed to capture the contributions and experiences of the management of HBCUs that have such an impact on society.

Like many private colleges and universities, many private HBCUs, due to their constrained funding, are frequently associated with financial hardship (Glenn, 2018; Williams & Davis, 2019). Financial concerns not only impact HBCUs structurally but also burden their human resources (Escobar et al., 2023). Although HBCUs are committed to the legacy of relationships with students, faculty, staff, and the communities they represent, they face contemporary challenges such as funding, accreditation, enrollment, staffing, student debt, infrastructure, endowment, marketing, retention, education quality, campus safety, leadership, technology, public perception, diversity, marketing efforts, shifting demographics, limited degree offerings, and community relations (Bonner et al., 2023). These challenges could be associated with tuition discounting management, which impacts net revenues.

Private institutions often use merit aid programs and tuition discounting for the enrollment growth of targeted populations (Behaunek, 2015). According to Ward and Corral (2022), the published tuition costs for private colleges have more than doubled over the previous 30 years. Discounting tuition impacts colleges' prestige, recruitment of new students, and financial considerations (Jalal & Khaksari, 2019). There are several enrollment shortfalls for private colleges compared to public competitors because parents of high school students are becoming more sensitive to tuition (Carlson, 2020; LeClair, 2021; Pavlov & Katsamakas, 2020). This reality has pressured smaller colleges to increase the institutional aid they provide. On average, in 2019, private colleges discounted tuition by more than 50% for first-year students, according to a report from the NACUBO (as cited in Kelderman, 2019).

Although tuition discounting is a common and less transparent practice, some institutions are resetting the published price for more transparency (Ward & Corral, 2022). According to Brock (2020), administrators who implement a tuition reset offer diverse answers from colleges and universities when asked why they reset their tuition cost. For example, because of the gradual distortion of pricing, Central College in Pella, Iowa, reduced their published tuition price from $38,600 to $18,600 in Fall 2020 to come forthcoming with tuition getting away from the tuition discount strategy to understand the bottom line (Brock, 2020). Based on the current study’s literature review, researchers had not explore whether private HBCUs are experiencing this pressure to reset or the experiences with the management of tuition discounting. It was essential to understand the thinking behind managing tuition discount rates of private HBCUs.

The scope of the study was limited to the lived experiences of business officers and other employees managing the tuition discount rate at HBCUs. Exploring the human experiences of people regarding a phenomenon demonstrates respect for the individuals telling their stories, connects individuals in similar contexts, and provides strategies to others in a similar setting (see Peoples, 2020). The participants from private HBCUs shared their lived experiences managing the tuition discount rate as operations managers. This study was needed because it added to the literature by exploring the lived experience of business officers and other employees managing the tuition discount rates of private HBCUs.

Problem Statement

The general problem was a growing concern regarding the financial stability of private colleges and universities due to their dependence on tuition revenue (Adamiec et al., 2022; Crosby et al., 2022; Dorantes & Low, 2016). The tuition discount rate in private colleges and universities is among the highest in higher education in the United States, resulting in a decrease in tuition revenue (Behaunek & Gansemer-Topf, 2019; Jalal & Khaksari, 2019; Mintz, 2021). The rate of first-time undergraduates at private institutions was 54.5% in 2022, adversely affecting the institutions' financial health (NACUBO, 2022).

Through amendments, interpretation, and court decisions in the United States, Black people can enroll in PWIs (Bracey, 2017; Kidd, 2019). Before ratification, Blacks were only allowed to enter HBCUs for higher education. Black students started to attend PWIs at higher rates than non-Blacks attending HBCUs, and enrollment declined for HBCUs (A. B. Clayton & Peters, 2019). Private HBCUs encountered more financial strain, facing closures and layoffs because they were tuition dependent (W. R. Allen et al., 2018; Bracey, 2017; Eide, 2018). Tuition-dependent colleges offer extensive scholarships and use a high-discount pricing model to attract students and maintain their financial health; a tuition discount is a tool to increase enrollment (Behaunek, 2019; Caskey, 2018; Crosby et al., 2022). With a small percentage of non-Black students enrolling in HBCUs, they faced pressure to increase enrollment and maintain a conservative discount rate to secure the financial outlook of their balance sheet (Eide, 2018; Harter, 2016; Rausaw, 2016). According to Savage (2017), an investment in other strategies, such as an increase in enrollment, must be considered to address the threat of economic solvency for an HBCU. Eide (2018) described how discount funding at Sweet Briar College, a private women's institution, nearly forced the school to close due to financial insolvency. However, there was a general problem with determining the best strategy for an institution's conservative discount rate and the financial stability of HBCUs.

The term *tuition discount rate* was used in the current study. Higher education institutions also use institutional grants to reduce tuition and other charges that students would otherwise be unable to pay to attend college (Jalal & Khaksari, 2019). These institutions also use tuition revenue, earnings from endowments, or gifts to fund tuition discounts. According to NACUBO (2019), private colleges used half of their tuition revenue to provide scholarships and aid to assist deserving students. Excessive tuition discounting has led to sizeable net tuition losses and budget cuts when delivering programs (Askin & Bothner, 2016; Rine, 2019). Tuition discounting is an economic policy issue for long-term financing in the United States, particularly in private colleges. Above-average discount rates are known to impact colleges and universities negatively. The NACUBO (2023) study included 341 institutions; only five participants were from HBCUs, and the study did not include an analysis of private HBCUs or a lived experiences of managing tuition discount rates. There was a gap in the literature regarding business officers and other employees who manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs. Little was known about the lived experiences of business officers and other employees who manage the tuition discount rate.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs who manage the tuition discount rate. Researchers use a transcendental approach to understand participants' human experience and incorporate bracketing or epoché, or suspending biases using descriptions (Dawidowicz, 2016; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Moustakas, 1994; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). To gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, I used a transcendental phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs who manage the tuition discount rate. Data were collected via individual, virtual, semistructured interviews in the informal, interactive process of transcendental phenomenological research through semistructured interviews and follow-up interviews (see Moustakas, 1994). The data analysis method for the current study was the modified van Kaam method for analyzing the lived experiences collected through the development of a synthesis of the participants' experiences (see Moustakas, 1994). The seven-step method was used to capture the phenomenon's essence (see Moustakas, 1994).

Research Question

The gap in the literature for the study informed the research question: What are the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBUCs who manage the tuition discount rate?

Conceptual Framework

The grounding framework to explore the lived experiences of business officers or employees of private 4-year HBCUs who manage the tuition discount rate was phenomenological philosophy. I used phenomenological theory to capture the essence of the participants' descriptions of their experiences (see Giorgi et al., 2017; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The rationale for the phenomenological approach was due to the misalignment of the study's purpose with other research traditions. The phenomenological approach was more appropriate than other qualitative designs, including narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study, because they would not have addressed this study's purpose and research question (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The current study was experience based and aimed to explore the experiences of business officers or other employees of private HBCUs who manage the tuition discount rate. According to Peoples (2020), additional frameworks should not be coupled with the transcendental phenomenological framework. In the current study, biases were consistently set aside or bracketed, a property of phenomenological reduction. Bracketing refers to suspending beliefs about the phenomenon to see them clearly (Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 2016). A fundamental property of the Husserlian framework is awareness of a sense of intentionality (Giorgi et al., 2017; Peoples, 2020). The framework involves *noesis* or thinking about or interpreting the thick, rich descriptions in the data collection and what is thought about the *noema*, which is a logical connection to the research question in understanding participants' lived experiences.

The goal of financial management of institutions is to reduce their economic vulnerability and manage tuition discounting practices. With so many smaller liberal arts colleges closing, there is a threat to address the prevailing trends of increased tuition discounting (LeClair, 2021). Behaunek and Gansemer-Topf (2019) provided the historical background of operations of private liberal arts institutions in a study addressing more than 200 private colleges in the United States. The study focused on the misuse of tuition discounting of private colleges that leads to unfavorable outcomes. Private colleges can set increased enrollment as a goal when properly managing tuition discounting (Behaunek & Gansemer-Topf, 2019).

Administrators must address policies such as financial aid, tuition costs, and revenue sources to compete for a diverse student population. Carlson (2020) explained the relationship between enrollment and tuition discounts, indicating that numerous universities experienced a decline in student enrollment during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in less tuition revenue at a time when higher education faced financial challenges. A primary understanding of the value of tuition discounting for private colleges was essential to further the conversation. Other studies revealed that colleges often offer tuition discounts to increase or maintain enrollments, but fewer colleges achieve long-term stabilization using this model (Browning, 2013; Pavlov & Katsamakas, 2020). LeClair (2021) predicted that 40% of colleges and universities may close or merge in 2026-2027 due to the competition and the practice of discounting.

Nature of the Study

The current study focused on exploring and describing the lived experience of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs who manage the tuition discount rate. Several qualitative research traditions, such as narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study, were considered but did not align with the current study's purpose. The rationale for the phenomenological approach was the misalignment with other qualitative research traditions. The phenomenological approach was more appropriate than other qualitative research designs because they did not address the current study's purpose and research question (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because the current study was experience based and aimed to explore the participants' lived experiences of a specific phenomenon through interviews, phenomenology was the most suitable approach for this inquiry. The transcendental phenomenological approach's definition, intended outcome, and applicability aligned with the study's objectives.

The phenomenological study aims to explore an experience rather than a perception of the phenomenon being studied, according to Moustakas (1994). The transcendental method of Husserl, which suspends rather than eliminates prejudices through bracketing, epoché, and phenomenological reduction, was applied in the current study. Using a transcendental phenomenological research method, I addressed the study's topic, meaning, structure, and essence. The data collection plan was applied using the seven steps in the modified van Kaam framework described in Chapter 3.

Definitions

Bracketing (epoché): Phenomenological reduction when suspending judgments (Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2020; van Kaam, 1996).

Business officer: Professional staff members in higher education with titles such as chief business officer, academic officer, and administrative director. Top administrators, such as the university president or chief executive officer, are typically the people business executives report to. Business officers generally oversee their company's financial and budgetary operations, human resource management, and physical building activities (Bartem & Manning, 2001).

Chief financial officer (CFO): A senior member of the management team of a college or university who manages the business practices of the institution (Jenkins, 1985).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): Any historically black college or university established before 1964 (U.S. Department of Education, 2024).

Horizon: From Husserl's philosophy, the present experience that cannot be bracketed (Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2020).

Noema: From Husserl's philosophy, the thing that is thought about (Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2020).

Noesis: From Husserl's philosophy, thinking about or interpreting (Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2020).

Phenomenological reduction: From Husserl's philosophy, intentional consciousness (Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2020).

Positive social change: A transformation process in behavior and social relationships in such a way that the outcomes benefit individuals, organizations, and society beyond the initial advantages that may be realized by those who instigate the change (Stephan et al., 2016).

Predominantly White institutions (PWIs): A college or university in which the student body is predominately White and not an HBCU (Badio et al., 2024).

Transcendental: Using descriptive phenomenology, a researcher can distill unique experiences into themes and patterns for essences (Dawidowicz, 2016).

Tuition discounting: A practice to reduce the published cost of college and university tuition for students using restricted and unrestricted institutional funds (Browning, 2013; Hillman, 2012; Jalal & Khaksari, 2019). The practice is also known as remissions or institutional scholarships for some institutions (Baum & Ma, 2010).

Assumptions

Discussing assumptions in hermeneutic phenomenological studies is essential because biases cannot be bracketed; however, the current study was a transcendental phenomenological study (see Peoples, 2020). An assumption in transcendental phenomenological studies is counterintuitive; the researcher must maintain an attitude of curiosity during the study, setting aside biases (Peoples, 2020). Husserl's transcendental approach involves employing bracketing, epoché, and phenomenological reduction to suspend or eliminate biases (Peoples, 2020). Setting aside biases and excluding assumptions is critical in the transcendental bracketing process (Peoples, 2020). The researcher must be a stranger in a strange land (Peoples, 2020). Bracketing is suspending beliefs about the phenomenon to see it clearly (Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 2016). The current study could have included implicit bias; however, I used reflexivity and bracketing to manage bias in the data collection and analysis to improve the study's rigor (see Peters & Halcomb, 2015). Bracketing is a core concept within the transcendental phenomenological research design with three constructs: epoché or a phenomenological attitude, phenomenological psychological reduction, and transcendental phenomenological reduction (Dörfler & Stierand, 2021; Van Kaam, 1966).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study was limited to HBCUs; these institutions are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and accredited. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2023), 99 HBCUs are in 19 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Of the 99 HBCUs, 50 are public institutions, and 49 are private nonprofit institutions. Of the 49 private HBCUs, 48 were considered eligible in the current study.

The participants and statistics included institutions that reported to the NACUBO; this may not represent all private HBCUs. The participants in the study were chief financial officers or other employees familiar with tuition discounting strategies. Some institutions in the study might not have provided the actual tuition cost but rather a "high-price, high-aid" model that misrepresents their tuition discount rate (see Rine, 2019). The study's literature review was limited to a few databases such as Library Search (formerly Thoreau). The findings from the current study may enlighten business officers and other employees at private HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate; the reader will determine transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Shkedi, 2019).

Limitations

There were challenges in the study, and reasonable measures were employed to address the limitations to achieve rigor and transferability. Most qualitative studies have challenges; exposing the challenges enables the reader to apply the findings from a proper perspective (Shahriari & Rasuli, 2020). As a faculty member employed at a private HBCU and business officer of a PWI, my lived experience had the potential to impact the results. I employed reflexivity and bracketing (epoché) to manage data collection and analysis bias to improve the study's rigor. However, some unintentional bias could have been present in the study (see Peters & Halcomb, 2015).

There were other limitations to the study, such as transferability and dependability. Responses may have reflected some private HBCUs with a particular religious affiliation. Other business officers or employees of private HBCUs might need help to transfer the results of this study to their experience due to the diverse variety of religious beliefs among HBCUs. The second limitation was dependability; participants may not have been honest with their interview responses, making the data less dependable. The study included participants' experiences from institutions that reported to the NACUBO. The study did not represent all private HBCUs; seven HBCUs were included in the study, representing six states. The participants included employees of private HBCUs with experience managing the tuition discount rate. Participants in the study had diverse experiences with the cost model and possibly misrepresented their tuition discount rate and experience (see Rine, 2019). The study's literature review was limited to a few databases such as Library Search (formerly Thoreau). Another potential weakness was methodology; a quantitative, mixed methods, or multimethods study would have yielded different results.

Significance of the Study

This transcendental phenomenological study explored the experiences of business officers and other employees managing the tuition discount rate at private HBCUs. Based on the literature review at the time of the study, no peer-reviewed qualitative transcendental phenomenological studies had addressed the lived experiences of business officers or others who manage the tuition discount rate at private HBCUs. This study filled the literature gap. Filling the gap in the literature could begin the conversation between those managing the tuition discount rate. This discussion could lead to further research involving safeguarding private HBCUs, preserving the legacy and heritage of these institutions, and ensuring equitable access to quality education for underserved communities and future generations of students. Private HBCUs may decide to adjust pricing policy, employee development, or enhance technology to manage emerging tuition discount rates.

Table 1 shows article searched as of January 14, 2024; there were no date limitations, only full-text limitations. The title represents the name of the Walden University online library database. Column 1 includes search terms relevant to the study. Column 2 is the number of articles found. Column 3 includes notes, and Column 4 is the date of the last search. Row 1 identifies colleges, universities, and higher education, with only one limitation: full text. When the search was narrowed to HBCUs in Row 2, less than 1% of articles were returned. When those results were limited to only private in Row 3, no relevant research was returned. When Row 2 results were limited to phenomenological studies, no relevant research was returned. Table 1 shows that very few articles were available to contextualize the lived experience of business officers and other employees who manage the tuition discount rate at private HBCUs.

Table 1

Review Literature Search Results

Search term	Number of articles	Researcher note	As of date
college or university or higher education or postsecondary education or undergraduate.	57,469,174	Several relevant articles were found.	1/14/24
(college or university or higher education or postsecondary education or undergraduate) AND (HBCU or historically black colleges or historically black colleges and universities)	30,348	Several relevant articles were found.	1/14/24
(college or university or higher education or postsecondary education or undergraduate) AND (HBCU or historically black colleges or historically black colleges and universities) AND private	1,262	Several relevant articles were found.	1/14/24
(college or university or higher education or postsecondary education or undergraduate) AND (HBCU or historically black colleges or historically black colleges and universities) AND private AND (phenomenology or phenomenological or lived experience)	7	Out of the seven articles, no relevant articles were found.	1/14/24
(college or university or higher education or postsecondary education or undergraduate) AND (HBCU or historically black colleges or historically black colleges and universities) AND private AND (tuition discounting or tuition discount rate x	0	No relevant articles were found.	1/14/24

Note. Search results from the Library Search (formerly Thoreau) Database, limited to full text. Although there were no text limiters, the search included full-text results only for the criteria.

Significance to Practice

Private colleges and universities rely on student tuition as the primary revenue source rather than state appropriations (Coupet, 2017; Smith, 2021; Ward & Corral, 2022). This is a challenge for private institutions because the enrollment numbers have declined compared to public institutions (Ward & Corral, 2022). The decline in enrollment could be attributed to low birth rates, lowering the pipeline to private colleges and universities, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Hussar et al., 2020; Ward & Corral, 2022). Another reason may be that the debt associated with a college education, compared to lifelong earnings, may not be as attractive as it once was.

Significance to Theory

The findings of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study contribute to a deeper understanding of how an employee of an HBCU experiences tuition discounting. This understanding may help readers acknowledge how a private HBCU can adequately use the institutional tuition discounting tool. When used correctly, shared strategies can improve study enrollment, offer low-income applicants, and attract students with high academic merit (Hubbell, 1992). Evidence showed that tuition discounting has yet to be a successful management tool for private colleges (Behaunek & Gansemer-Topf, 2019). Behaunek and Gansemer-Topf's (2019) findings on tuition management and demand revealed the likelihood that institutions may face closing over the next decade as the marketplace remains hostile. The strategies centered on tuition discounting and demand strategies, such as enrollment, may be essential in determining which colleges flourish (Behaunek & Gansemer-Topf, 2019).

Significance to Social Change

The findings of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study may suggest how a private higher education institution can utilize the tuition discounting strategy to sustain its operations. Collaborative initiatives can enhance student enrollment, provide opportunities for low-income applicants, and draw in academically exceptional individuals (Hubbell, 1992). Evidence indicates that tuition discounting has not proven an effective management strategy for private universities (Behaunek & Gansemer-Topf, 2019). Behaunek and Gansemer-Topf's (2019) research on tuition management and demand indicated that universities may confront closures in the forthcoming decade due to a persistently adverse marketplace. The initiatives focused on tuition discounting and demand tactics, such as enrollment, may be crucial for the institution's survival (Behaunek & Gansemer-Topf, 2019).

According to the United Nations (2023), Number 4 of the 17 sustainable global goals ensures inclusive and equitable education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all; preserving the financial health of private HBCUs supports the educational goal. Tuition discounting means the college or university pays the total or portion of tuition. Reasons to offer tuition discounts could be to attract students using a pricing strategy; support a student who needs financial assistance; or reward students for their academic success, artistic ability, or athletic ability. Some schools offer institutional aid to develop a new program or major and diversify the student body (Chicas-Mosier et al., 2023; Wilson et al., 2021).

Societies have growing challenges in education (Stephan et al., 2016). The reason for discounting tuition is to provide quality education for everyone. If not appropriately managed, tuition discounting can cause financial hardship for private HBCUs, which is a social challenge for communities (Woodson, 2020). Stimulating advances in societal well-being creates positive social change (Stephan et al., 2016). The current study has the potential to contribute to practice by identifying the policies and procedures institutions can use to continue an influx of diversity that leads to positive social change.

Summary and Transition

Excessive increases in tuition discount rates for private colleges and universities and the lack of empirical research on private HBCUs promoted the need to explore the lived experiences of operations managers or other employees managing the tuition discount rate for private HBCUs. The findings of this study extended the literature by exploring the lived experiences of business officers at private HBCUs regarding the management of tuition discount rates. In addition to extending the literature, the study results may advance the understanding of tuition discounting for professional application and promote positive social change by ensuring equitable education for underrepresented communities.

Chapter 1 offered an introduction and the significance of this transcendental phenomenological study, which aligned with the study's purpose and research question. The purpose of the study was to explore and describe the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs who manage the tuition discount rate. Recruitment of participants included purposive and snowball sampling. Seven people were recruited for the study. Data were collected from the seven participants using semistructured interviews, follow-up interviews, and reflective journaling, including the bracketing process. There were six open-ended questions in each interview, along with member checks. The data analysis included the seven-step modified van Kaam method, audit trails, and reflective journaling to enhance the rigor and ensure data saturation.

Chapter 2 includes a literature review that examines significant themes associated with the literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, and literature review. Chapter 2 also includes a discussion on colleges and universities in the United States, private colleges and universities, HBCUs, how student enrollment reshaped the higher education administration, the role of business officers, tuition revenue in the financial stability of colleges and universities, tuition discount rates, and the intersection of private HBCUs, tuition discounting, and business officers. Lastly, there is a summary of the literature review in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The general problem addressed in this study was a growing concern regarding the financial stability of private HBCUs due to dependence on tuition revenue (Adamiec et al., 2022; Crosby et al., 2022; Dorantes & Low, 2016). Tuition discounting might negatively impact tuition revenue (Adamiec et al., 2022). The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of business officers and other employees managing the tuition discount rate at private HBCUs. This chapter is a review of the recent literature to justify the need for the current study. This chapter explores the topic's history, clarifies definitions, and offers a comprehensive review. Chapter 2 examines contemporary literature and the necessity to augment the existing knowledge pertaining to the research issue.

The current study focused on the lived experience of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs regarding managing tuition discount rates. Chapter 2 introduces the empirical context, theoretical foundation, and scholarly literature on tuition discount rates and enrollment in private HBCUs. Chapter 2 provides a synthesis of the findings and an explanation of the gap in the literature.

An above-average tuition discount rate can affect a college or university's financial performance and undermine academic programs (Behaunek & Gansemer-Topf, 2019; Caskey, 2018; Jalal & Khaksar, 2019). Because institutions want to provide access and affordability to students for higher education, tuition discounting is a solution to attract students and maintain enrollment (Eide, 2018; Gansemer-Topf & Behaunek, 2017; LeClair, 2021). Higher education institutions also use tuition discounts to compete for students, which may cause unavoidable financial problems for universities (LeClair, 2021, 2022; Webber, 2017). The lack of merit scholarships can result in a reduced first-year cohort from lower income families (Caskey, 2018). The lack of scholarships can also deter students of other subgroups, such as transfers, athletes, and racial minority students (Galli & Bahamonde, 2018; Harris et al., 2021). Financial stability between enrollment and student enrollment plays a crucial role in the success of higher education's academic programming (Postlewaite & Frankland, 2021; Stowe & Komasara, 2016). The imbalance between tuition discount rates and enrollment can diminish the quality of a rich higher education experience (Rine, 2019; Sanchez et al., 2018).

Enrollment can also play a fundamental role in a student's success. Because students desire inclusiveness to enhance their institution's social and academic climate, it is essential to create a diverse student body (Sanchez et al., 2018). Even when applications are low for racial minority applicants, institutionally funded financial aid can boost a diverse pool of applicants (Galli & Bahamonde, 2018). This chapter includes an extensive literature review on higher education's revenue management, tuition discount rate, enrollment, and the intersection of these factors.

Literature Search Strategy

During the literature search on the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs, I discovered a scarcity of studies on managing the tuition discount rate. Based on the literature search strategy for this study, no articles addressed the lived experience of business officers and other employees managing the tuition discount rate at private HBCUs. Furthermore, there was insufficient qualitative evidence to represent the perspective of a group of private HBCUs. Older and recent peer-reviewed literature was located from a search in the Walden University Library EBSCO Host database and other relevant databases. I used multidatabase search engines related to the topic and the desired theoretical framework to formulate the research question and support the need for this study. The literature search included articles with the following keywords: *colleges*, *universities*, *higher education*, *postsecondary*, *college students* or *university students* or *undergraduates*, *tuition discount rate*, and *tuition discounting*. The objective was to learn about relevant research regarding the management of tuition discounting within higher education. After investigating the results from the previous searches, I applied a filter using the keywords *HBCU*, *Historically Black Colleges*, *Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, and *positive social change*. Business Source Complete, SAGE Journals, Library Search (formerly Thoreau) Multi-Database, and Google Scholar from Walden University's library were accessed to narrow the search. After formulating research questions, I conducted an interactive decision-making search using Walden University's Library. To ensure an exhaustive literature search, I combined the keywords *colleges*, *universities*, *higher education*, *postsecondary*, *tuition discounting*, *tuition discount rate*, and *HBCUs*. The search algorithm was activated because the strategy included a selection of literature primarily published in 2016 or later, limiting the search to peer-reviewed scholarly journals. Of the sources consulted, 7% were published before 2017 and included seminal works on which other researchers based their studies. The remaining 93% consisted of newer works published between 2017 and 2024.

Table 2 shows articles relevant to private HBCUs' tuition discounting and phenomenological studies. Table 2 presents article searchers from June 1, 2022, to May 11, 2023. Column 1 represents the name of the Walden University online library database, Column 2 includes search terms relevant to the study, Column 3 is the number of articles found, Column 4 includes notes, and Column 5 provides the search date. Each row represents various approaches to the search strategy limited to full-text peer-reviewed studies from 2016 to May 1, 2023. Row 1 includes the headers, as Row 2 includes all colleges and university articles relevant to tuition discount rates or discounting. Each row has an adjusted search term or limitation to extract the published literature specific to the research question within a certain time frame.

The searches resulted in a minimal number of recent peer-reviewed studies, thereby demonstrating the gap in the literature. To address the gap in the literature in terms of a literature search strategy, I used additional key terms to expand the literature search, such as *colleges and universities in the United States*, *private colleges and universities*, *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)*, *student enrollment reshapes higher education administration*, *business officers in higher education*, *the role of tuition revenue in the financial stability of colleges and universities*, *tuition discount rate*, *the intersection of private HBCUs*, *tuition discounting*, and *business officers*.

Table 2

Detailed Literature Review Search Results

Col. No.	Search term	Number of articles	Note	Date
1	(colleges or universities or higher education or postsecondary) AND (tuition discounting or tuition discount rate)	72	Several relevant articles found	6/1/22
2	(colleges or universities or higher education or postsecondary) AND (tuition discounting or tuition discount rate)	8	Multiple recent relevant articles found; Broaden search by adjusting search terms	6/1/22
3	(colleges and universities or higher education) OR tuition revenue AND (tuition discounting or tuition discount rate) AND (historically black colleges and universities or HBCU); limited to peer reviewed, 2016-present	2,807,703	Search too broad; Narrow by using multiple terms	6/1/22
4	((colleges and universities or higher education) OR tuition revenue AND (tuition discounting or tuition discount rate) AND (historically black colleges and universities or HBCU)) AND (united states or America or USA or u.s); limited to peer reviewed, 2016-present	710,462	Search too broad; Narrow by using multiple terms	6/1/22
5	(colleges and universities or higher education) AND tuition revenue AND tuition discounting OR tuition discount rate	45	Much better; Several relevant articles found	6/1/22
6	effect of positive social change AND (college students or university students or undergraduates)	3	Search too narrow; Some relevant articles found	7/1/22
7	((effect or impact or influence), positive social change) AND TI positive social change)	5	Some relevant articles found	7/1/22
8	TI diversity AND TI (HBCU or historically black colleges or historically black colleges and universities))	16	Several relevant articles found. The date limiter was not on in the previous search.	7/1/22
9	TI research limitations	426	Search too broad; Narrow by using multiple terms	7/1/22
10	(colleges or universities or higher education or postsecondary) AND (tuition discounting or tuition discount rate)	12	Limiters - Full Text; Peer Reviewed Scholarly Journals Only; Publication Date: 20170101-20221231	12/1/22

Col. No.	Search term	Number of articles	Note	Date
11	TI (colleges and universities or higher education) AND TI revenue	6	Limiters - Full Text; Peer Reviewed Scholarly Journals Only; Publication Date: 20170101-20221231	12/1/22
12	“Search Terms: HBCUs or historically black colleges and universities	2,993	Search too broad; Narrow by using multiple term	5/11/23
13	“Search Terms:(HBCUs or historically black colleges and universities) AND (history or background or past or historical)	589	Search too broad; Narrow by using multiple terms	5/11/23
14	“Search Terms: SU (HBCUs or historically black colleges and universities) AND (history or background or past or historical)	286	Search too broad; Narrow by using multiple terms	5/11/23

Note. Search Results from the Library Search (formerly Thoreau) Database, Limited to Full-Text. The search exclusively includes full-text results based on the specified parameters, “TI” is short for tuition discount rates, or tuition discounting.

The remainder of Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature organized under various headings and subheadings. A conceptual framework review appears first; next, review research on colleges and universities in the United States, private colleges and universities in the United States, and HBCUs. Then, I review the literature related to student enrollment reshaping higher education administration appears, the role of the business officer in higher education, and the role of tuition revenue in the financial stability of colleges and universities. After that, the definition of tuition discount rate is provided, followed by a review of the intersection of private HBCUs, tuition discounting, and business officers. Each section of this chapter includes topics or subtopics such as public and private colleges and universities. Chapter 2 concludes with a summary of the main points found in the literature review. This summary also reveals gaps in the literature and discusses how this study extended the literature.

Conceptual Framework

The phenomenon of this study was the lived experience of business officers or other employees of private 4-year HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate. At the time of this study, there was little to no literature related to the phenomenon. Understanding the lived experiences was intended to expand the literature; the framework for this study was a qualitative transcendental phenomenological design. A framework is a construct or structure in the literature that supports the research and falls into conceptual and theoretical categories (Imenda, 2014). Although some authors use theoretical and conceptual frameworks interchangeably, others believe there is a clear distinction (Imenda, 2014). According to Liehr and Smith (1999), the word "framework" is the root of both theoretical and conceptual frameworks. A framework guides the research questions and determines whether the findings align with the framework (Imenda, 2014).

Theory is the root of a theoretical framework, and concept is the root of a conceptual framework (Imenda, 2014). A theory is a set of interrelated concepts to explain or predict a phenomenon (Imenda, 2014). Chinn and Kramer refer to a theory as an expression of knowledge or structuring of ideas (Imenda, 2014). The seminal authors define theory as a comprehensive explanation of an essential feature of nature supported by many facts gathered over time (Imenda, 2014). Liehr and Smith defined a concept as "an image or symbolic representation of an abstract idea" (Imenda, 2014). Chinn and Kramer define a concept as a component of a theory that conveys the abstract ideas within a theory (Imenda, 2014). However, Hornby states that it is difficult to define the term concept because it is a matter of context. Conceptual theory often uses the qualitative research process and aligns with the research question; this research opines on the conceptual theory.

This research asks questions that align with a qualitative process for the following characteristics: The research includes characteristics found in qualitative studies. Based on theory, the research relies on previous research, is selective, has a personal orientation, includes features about the study and shows relationships between those features, is irritative, and makes explicit assumptions.

This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of those managing the tuition discount rate at private HBCUs' to illuminate the lived experiences of the phenomenon. The phenomenological approach is more appropriate than other qualitative research traditions, narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and a case study; they do not address this study's purpose and central research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A fundamental property of the Husserlian framework is our awareness of a sense of intentionality (Giorgi et al., 2017; Peoples, 2020). The targeted population consisted of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs who manage the tuition discount rate. According to Dr. Katarzyna Peoples (2020), additional frameworks should be separate from the transcendental phenomenological framework. Bracketing is an essential concept within the transcendental phenomenological research design with three constructs: epoché or a phenomenological attitude, phenomenological psychological reduction, and transcendental phenomenological reduction (Dörfler & Stierand, 2021; Van Kaam, 1966). The transcendental phenomenological approach's definition, intended outcome, and relevancy align with the study's objectives, the research tradition, and the design rationale.

Literature Review

Colleges and Universities in the United States

The Morrill Act of 1862 is the most critical educational legislation ever passed in the United States, entitling every United States citizen to educational aid from the federal government despite their status (Wheatle, 2019). Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont sponsored the act to donate public land to finance higher education and protect the land from seizure by native people of the land (Ingrassia, 2019). The Morrill Act of 1862 is the first federal aid to higher education (Ingrassia, 2019). Although America has a founding date of 1776, Harvard University was founded before America in 1636, Harvard University was recognized as a "schoale" or "colledge" and named Harvard College in 1638 after a 31-year-old clergyman, John Harvard (Harvard University, 2023). Today there are about 5,000 colleges and universities in America, including public, private, liberal arts, PWI, HBCU, 2-year, 4-year, female, male, co-educational, research, for-profit, and non-profit (Freeman & Lee, 2018). Dr. Pamela Allen and Dr. Paul Withey (2017) focused on the changes in non-traditional education in the United States. The researchers discuss three waves of higher education: pedagogy, andragogy, transformational learning, and the evolution of higher education and degrees on demand (Allen & Withey, 2017). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the researchers determined from their research that undergraduate students and how they pay for tuition are changing (Allen & Withey, 2017). The new undergraduate student requires flexibility to fit in with their demanding lifestyle (Allen & Withey, 2017). According to the scholars, the non-traditional student combines the ability to develop skills with life-learning potential when considering education. Non-traditional students request discounts because they use minimal campus services (Allen & Withey, 2017). Elizabeth N. Appiah of the Journal of Education Finance (2014) revealed that the institutional costs of higher education have been rising; in contrast, public support per student has been diminishing, and tuition and fees private costs have also been rising. Nevertheless, so have the actual earnings of college graduates (Appiah, 2014).

According to Caskey (2018), institutions with healthy revenue from endowments and gifts usually do not offer merit scholarships; these institutions draw highly desired students by spending more per student than they charge full-pay students. When tuition-dependent colleges offer extensive scholarships, they spend less per student than they charge full-pay students (Caskey, 2018). Colleges that spend considerably less per student than they charge full-pay students often need help drawing such students and filling empty seats (Caskey, 2018). They may offer more scholarships, especially merit scholarships. Merit scholarships can crowd out need-based scholarships in some schools but enhance others (Caskey, 2018).

Executive Order 10925, Affirmative Action, was signed by President John F. Kennedy on March 6, 1961; the order required government contractors to take affirmative action for applicants and employees to assure treatment without consideration to their race, creed, color, or national origin (De Silva et al., 2021; Iceland et al., 2023). In higher education, affirmative action policies helped traditionally disadvantaged minorities with college admissions (De Silva et al., 2021).

Private Colleges and Universities in the United States

Private colleges and universities possess many shared attributes, yet it is crucial to acknowledge that each school has its distinct history, culture, teaching methodology, and community. These various establishments collectively enhance the broad range of educational options in higher education that are accessible to students. Private colleges and universities are educational institutions that receive funding and are governed by private sources rather than being funded and operated by state or government bodies. Private schools and universities depend on private financial sources, including tuition and fees, endowments, contributions, and other personal assistance. They do not receive financial support directly from state governments to cover their day-to-day operations. Private institutions typically possess greater autonomy in their decision-making processes, organizational structure, academic programs, and administrative regulations than public institutions. By having autonomy, they are frequently able to promptly adjust to evolving educational environments and introduce novel approaches in multiple facets of higher education. Private institutions of higher education exhibit significant diversity in scale, organizational framework, and purpose. These educational institutions might vary in size and focus, ranging from small liberal arts colleges to research-intensive universities, specialized institutions, religiously associated colleges or secular universities. This variety provides a broad spectrum of educational options and settings for pupils. Private institutions typically have higher tuition fees than public colleges and universities because they do not receive financial support from the state.

Nevertheless, private colleges sometimes provide generous financial assistance, scholarships, and grants to mitigate the expenses associated with student attendance. Private colleges and universities are well-known for their exceptional academic standards, demanding curricula, expert teachers, and top-notch facilities. Consequently, these institutions frequently acquire a robust reputation and demonstrate a steadfast dedication to providing a unique educational encounter. Private institutions often have a distinct mission, vision, and values directing their educational philosophy and concentration. This may encompass a commitment to academic fields, areas of research, cultural or religious customs, and service-oriented objectives.

Small private colleges give higher tuition discounts, and larger institutions lose most revenue from canceling athletic events, notably NCAA schools (Carlson, 2020, December 11). According to Baker, Moore, Byars, and Aden (2020), private colleges in the United States must discount tuition to increase admissions. The scholars also revealed that many private institutions are in financial turmoil; 20% of private colleges face financial crises. (Baker et al., 2020). During the Pandemic, a lack of athletic programs and a decrease in international enrollment reduced revenue for private colleges (Baker et al., 2020). The popularity of online learning has also increased due to the Pandemic and attitudes toward the quality of education (Baker et al., 2020).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Historically Black Colleges and Universities were first recognized in the 1800s by people of the African Diaspora by the church, abolitionists, well-meaning white philanthropists, the Freedmen's Bureau, American Missionary Association (AMA), and other individuals in the United States for cultural uplift (Andrews, 2016; Barcey, 2017; Crewe, 2017; Hotchkins, 2021; Gasman & Abiola, 2016; Sum et al., 2004). Cheyney University of Cheyney, Pennsylvania, was the first HBCU founded in 1837 by a Quaker philanthropist, Richard Humphries, with a $10K endowment (Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, 2023; Harper, 2019). Cheney was named the African Institute and then renamed the Institute for Colored Youth in earlier years (Bonner et al., 2023; Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, 2023; Crewe, 2017). The first degree-seeking HBCU was Lincoln University of Pennsylvania, founded in 1854 by Reverend John Miller Dickey, a Presbyterian minister, and his wife, Sarah Emlen Cresson (Our History - Lincoln University, n.d.). The HBCU was initially named The Ashmun Institute (Our History - Lincoln University n.d.). The first Black-owned and operated HBCU was Wilberforce of Ohio, founded in 1856 by the Cincinnati Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) (Wilberforce University, 2022). The Morrill Land-Grant Acts evolved some HBCUs (Wheatle, 2019).

The Morrill Act of 1862 allowed mostly PWIs to have land grants, and two HBCUs profited, the University of Virgin Islands and the University of the District of Columbia (Barcey, 2017; Clayton et al., 2022). The remaining HBCUs were not allowed access to land grants, especially in the South (Barcey, 2017). During Reconstruction, however, if a college had no distinction of race or color, the Morrill Act of 1890 offered more support to states and territories (Barcey, 2017; Wheatle, 2019). Because the South barred Black students from entering state colleges and universities, 19 HBCUs benefited from The Morrill Act of 1890 (Barcey, 2017; Clayton et al., 2022; Wheatle, 2019). Only three were private: Claflin University of South Carolina, founded in 1869; Tuskegee University of Alabama, founded in 1881; and Virginia University of Lynchburg of Virginia, founded in 1886. The Morrill Land-Grant Acts did not fund most HBCUs and chose to finance their colleges and universities (Barcey, 2017; Wheatle, 2019). Nevertheless, the "separate but equal" agenda provided spaces where Blacks could be taught separately from their white peers (Andrews, 2020).

Predominately White institutions did not show a sustained commitment to educating Black students in the United States, except for athletes (Bracey, 2017). Additionally, to boost education for veterans returning from World War II, the United States signed the race-neutral G.I. Bill of Rights in 1944 (Bracey, 2017). In practice, the Service Readjustment Act systemically did not ascend Black soldiers into the middle class like Whites and further reinforced racial segregation in education and housing (Bracey, 2017). Blacks have had many obstacles obtaining higher education and, in the 21st century, outspend White families as a percentage of their household income and net worth on education (Bracey, 2017). Despite the racial tensions, injustice of higher education, lack of teachers, and withdrawal of many White benefactors who previously supported HBCUs, HBCUs remained steadfast or reorganized (Harper, 2019).

Support for HBCUs at the federal level defined their collective mission. On November 8, 1965, Congress defined HBCUs in the Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965. In Section 322(2), an HBCU was any college or university established before 1964 whose principal mission was the education of Black Americans and accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary of Education (Hotchkins, 2021). President Jimmy Carter, The U.S. Department of Education (2024) recognizes 102 HBCUs. Historically Black Colleges and Universities represent 3% of colleges and universities in the United States (Andrews, 2016).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities are a source of accomplishment and great pride for the Black community and nation (Crewe, 2017). Historically Black Colleges and Universities continue to graduate more economically and academically challenged students than PWIs (Freeman & Lee, 2018). A decision by the United States Supreme Court, known as Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 US 483, ruled that United States state laws establishing racial segregation in public schools were unconstitutional, even if the segregated schools were otherwise equal in quality (Brooks, 2021; Harper, 2019). Before the Brown v. Board of Education decision, 90% of all Black college students attended HBCUs (Elliott & Kellison, 2019). Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) are valuable producers of degree holders (Chicas-Mosier et al., 2023). Today, many Black students seek this culturally specific education, but other Black students seek PWIs to complete their college education (Crewe, 2017). Integration of PWIs increased, and the Black middle class shifted to public and private HBCUs. Historically Black Colleges and Universities represent less than 3% of colleges and universities in the nation, serving 300,000 annually (Gasman & Abiola, 2016; The White House, 2023).

There are 102 recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (2024). There are 11 2-year HBCUs, one 2-year private HBCU, Shorter College, and ten 2-year public HBCUs, Bishop State Community College, Gadsden State Community College, H Councill Trenholm State Community College, J. F. Drake State Community and Technical College, Lawson State Community College, Shelton State Community College, Southern University at Shreveport, Coahoma Community College, Denmark Technical College, and St Philip's College (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). Four 4-year, primarily associate's, private not-for-profit HBCUs, Arkansas Baptist College, Clinton College, Southwestern Christian College, and Virginia University of Lynchburg exist (U.S. Department of Education, 2024).

There are 43 4-year public HBCUs from the State of Alabama, Alabama A&M University, and Alabama State University (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). There is one 4-year public HBCU from the state of Arkansas, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). There is one 4-year public HBCU of Delaware that has one HBCU, Delaware State University (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). University of the District of Columbia and the University of the District of Columbia-David A Clarke School of Law are in the District of Columbia (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). The state of Florida has one HBCU Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). Georgia has three HBCUs, Albany State University, Fort Valley State University, and Savannah State

University (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). There is one HBCU in Kentucky, Kentucky State University (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). Grambling State University, Southern University and A & M College, Southern University at New Orleans, Southern University Law Center, Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Morgan State University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Alcorn State University, Jackson State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Harris-Stowe State University, Lincoln University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, North Carolina A & T State University, North Carolina Central University, Winston-Salem State University, Central State University, Langston University, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, Lincoln University, South Carolina State University, Tennessee State University, Prairie View A & M University, Texas Southern University, University of the Virgin Islands, University of the Virgin Islands-Albert A. Sheen, Norfolk State University, Virginia State University, Bluefield State College, and West Virginia State University (U.S. Department of Education, 2024).

There are 44 4-year, private not-for-profit HBCUs, Miles College, Oakwood University, Stillman College, Talladega College, Tuskegee University, Philander Smith College, Howard University, Bethune-Cookman University, Edward Waters College, Florida Memorial University, Clark Atlanta University, Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, Paine College, Spelman College, Simmons College of Kentucky, Dillard University, Xavier University of Louisiana, Rust College, Tougaloo College, Bennett College, Johnson C Smith University, Livingstone College, Saint Augustine’s University, Shaw University, Wilberforce University. Allen University, Benedict College, Claflin University, Morris College, Voorhees College, American Baptist College, Fisk University, Lane College, Le Moyne-Owen College, Meharry Medical College, Huston-Tillotson University, Jarvis Christian College, Paul Quinn College, Texas College, Wiley College, Hampton University, and Virginia Union University. There are 102 HBCUs (1: 2-year, private not-for-profit, 10: 2-year, public, 4: 4-year, primarily associate's, private not-for-profit, 44: 4-year, public, and 44 4-year, private not-for-profit =102).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities can be characterized based on their historical importance, academic offerings, athletic ranking, and impact on African American education and culture (Bracey, 2017; Caldwell et al., 2023; Crewe, 2017; Shuler et al., 2022). Typical classifications for HBCUs include early historical, land-grant, research-intensive, comprehensive, faith-based, and private HBCUs. These categories showcase the diversity and cultural legacy of HBCUs, each playing a crucial role in educating and promoting the progress of African American students and providing essential contributions to higher education in the United States.

Early historical HBCUs are the oldest, many established in the 19th century. Notable examples are Howard University, established in 1867, and Lincoln University of Pennsylvania, established in 1854. Since 1867, Howard University has conferred over 100,000 degrees in various professions, arts, sciences, and humanities (Howard University, 2024). The Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (MSRC) is acknowledged as one of the greatest and most extensive repositories globally for documenting the history and culture of individuals of African heritage in Africa, the Americas, and other regions (Howard University, 2024).

The Second Morrill Act of 1890 classified land-grant HBCUs as land-grant institutions. This classification secured federal support for establishing colleges that provided agricultural and mechanical arts instruction. Examples are Alabama A&M University and North Carolina A&T State University. Alabama A&M was established in 1875 by Dr. William Hooper Councill, a former slave (Alabama A&M University, 2023). Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University offers over 60 undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs, a varied international faculty, 50+ student organizations, and a broad alumni network consisting of individuals in various fields such as politics, education, business, medicine, law, engineering, science, literature, and art, many of whom are influential figures at local, national, and international levels (Alabama A&M University, 2023).

Research-intensive HBCUs prioritize research endeavors in several subjects and fields. They back research projects and aid in the progress of academic knowledge. Florida A&M University and Tennessee State University are renowned for their research-focused programs. Florida A&M (FAMU) is categorized as an R2 Doctoral Research University according to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, indicating a high level of research activity (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2023; Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), 2024). FAMU's status places it among the largest mainstream universities in the nation. FAMU is dedicated to growing its scientific and research community by recruiting and retaining professors through offering competitive wages and appealing start-up packages (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), 2024). The University received contracts and grants totaling more than $46.2 million from federal, state, and private funding entities in 2017-18. FAMU faculty submitted $99 million in research proposals to federal, state, and private entities for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018, which is a record and a more than 60% increase from the prior year (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), 2024). The FAMU's 2010-2020 Biomedical/Behavioral Research project aims to elevate the University to a globally renowned land-grant and research institution dedicated to outstanding teaching, research, and service (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), 2024). The strategic objectives aim to maintain and enhance essential institutional biomedical/behavioral resources, including human, physical, financial, and technology assets. Enhance and uphold the University's proficiency and standing in specific research areas that align with FAMU's distinct purpose as a public HBCU and land-grant university (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), 2024). Tennessee State University is classified as an R2: Doctoral Institution - High Research Activity by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The institution conducts innovative research to tackle important societal issues (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2023; Tennessee State University, 2024). The research division assists academics and students in developing ideas in various important fields such as agricultural sciences, engineering, biotechnology, nanotechnology, health sciences, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, astrophysics, business, and the social sciences (Tennessee State University, 2024).

Comprehensive HBCUs provide diverse academic programs encompassing liberal arts, professional studies, and STEM subjects. Hampton University and Clark Atlanta University are examples of institutions that belong to this group. Hampton University offers diverse technical, liberal arts, and graduate degree programs, making it a forward-thinking and evolving higher education institution (Hampton University, 2024). Clark Atlanta University was founded in 1865 by the American Missionary Association and was the first institution in the United States to grant graduate degrees to African Americans (Clark Atlanta University, 2023).

Some HBCUs have significant historical connections to religious institutions and groups. These institutions frequently incorporate religious beliefs and teachings into their academic curriculum. Xavier University of Louisiana and Oakwood University are notable examples (Xavier University of Louisiana, 2019). Xavier University of Louisiana stands out for over eight decades as the sole HBCUs in America (Xavier University of Louisiana, 2019). Xavier is a prominent figure in the science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), and health sciences sectors, with a track record of graduating more African American medical students annually compared to any other university in the United States (Xavier University of Louisiana, 2019). The College of Pharmacy is a leading institution in producing African American pharmacists (Xavier University of Louisiana, 2019). Founded in 1896 by the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA), Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, was established to provide education to the newly emancipated African Americans in the Southern United States (Oakwood University, 2020). Based on its Christian beliefs and the abolition of slavery by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, the organization thought that all individuals were equal and should have the chance to acquire a skill (Oakwood University, 2020).

Private HBCUs have an exemplary reputation for offering excellent education to Black students. Miles College, Shaw University, and Spelman College are examples of institutions that belong to this group. Miles College of Fairfield, Alabama, founded in 1898, is a private senior liberal arts institution with historical ties to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and a focus on serving the Black community (Miles College, 2024). Miles College encourages students to pursue knowledge that results in intellectual and civic empowerment (Miles College, 2024). Students undergo complex study, scholarly research, and spiritual awareness to become responsible citizens who contribute to shaping the global society (Miles College, 2024). Shaw University of Raleigh, North Carolina, founded in 1865, is the first college in the United States to offer a four-year medical program and the first HBCU to enroll women (Shaw University, 2024). Spelman College of Atlanta, Georgia, founded in 1881, is a prominent institution that focuses on educating women of African heritage, emphasizing academic achievement in liberal arts and sciences, and fostering intellectual, artistic, ethical, and leadership growth in its students (Spelman College, 2024). Spelman uses many educational methods to educate individuals to interact with different cultures and encourages a dedication to promoting beneficial social transformation (Spelman College, 2024). The stewardship of HBCUs has proved to be essential to upward mobility in many communities.

Student Enrollment Reshapes Higher Education Administration

Events during the 20th century resulted in significant rises in student enrollment in the United States, which fundamentally transformed the structure of higher education institutions and facilitated the formation of heterogeneous student communities. Korhonen (2023) reported a substantial surge in higher education enrollment, with the number of students in public and private colleges and universities increasing from 5.65 million to 18.94 million in 2023, representing a growth of over 200%. The rise in student enrollment can be ascribed to multiple sources, such as the culmination of World War II, the high birth rates during the Baby Boomer era, the Civil Rights Movement, federal initiatives for financial aid, and the introduction of diverse educational programs. The significant growth can be traced back to vocational and public higher education and other sectors within higher education (Moodie, 2020). The remarkable expansion originated from vocational and public higher education and other areas of higher education (Moodie, 2020). Higher education enrollment experienced a significant rise, leading to a transformation in college and university business office operations.

The federal government enacted the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, popularly called the G.I. Bill, to assist returning veterans after World War II, and the next version of the G.I. Bill, the Veteran's Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966". This bill extended benefits to Vietnam veterans (Barr et al., 2021; Moodie, 2020). The G.I. Bill encompassed various advantages, including provisions that granted honorably discharged veterans the opportunity to pursue school for four years (Bullington et al., 2022). The G.I. Bill provided monetary support for various educational initiatives, including degree programs, vocational training, and apprenticeships. Veterans who meet the requirements may be eligible to receive financial aid to cover the costs of books, fees, and tuition for undergraduate, graduate, and refresher courses, as well as supplementary retraining at accredited schools and universities (Barr et al., 2021; Bullington et al., 2022). The G.I. Bill significantly reduced the cost of college education, resulting in a substantial increase in the number of male students returning from military service who enrolled in college. Specifically, during the years 1946 and 1947, more than 70% of male college students were veterans (Moodie, 2020). The bill's unemployment compensation program disbursed about $4 billion to four million veterans.

The G.I. Bill is crucial for war veterans to obtain postsecondary education, acting as a strong motivator for them to enroll in colleges and universities, contributing to the significant increase in enrollment. The rise in enrollment led to a greater need for higher education, prompting colleges and institutions to expand to accommodate the inflow of returning veterans. The veterans acquired additional expertise alongside pursuing higher-level academic qualifications, resulting in educational and socioeconomic consequences. Their personal and professional development was enhanced by acquiring new skills, pursuing higher education, and transferring to civilian life with improved job opportunities. Chancellor Clark Kerr of the University of California gained recognition for describing colleges and universities as "tools for achieving national objectives." The

G.I. Bill was a component of the prosperous period of higher education known as the Golden Age, which coincided with the Baby Boomer era (Ris, 2023).

The significant surge in birth rates in the United States following the baby boom of the World War II era, namely throughout the 1960s to the 1970s, dramatically impacted higher education (Rousmanière, 2021). Rousmanière (2021) reports that Ohio State University experienced a twofold enrollment increase, from 25,000 to 50,000, from 1960 to 1970. Higher education entrants exhibited characteristics such as advanced age, racial and ethnic diversity, higher likelihood of engaging in part-time study and employment, higher likelihood of being female, and a greater inclination towards independent and countercultural lives (Rousmanière, 2021). Attitudinal changes, increased demand for education, and population growth have led to a shift in educational goals, resulting in a more significant cohort of prospective college students. Pursuing higher education has progressively been recognized to achieve upward social mobility, job progression, and personal growth. Colleges and universities recognized the necessity to cater to the increasing number of students, creating new programs, instructional initiatives, and physical facilities to address the rising demand for higher education. The increase in wealth affected the ability of institutions, which in turn contributed to the period of prosperity in higher education's Golden Age, expanding educational opportunities for the growing population (Ris, 2023).

The Civil Rights Movement significantly increased the number of students attending higher education institutions by removing barriers to admission, advocating for equal opportunities, and motivating individuals from historically marginalized communities to pursue educational advancement. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is a significant federal law in the United States that seeks to eliminate segregation and ensure equal rights and protections for all individuals (Sharp, 2020; Rossman & Simpson, 2022). Desegregation, an essential element of the Civil Rights Act, sought to address racial segregation in educational institutions. The purpose was to eliminate racial segregation indicators, such as “whites only” and “colored only,” and establish Jim Crow legislation to promote more integration and fair public access (Sharp, 2020). The removal of racial obstacles, the correction of past inequalities, and the advancement of fair educational opportunities have greatly enhanced the enrollment of African American students in higher education institutions. Conwell and Quadlin (2021) found that the percentage of Blacks, Hispanics, and women with a college degree has increased. Underprivileged students from minority backgrounds were provided with scholarships, financial help, grants, and financing for programs designed to enhance enrollment rates by delivering resources.

The presence of financial help has a substantial impact on students’ enrollment decisions and their degree of readiness (Heo, 2023). The federal government believed higher education was an investment rather than an expense. It represents a commitment to empowering individuals who are not subject to constraints or limitations. It represents a commitment to enhancing social well-being, improving living conditions, promoting better health, and reducing crime rates. Investing in agriculture, industry, and government increases productivity, income, and efficiency. Investing in a bulwark serves as a defense against distorted information, incomplete truths, and falsehoods, as well as against ignorance and intolerance. Investing in human talent, fostering improved human relationships, promoting democracy, and striving for peace are all essential endeavors (Ris, 2023).

Implementing federal gift aid programs, such as the Pell Grant, a need-based federal financial aid program overseen by the U.S. Department of Education, has enhanced the inclusivity of college education by expanding access to a broader demographic (Wright-Kim et al., 2019). Congress instituted the Federal Pell Grant to eradicate financial barriers that impede lower income students from obtaining a college education (Wright-Kim et al., 2019). The Pell Grant, a crucial element of government financial aid for economically disadvantaged students, enables undergraduate students to cover their expenses for higher education, leading to a significant increase in enrollment (Rousmanière, 2021). The Pell Grant was the primary federal initiative for financially disadvantaged students seeking higher education. This impact has fostered a higher education milieu characterized by more inclusivity, accessibility, and diversity, leading to alterations in higher education management.

The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 and the Morrill Act of 1890, enacted during the Civil War by the federal government, were designed to allocate land grants, foster practical education, and stimulate the American economy and workforce growth (Clayton et al., 2022). The Morrill Land-Grant Act, also known as the “Act Donating Public Lands for the Establishment of Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts,” was enacted to provide federal support for postsecondary education and prioritize agriculture, engineering, and practical arts (Croft, 2019; Singh, 2021; Stein, 2020). The legislation allocated federal land grants to individual states, with the proceeds from its sale establishing institutions focused on agricultural and industrial education. Before the enactment of the Morrill Land-Grant Act, there were occurrences in which states were granted land to promote and enhance higher education (Clayton et al., 2022; Croft, 2019; Stein, 2020). In 1618, King James gave the Virginia colony ten thousand acres to establish a college (Singh, 2021). Historians and higher education experts regard the Morrill Land-Grant Act as the key example of how public higher education in the United States became accessible and aligned with democratic ideals. The Morrill Land-Grant Act is often regarded as a pivotal factor in the progression of American democracy (Anderson, 2022).

The legislation did not mandate land-grant universities to primarily focus on agricultural, mechanical, or military studies to access the funds (Singh, 2021). Instead, they specifically emphasized the integration of these fields of study with other scientific and classical disciplines to foster comprehensive and applicable education (Singh, 2021; Stein, 2020). Land allocation from the act enabled the establishment of “land-grant” institutions in all states, expanding educational opportunities beyond traditional disciplines such as law, theology, and classical studies. Higher education broadened its curriculum to include traditional academic degrees and practical courses in agriculture and mechanics (Singh, 2021; Steiner, 2022). This expansion was crucial in the advancement of the modern university (Sullivan, 2024). Higher education became more accessible to a broader range of people, including those from working-class backgrounds and persons seeking more practical vocational training, due to implementing a more practical, hands-on approach to learning and fostering innovative curriculum. It fostered the creation of educational programs that emphasized agricultural, mechanical, and industrial subjects (Singh, 2021; Steiner, 2022). Higher education saw a significant transformation, leading to a broader impact on the design of campuses. Consequently, there was a commensurate change in the duties and obligations of business officers (Steiner, 2022).

Business Officers in Higher Education

With the rise in student enrollment in American colleges and universities, the administration changed from a “single manager” structure to a “modern university” administration referred to as the “hierarchical administrative model” (Sullivan, 2024). Higher education had to assign authority hierarchically with defined roles and responsibilities to manage the complexity of the organization as student enrollment increased. The college or university president or chancellor was no longer the only person who made decisions and needed to delegate authority. A range of organizational structures were present in schools and universities due to the rise in student enrollment. The two prominent administrative posts were the chief or academic and business officers. The chief business officer, sometimes called the senior vice president for finance and administration, usually oversees fiscal issues, whereas the chief academic officer, also called the provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, directs the curriculum. Because of the increase in higher education, the college and university hierarchy keep growing to include several business executives reporting to the chief officers.

A chief business officer is subordinate to the president or board of directors and is tasked with planning and overseeing the financial matters of the institution. The role of the chief business officer in various higher education institutions, regardless of their size, has experienced significant transformation during the past century (Calver & Vogler, 1985; Samuels & Miller, 2021). This shift has been initiated by internal institutional changes, external pressures, and modifications from sources outside of higher education. During the initial stages of higher education, business officers were frequently responsible for administrative and financial tasks associated with the establishment and operation of colleges and universities (Calver & Vogler, 1985). The fiscal affairs of business officers include managing funds, handling payroll, and overseeing financial transactions (Calver & Vogler, 1985; Kim & Chung, 2023). As higher education institutions grew in scale and complexity, the role of business officers expanded to encompass more strategic and administrative responsibilities: financial planning, resource allocation, and long-term financial sustainability (Kim & Chung, 2023; Samuels & Miller, 2021). Technology and data management, and other trends are growing in importance to higher education (Delucchi et al., 2021). Thus, business officers have assumed duties pertaining to information systems, data analysis, and adherence to financial rules and reporting obligations (Delucchi et al., 2021). The responsibilities of business officers have undergone transformation in response to shifts in higher education governance, customer expectations, and technological progress. It plays an essential role in strategic decision-making, management, and addressing the financial issues faced by higher education institutions. Business officers are playing an increasingly active role in promoting diversity, fairness, and inclusion in the financial management of higher education institutions (Delucchi et al., 2021). They are responsible for ensuring fair financial procedures and allocating resources in a just manner. As higher education undergoes further development, the responsibilities of business officers are expected to adjust to fulfill the requirements of a swiftly changing landscape.

The position of the chief business officer in different higher education institutions, regardless of their size, has seen substantial changes throughout the past century. Internal institutional reforms, external pressures, and alterations from sources beyond higher education prompted the transformation. In the initial stages of higher education, business officers' responsibilities include the intersection of academic and facility planning, and administrative and financial tasks associated with establishing and operating colleges and universities (Samuels & Miller, 2021). The duties entailed money management, payroll administration, and supervision of economic activities. With the growth and increased complexity of higher education institutions, the responsibilities of business officers have extended to include strategic and administrative tasks such as financial planning, resource allocation, and ensuring long-term economic sustainability. Given the significance of technology and data in higher education management, business officers assumed duties regarding information systems, data analysis, and adherence to financial rules and reporting obligations. The responsibilities of business officers have transformed in response to shifts in higher education governance, customer expectations, and technological progress. It plays a crucial role in making strategic decisions, managing risks, and addressing higher education institutions' financial issues. Business officers are playing a growing role in promoting diversity, expansion of student services to remote delivery, and inclusion in the financial management of higher education institutions (Bouchey et al., 2021). They are responsible for ensuring fair financial procedures distribution of resources, and outsourcing services (Bartem & Manning, 2001). The role of business officers is expected to adjust in response to the fast-changing environment as higher education continues to evolve.

Colleges and universities usually have multiple business officers who oversee financial activities such as budgeting, institutional programs, personnel matters, and physical infrastructure needs. Several corporate executives supervise tasks such as acquisition, administration, resource allocation, procurement, auxiliary operations, budgeting, and oversight. Businesses manage budgetary requirements, budgeting, bursar operations, cashiering, expenditure control, account oversight, and financial management coordination. Business managers are responsible for data processing, making judgments on administrative issues, and sending regular financial information to employee benefits program management. The chief business officer is responsible for energy management, facilities and custodial services, financial reporting and analytics, fundraising, and grant and contract administration. Chief business officers oversee grounds management, institutional research, and planning. The business officer is responsible for overseeing insurance management, internal control/audit, and investment and management of endowment and other funds. The chief business officer also oversees labor relations, collective bargaining negotiations, the maintenance of landscape and grounds, and legal administration. Additionally, the chief business officer overseed major repairs, operation, and upkeep of building, parking, payroll, and personnel services for non-academic workers. The chief business officer may also be responsible for planning, building, process and manual preparation and maintenance, purchasing, and renovations. The chief business officer may also be responsible for risk management, security, student financial assistance programs, transportation, and utilities.

The chief business officer must possess indispensable qualities to effectively carry out their responsibilities, including a thorough understanding of the organization's objectives, academic and business obligations, as well as educational credentials such as a degree in accounting, a master's degree in business administration, a Ph.D., or certification as a public accountant. A high level of expertise in accounting is essential for the college or university's progress, administrative procedures, and financial record-keeping. The chief business officer of a small college may bear significant responsibilities due to limited staffing with specialized professionals seen in larger higher education institutions. The reliance on external expertise is typically greater for a chief business officer in a small college than a chief financial officer in larger institutions, particularly in investment management.

Small college business officers can access various external resources to help them fulfill their duties. These resources include the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), regional conferences like the Southern Association of College and University Business Officers (SACUBO), fellow chief business officers, workshops, publications, external experts, and various organizations (Samuels & Miller, 2021). Business officers receive assistance from internal and external resources to manage opportunities and risks that impact the higher education industry effectively. These factors are outside the jurisdiction of chief business officers, yet they must address them independently or in cooperation with other institutions. The five primary issues are political, social, and economic factors that substantially impact the external market for modern higher education. The increase in tuition prices at publicly funded schools, along with decreased state funding for private higher education, surpasses the financial support provided. Modifications impact this pattern in the country's economic framework, population composition alterations, and state education program revisions. Public sentiment mirrors apprehensions around increased college fees, perceived deterioration in educational standards, restricted prospects for minority individuals, and the influence of inflation.

Role of Tuition Revenue in the Financial Stability of Colleges and Universities

Tuition revenue is a traditional funding source for higher education to cover operating expenses, and other income streams supplement non-operating expenses (Clapp, 2021). Some spending categories in the operating budget incorporate labor, supplies, equipment, facilities, fees, technology, travel, and dining (Bennett & Law, 2021). The primary pursuit of any college or university is to educate its students with the guidance of faculty. The faculty investment includes salaries, benefits, and teaching supplies (Bennett & Law, 2021). Academic support units, such as libraries, informational technology, faculty development, and course development, are also crucial to colleges and universities' success (Bennett & Law, 2021). Student services include admissions, financial aid, and student life/activities. Institutional support is another category and includes fiscal operations, executive management, long-term planning, and general operations of the institution; plant operations and maintenance have residence halls, academic buildings, and landscaping expenses. The higher education marketplace is a growing business, and its growth accounts for over $65 billion in annual revenue (Allen & Withey, 2017; Thompson et al., 2016).

Tuition Discount Rate

The tuition discount rate denotes the proportionate decrease in tuition and fees provided by an educational institution. This decrease is frequently offered through scholarships, grants, or other financial assistance that reduces the actual expense of attending the university. The tuition discount rate plays a crucial role in evaluating the cost of higher education for students and their families and affects the institution's financial aid budget and income. Comprehending the tuition discount rate is crucial for students and families contemplating enrolling in a specific college or university, as it offers valuable information about the financial aid provided to reduce the published tuition and fees (Lassila, 2010). Furthermore, the tuition discount rate in higher education institutions is vital in financial planning, enrollment management, and budgeting. This rate directly impacts the institution's net revenue and the demographic makeup of its student population.

A high tuition discount rate signifies a substantial decrease in the cost of education for students, typically leading to a reduced net price for families. In contrast, a low tuition discount rate indicates that the institution contributes a smaller proportion of the overall cost, which could lead to a higher net price for students. Higher education institutions proactively determine tuition discount rates to attract and retain a varied and highly skilled student population, meanwhile assuring financial stability. Colleges and universities must carefully balance economic aid with fiscal prudence to offer accessible education and efficiently manage resources.

Many studies address growing tuition discount rates for private institutions, such as The 2023 Tuition Discounting Study, Moody's Annual Tuition Pricing Survey, and College Board - Trends in College Pricing (Askin & Bothner, 2016; Kisgen, 2019; NACUBO, 2023; Pettit, 2018; Rine, 2019). Although tuition discounting was a strategy to enroll students before the fall semester, it has burdened the university in the long term, according to the article. (Carlson, 2020, December 11). The tuition discount rate in private colleges and universities is among the highest in higher education in the United States, resulting in tuition revenue (National Association of College and University Business Officers [NACUBO], 2023). Askin and Bothner's study (2016) revealed that colleges and universities that drop in rank are prone to increase tuition costs to become more attractive to students. Pricing models such as signaling theory, hedonic pricing models, and performance feedback have pricing models that use associate price as symbolic (Askin & Bothner, 2016). There is a positive correlation between price and quality or rank, according to Askin and Bother (2016). Evidence shows that tuition discounting has yet to be a successful management tool for private colleges. These authors note the first form of tuition discounting in the 1600s as donor-assisted a-need students at Harvard University (Behaunek & Gansemer-Topf, 2019). Some of the reasons for tuition discounting mentioned were enrollment management, enticing students for a particular skill they have, such as athletics and academic attributes, and diversifying the ethnic profile of the student body (Behaunek & Gansemer-Topf, 2019). According to Behaunek and Gansemer-Topf (2019), financial managers need to understand the effectiveness of their financial aid and tuition discounting practices for enrollment management. Carlson, S. (2020, December 11) of the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that the University of Scranton is a private master's institution with a 12 - 14 million dollar hit during the Pandemic (Carlson, 2020, December 11). The university seeks strategies to manage the tuition discount rate (Carlson, 2020, December 11).

Intersection of Private Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tuition Discounting, and Business Officers

As enrollment continues to be a principal goal for private institutions, led by demand and institutional mission statements, higher education administrators are vested in the registration growth of minority students. The tuition discount rate denotes the proportionate decrease in tuition and fees provided by an educational institution. This decrease is frequently delivered through scholarships, grants, or other financial assistance, decreasing the university's total expense. The tuition discount rate plays a crucial role in evaluating the affordability of higher education for students and their families, and it directly impacts the financial aid budget and income of the institution. A thorough comprehension of the tuition discount rate is crucial for students and families contemplating enrolling in a specific college or university. This information offers valuable insight into the financial aid options that can help reduce the overall cost of tuition and fees.

The tuition discount rate holds significant importance in financial planning, enrollment management, and budgeting in higher education institutions. This rate directly impacts the institution's net revenue and the demographic makeup of its student population. A significant tuition discount rate signifies a substantial decrease in student attendance expenses, frequently leading to a reduced net price for families. In contrast, a low tuition discount rate indicates that the institution only provides a smaller percentage of the overall cost, which may lead to a higher net price for students. Higher education institutions proactively establish tuition discount rates to recruit and retain a broad and highly skilled student population as they preserve financial stability. Leaders of colleges and universities must carefully combine economic aid with fiscal responsibility to provide accessible education and adequately manage resources. The convergence of tuition revenue and discounts in higher education is a crucial financial and strategic factor for schools and universities. This intersection entails the delicate equilibrium between the income derived from tuition fees and the consequences of offering tuition discounts on the institution's fiscal well-being and student enrollment. Tuition Revenue refers to the financial gain obtained by the school by collecting student tuition fees. It is a substantial financial resource for colleges and universities, supporting their operational budget, academic initiatives, student support services, and infrastructure expansion. The tuition discount reduces the officially stated tuition rate students obtain through scholarships, grants, or financial help. These reductions enhance the affordability of higher education for students by lowering a portion of the base tuition fee. The convergence of tuition revenue and discounts necessitates a delicate equilibrium between earning sufficient income to sustain the institution's operations and effectively regulating the discount rate to attract and keep a heterogeneous student population.

Institutions strive to maintain a tuition discount rate that is financially sustainable, appealing to prospective students, and competitive. An institution's financial resources can be strained if it offers excessive or unsustainable tuition discounts, harming its net tuition revenue. Hence, it is imperative to effectively manage the efficacy of tuition discounts to attract and retain students simultaneously ensuring a sustainable revenue stream from tuition fees. The convergence of tuition revenue and discounts is also linked to enrollment management tactics. Higher education institutions intentionally employ tuition discounts to influence enrollment decisions and mold the composition of the student body. Colleges and universities must carefully analyze the correlation between tuition income and discounts to enhance student affordability, maximize net tuition revenue, and efficiently distribute financial aid resources to align with their institutional missions and objectives. The convergence of tuition income and discounts exemplifies the intricate and tactical choices colleges and universities undertake to guarantee financial viability, accessibility, and student enrollment control. Colleges and universities consistently evaluate and improve their approaches to reducing tuition costs to strike a favorable equilibrium between earning income and offering financial aid to students.

Minority-serving institutions (MSIs), including many HBCUs, deliberately avoid tuition increases to not price potential students out of the market (Chicas-Mosier et al., 2023). Students enrolled in MSIs rely on financial aid due to a lack of resources; the institutions generally cannot offer institutional aid to their students (Chicas-Mosier et al., 2023). Earnest Barcey (2017) stated that HBCUs are the hardest financially hit than PWIs throughout history. Six authors of Southern University and A&M College, an HBCU in Baton Rouge, LA, highlight HBCUs' financial challenges and pertinence (Andrews, 2016). Some private HBCUs encounter additional financial strain facing closures and layoffs because they are tuition-dependent (Allen et al., 2018). Davis and Kimbrough (2018) noted that decreasing endowments, state funding, and the number of HBCUs created fiscal challenges for HBCUs. Behaunek and Gansemer-Topf (2019) suggested that if colleges and universities want to diversify, they must develop practical communication strategies to inspire them to apply. Behaunek and Gansemer-Topf's (2019) study showed that tuition discounting could be more sustainable, and private colleges must reevaluate their market and pricing.

Summary and Conclusions

From the literature findings, the history and contribution of private HBCUs, enrollment impact changes the management of higher education, and the financial impact of tuition discounting is known for private colleges and universities. The findings in the literature did not reveal the lived experiences of business managers or those managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs. Students have benefited from scholarships, grants, and various institutional discounts coupled with the opportunity to experience a diverse student body; however, less is known about how schools, mainly private HBCUs, manage discount rates from the experience of those managing the process. Based on the literature review, there is a literature gap in illuminating the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate. This knowledge may cultivate a stable discount rate, leading to positive social change.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of business managers and other employees managing the tuition discount rate in private HBCUs. NACUBO (2023b) demonstrated that business officers must strategically allocate resources and ensure education affordable. Although research addressed nonprivate HBCUs' experiences managing the tuition discount rate, the literature lacked accounts of the lived experiences of business managers and other employees of private HBCUs. The gap in the literature for the study shaped the following research question and guided the transcendental qualitative analysis: What are the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBUCs who manage the tuition discount rate?

In Chapter 3, I present the research design, rationale, and my researcher role. I also provide an in-depth description of the methodology for other researchers to model. The methodology section includes the logic of selecting participants, instrumentation and recruiting procedures, participation and data collection, and the data analysis plan. Following the methodology, I address trustworthiness issues including credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures. I also explain the practices used to protect the confidentiality of participants and ensure the moral integrity of the research. Chapter 3 concludes with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

Determining the appropriate methodology for this study was guided by the purpose of the study and the research question. Qualitative inquiry presents a narrative of what individuals or groups experience, giving meaning to their actions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This methodology in the current study aligned with the research question: What are the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBUCs who manage the tuition discount rate? I used phenomenological methodology because it allowed me to explore the lived experiences of business managers and other employees managing the tuition discount rate at private HBCUs. The phenomenological methodology approach was the research tradition that provided qualitative data to answer the research question. The research tradition for this study was qualitative, and the chosen design was transcendental phenomenology; other traditional methods and designs would have been less effective for this study.

Research Tradition

I chose the qualitative research tradition over quantitative, mixed methods, and multimethods because of the qualitative method's attributes and the study's goals. Qualitative research has exploratory capability and aims to find, characterize, or narrate people's actions in their unique surroundings about a topic under study (Alase, 2017; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016), qualitative research also entails identifying and characterizing people's interests and views in their unique, natural settings. Through the iterative qualitative research process, the scientific community can generate theory in the data collection phase and significant distinctions by getting closer to the issue under investigation or examination, leading to improved knowledge (Alase, 2017; Anafra & Mertz, 2015; Aspers & Corte, 2019). A natural and interpretive method for comprehending various world occurrences is provided by qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). A quantitative approach renders different outcomes than a qualitative approach.

Quantitative research fundamentally differs from quantitative research and has some advantages over qualitative research (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Like qualitative research, there are various subtypes of techniques, types of study, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques in quantitative research. A researcher can replicate quantitative research with standardized data collection protocols, have direct comparisons, and use a larger sample size than qualitative data, representing a more significant portion of the population (Babbie, 2016; Burkholder, 2016). Quantitative researchers assign numbers to examine the phenomenon under investigation; the researcher collects quantifiable data and performs computational, mathematical, and statistical techniques to understand a larger population. Quantitative researchers use an objective approach, whereas qualitative researchers use a subjective approach and depend on the respondents' perceptions or experiences expressed in words rather than numbers (Queirós et al., 2017; Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Quantitative research is conclusive, including measurable deductive data, and aims to confirm or test a theory or hypothesis; qualitative research is exploratory, including verbal, inductive data to form a hypothesis or theory (Barroga et al., 2023). The quantitative method is used to analyze a cause-and-effect relationship between variables; on the other hand, qualitative research aims to engage and discover various ideas about the phenomenon (Carminati, 2018; Trafimow, 2013). Quantitative researchers recommend a final course of action, whereas qualitative researchers develop an initial understanding of the data and the human experience (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Although the quantitative research tradition promises to deliver some truths about a phenomenon and has definitive attributes, it did not align with the current study's research goals, research question, sampling, data collection, or data analysis. This study was not concerned with the numerical perspective but with gaining an initial understanding of an area that needed more information. I used data from the respondents' perspective. There was a need for more research about the lived experiences of private HBCU employees managing the tuition discount rate; there was no theory or hypothesis to test; instead, there was a theory to develop. Because the goal of this study was to understand and explore a phenomenon, qualitative research was the more suitable approach.

Although a mixed-methods research tradition can address an exploratory research question, it was not chosen for this study because it did not align with the goals of the study. The mixed-methods research tradition includes explanatory, exploratory, and convergent research questions along with sequential explanatory, sequential exploratory, and concurrent, convergent mixed-methods designs, depending on the order of data collection (Kelle, 2008). A mixed-methods study differs from a multimethods approach; a mixed-methods approach answers the same question, and a multi-methods approach answers different questions. Mixed-methods and multimethods studies include quantitative and qualitative research traditions in collecting and analyzing data to investigate a phenomenon (Migiro & Magangi, 2011; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

The mixed-methods approach may increase the rigor beyond the single approach (Migiro & Magangi, 2011; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). Mixed methods may also add precision to the data collection if used concurrently (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017; Trafimow, 2013). However, mixed methods are costly and time-consuming, and a researcher must have an in-depth understanding of the two methodologies (Migiro & Magangi, 2011). The mixed-methods approach did not align with the research question in the current study. For transcendental phenomenological study, the research question calls for the researcher to be a stranger in a strange land; this is difficult to do when using a mixed-methods approach because triangularization can influence the interpretation of the data and requires a theory to test from the quantitative perspective. I did not include variables in the research question; therefore, a quantitative approach did not support the research purpose or the research question exploring a particular group's lived experience. Additionally, resources were limited to investigate the phenomenon with a mixed-methods approach; therefore, a mixed-methods approach was inappropriate for this study.

I chose the phenomenological approach over other qualitative research traditions; narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study would not have addressed this study's purpose and research question (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although the narrative approach explores the human experience, a narrative approach can help researchers interpret or tell a story, whereas phenomenological approaches investigate the essence of the lived experience (Aspers & Corte, 2021; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). I considered grounded theory because, like theory phenomenology, it focuses on real-world data; however, grounded theory aims to seek patterns to develop a theory, whereas phenomenology focuses on participants' lived experiences (Charmaz, 2006; Niasse, 2023; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The ethnographic approach was unsuitable for the current study because ethnography documents a group’s culture rather than individual lived experiences (Blommaert & Jie, 2020; Caulfield, 2023; O’Reilly, 2005). A case study approach, which would have allowed the development and exploration of a single or multiple case analysis, was considered but did not prioritize the lived experiences (see McCombes, 2023; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The goal of the current study was to explore participants’ lived experiences of a particular phenomenon using interviews to gain insights from the participants about their activities; therefore, phenomenology was the best fit for this research.

Research Design

I chose the transcendental phenomenological design because its definition, intended outcome, and suitability aligned with the study’s goals. Phenomenological research’s foundation is philosophy; it is the essence of something described by the respondent (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological researchers agree that phenomenology’s goal is to describe, not explain, lived experiences and generalize from an analysis limited to the experiences of the research participants (Finlay, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). The intended outcome of phenomenological research is to gain an experience, not a perception, of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Through an analysis of the lived experiences in the study, the truth is illuminated through the participants’ vivid descriptions, creating a meaningful named reality (Peoples, 2020). Transcendental phenomenology adds dimensions to the study of the human experience (Peoples, 2020).

Phenomenological research encompasses various methodologies and approaches (Finlay, 2009). Two main phenomenological branches of thought are rooted in philosophy: Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. Additional approaches to phenomenology have developed over time, such as interpretative phenomenological analysis or van Manen's phenomenology (van Manen, 2016). It is essential to understand the background of transcendental phenomenology to understand the reasoning and application of the strategy in the current study.

Husserl is the developer of phenomenology and influenced the transcendental phenomenological approach. Kant's subjective approach influenced Husserl; as a renowned philosopher and psychologist, Husserl moved toward transcendentalism around 1905 (Finlay, 2009; Husserl & Moran, 2012). Leipzig is noted as the founder of psychology as the science of consciousness (Giorgi et al., 2017); in 1879, Husserl introduced phenomenology as a science, calling it categorial intuition, believing a person could be objective with a transcendental attitude (Husserl & Moran, 2012). Husserl publicized in lectures that his phenomenology was explicitly transcendental and introduced the notions of the phenomenological epoché and reduction (Laverty, 2003). The method epoché, or "bracketing," developed around 1906. Bracketing is suspending beliefs about the phenomenon to see it clearly (Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 2016). I used a transcendental phenomenological approach because it focuses on lived experiences, and the goal of this study was to focus on the lived experience of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate (see Guenther, 2019). I used Husserlian techniques because they aligned with the research purpose, question, and intended outcomes.

In comparing transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenological approaches, I discovered specific characteristics that encouraged me to stay with the transcendental phenomenological research tradition. Edmund Husserl's transcendental approach employs bracketing, epoché, and phenomenological reduction to suspend versus eliminate biases. At the same time, Martin Hieddeger was a student of Husserl; his philosophy influenced the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to reject bracketing, which Hieddeger believed was insufficient (Laverty, 2003; Peoples, 2020). Hieddeger believed one's present experience or "horizon" could not be bracketed (Heidegger, 1962, p. 15). Husserl's aim was the phenomenon's essence, operating in the consciousness, thinking about or the "*noesis*" and the thing that is thought about, or the "*noema*" (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021; Peoples, 2020; Rassi & Shahabi, 2015). The hermeneutic phenomenological approach can include additional frameworks; however, transcendental phenomenological methods do not allow supplemental frameworks due to the phenomenon of intentionality (Husserl & Moran; Peoples, 2020). The hermeneutic phenomenological approach focuses on interpreting the experiences; conversely, the transcendental phenomenological approach describes the experience to get to the pure essence of the phenomenon and aligns with the research question, which drives the selection of the research design.

Role of the Researcher

In this qualitative study, I planned the design, observed the phenomenon, conducted interviews, gathered secondary data, took essential field notes, and transcribed, analyzed, and archived the data to gain insight into the social phenomenon (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018; Vagle, 2018). As the researcher, I was the primary instrument because of the participants' information from policy development and policy implementation interviews (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

My work and current research endeavors could have added implicit bias to the findings of the study; however, I used reflexivity and bracketing to manage biases in the data collection and analysis to improve the rigor in the study (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). As a professor at a private HBCU and a member of the National Association of African American Honors Programs (NAAAHP), which collaborates with various HBCUs, one of the institutions or universities may associate with a possible participant. Employing reflexivity allowed me to critically reflect on any biases and bracket them out to the participants' lived experiences.

Bracketing is a core concept within the transcendental phenomenological research design with three constructs: epoché or a phenomenological attitude, phenomenological psychological reduction, and transcendental phenomenological reduction (Dörfler & Stierand, 2021; van Kaam, 1966). Bracketing is a process that sets aside, not eliminates, biases and preconceived ideas to approach the data with an open mind (Peoples, 2020). Epoché or a phenomenological attitude, is the researcher refraining judgment; phenomenological psychological reduction brackets out everything but the subject, and transcendental phenomenological reduction is a radical version of epoché to understand the essence of the phenomena (Dörfler & Stierand, 2021; Husserl, 1936; Moran, 2000). I captured the phenomenon's essence using the transcendental phenomenological approach by suspending biases. I consciously set aside any ideas when engaging with transcripts to better understand the experience as lived without considering the researcher's interpretations to maintain the validity and credibility of the research.

Methodology

Research methodology includes procedures for researchers to address research problems (Creswell, 2009). Comprehensive understanding is achieved when researchers use methodologies to confront the phenomena (Chivanga & Monyai, 2021). This in-depth methodology section is a step-by-step notation to conduct the research. The methodology section includes the participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, and the analysis plan.

Participant Selection Logic

Participants

Qualitative research includes recruiting people with information to address the research topic (Peat et al., 2020). The criteria for participants in this study consisted of business officers and other employees with experience managing the tuition discount rate at a 4-year private HBCU. There are 101 to 112 HBCUs (depending on the source); the U.S. Department of Education recognizes 102 HBCUs, and 44 are 4-year, private not-for-profit HBCUs (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). The 44 private HBCUs recognized by the U.S. Department of Education are in the following territories: Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia; participants can potentially represent this population. The rationale for including all 44 private 4-year HBCUs was to increase the odds of a more exhaustive response to the research question. I excluded HBCUs that are 2-year, public, unrecognized by the U.S. Department of Education or closed. Specific parameters are necessary to have distinct types of people with diverse and essential perspectives regarding the topic of research included in the sample (Campbell et al., 2020).

Sampling Strategy

Four attributes informed the selection of the sampling strategy: the research question, access to the population, other transcendental phenomenological studies, and resources. This transcendental phenomenology study initially included two participant non-probability sampling strategies to recruit participants: purposive and snowball sampling. The purposive sample technique matched the participants to the purpose and objective of the research, thereby improving the rigor and trustworthiness of the data and analysis (Campbell et al., 2020; Denieffe, 2020; Mujere, 2016). The purposive sampling method was appropriate as the study required key informants from a scarce population with specific experiences and specialized knowledge. The research question includes those with specific experience managing tuition discount rates (Campbell et al., 2020; Min & Wilson, 2018). Snowball sampling could have allowed participants to refer others and reveal hidden samples to help me recruit participants with specific criteria in a scarce population like private HBCUs (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The snowball sampling could have possibly produced referrals to those who manage tuition discount rates. According to Thomas (2022), purposive and snowball sampling can save the researcher resources compared to other sampling techniques.

Sample Size

Exploring how business officers and other employees of private HBCUs describe their lived experiences managing the tuition discount requires a suitable sample size to represent the population. Qualitative research typically has a sample size of 10 participants (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). On the other hand, some scholars argue that smaller sample sizes produce richer information during the interview process (Guest et al., 2020). According to Bartholomew et al. (2021), the qualitative phenomenological research method does not suggest a formal sample size. Some researchers offer an informal, suitable sample size for phenomenology research based on the level of study and research assignment, at least three participants for a master's degree and three and six participants for a reasonable project in a Ph.D. program (Smith et al., 2009). According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), researchers have data saturation when they gather sufficient information regarding the phenomenon of interest or determine that further data is redundant. Data saturation is the point in data analysis when coding when no new codes occur in the data (Saunders et al., 2017). Although scholars do not offer a formal sample size for qualitative research, they point to data saturation to adequately understand the represented population (Paul, 2017; Vasileiou et al., 2018). Thematic saturation is repeating themes from interview data (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I initially planned to purposefully sample 5-10 or until the point of thematic data saturation.

Recruitment

Participants received a consent form and a copy of an interviewee screening questionnaire via email to ensure participants met the participant logic (see Appendix C). The screening questionnaire data were reviewed to determine each participant's eligibility for the study. Recruitment channels for this study was achieved via direct messaging, social media, LinkedIn, and messaging (see Appendix A and B). Social media is an appropriate medium to collaborate, collect information, share knowledge, and network with professionals. Additionally, internet users represent a 59% penetration rate, and social media users have a 49% penetration rate (Darko et al., 2022). Social media provides an appropriate medium for user connection and communication, information collection and dissemination, knowledge sharing, discussion, and collaboration with communities for professional networking and business purposes (Darko et al., 2022). LinkedIn is also an effective means to recruit professionals and start a natural network and snowball effect to access participants (Stokes et al., 2017).

Instrumentation

Every data collection method has its instrument of data collection; Yin (2016) believed that data provides the foundation of qualitative research, and that research is data. For qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting data (Alase, 2017; Crawford, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The instrumentation development for this study was based on the phenomenological research design to describe the participants' lived experiences. For phenomenological research, there is typically a combination of research instrumentation to discover the meaning of the experience and address any gaps, misinterpretations, or unclear data (Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2020). This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study's primary data collection tools were semistructured interviews, including follow-up interviews, audio recordings, video recordings, and journaling gathered by the researcher.

Interviewing is a standard data-gathering tool humans use in qualitative research to gain in-depth meaning in a research study (Philipps & Mrowczynski, 2021). Interviews are often used in qualitative research to understand others' experiences related to the phenomena, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of everyday experiences through a phenomenological approach (Philipps & Mrowczynski, 2021; Zahavi, 2018). I chose a semistructured interview protocol for this study because this protocol guides the research, giving a balance between a natural and disciplined phenological study (Giorgi et al., 2017). According to Dr. Katarzyna Peoples (2020), a structured interview protocol may limit the ability of a researcher to deviate from specific content; a participant in the study may have unanticipated data to share that is relevant to the study. On the other hand, an unstructured interview may not address all relevant elements of the research topic; thus, a semistructured interview protocol fits a holistic approach (Peoples, 2020). Therefore, the participants were allowed to express themselves more clearly in a follow-up interview due to forgetfulness or inferior vocabulary, requiring further extrapolation (Kruger, 1988, p. 152). The data were analyzed until the meaning was evident from the participant (Giorgi et al., 2017).

All seven participants were asked six open-ended questions in one-on-one interviews; I conducted semistructured interviews to identify the business officers and other employees managing the tuition discount rate (see Appendix B). According to Singleton and Straits (2005), open-ended questions explore the phenomena of transcendental phenomenological studies with more depth. I used low-cost options to conduct the semistructured interview and transcribe data, including Zoom, a cloud-based video communications app. I gave participants an option for audio or written interviews if they wanted to opt out of a video conference interview.

The supporting central data collection instrument involved a semistructured interview guide and script I developed to answer the research question (see Appendix D). Responses to open-ended interview questions or phenomenological data were based on the modified van Kaam method of open-ended interview questions (Agustianingsih & Mahmudi, 2019; Ataro, 2020). According to various scholars, questions in an interview protocol should be consistent with the study's goal and produce relevant information from participants (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview guide helped initiate discussion topics and consistency and served as a conversational document (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2016). Questions in the interview guide were developed from other research scholars and research related to the study, framed using keywords such as describe, tell me about, what, or could you give me examples (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). An interview script aided me in an orderly process (Chan et al., 2015). Therefore, the formulation of the interview questions was informed by the literature on tuition discount rate management using open-ended questions.

Due to bracketing, it is unnecessary to journal as it may place bias on the phenomenon being studied (Peoples, 2020). Bracketing is necessary for transcendental studies; biases are suspended, taking nothing for granted. The process of bracketing allowed me to participate in the interview process without taking part in the interview for intersectionality from a constructionist view (Peoples, 2020: Windsong, 2018). This measure and bracketing ensured that findings were close to the participant's experience versus perspective (Chan et al., 2013). I used a journal to think about thinking versus recording biases or preunderstanding.

The interview process is critical for gathering participant data and interacting with subjects to generate data. The research emphasizes essential aspects of this phenomenon as it is lived and experienced. The interview process seeks probing questions (see Appendix D) and captures the essence of the participants' experience (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview process ensures meaningful responses come from the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Identifying those willing to participate in the qualitative study is vital to the data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Those meaningful responses can come from participants among a specific population with years of experience using purposive sampling from a target population (Mujere, 2016; Nelson, 2017).

After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved (IRB approval number 05-03-24-0563582) the data collection process (see Appendix A), a recruitment email invitation was sent to potential participants within the private HBCUs to conduct research. I purposively recruited business officers and other employees who experienced managing the tuition discount rate in private HBCUs who met the qualifying criteria via public websites, public directories, LinkedIn, social media, the researcher's professional network, or snowball sampling strategy. I first sent messages via LinkedIn or the organization's website and then sent follow-up emails inviting participants to the study (ss Appendix B). Participants received information regarding potential threats and benefits in a consent form for the study. Each participant was assigned a code (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7); the codes were used in the data analysis to protect identities. Although there was no formal range for the number of interviews for a phenomenological study, Tracy (2019) recommends a minimum of five participants. I continued my recruiting process until there were 5-10 participants or the point of data saturation.

The critical data collection methods for this study were the initial individual interviews, follow-up interviews, and my observations. I collected the data for this research study as the researcher. To understand the meaning of each participant's response, I collected the data through semistructured interviews to obtain rich data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In phenomenological research, semistructured interviews allow for methodological spontaneity (Giorgi et al., 2017). A structured interview would have been too constricting and may not meet the goal of this study; conversely an unstructured interview may lack the guidance needed to gain a consistent and deep understanding of the data, a semistructured interview allowed the balance of guidance and flexibility (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For transcendental phenomenological research, questions only included probes about the experience, not the participants' feelings, thoughts, or perceptions; however, most of the participants in this study offered their thoughts and feelings to describe their experience managing the tuition discount rate at a private HBCU.

I was mindful of the participants' schedules when planning the interviews. I planned to schedule 2-3 interviews in 2 weeks. Keeping the participants' time in mind, I was flexible, allowing participants to schedule on the weekend. I anticipated a 45-minute to 1-hour interview; phenomenological research requires extended interviews for data descriptions (Hoffding & Martiny, 2016). This time would include questions from the participants and follow-up questions from myself as the researcher. Using the epoché or bracketing process, I suspended all biases, prejudice, and preconceived ideas to clearly understand the phenomenon (Bevan, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). I planned for follow-up interviews to fill the gaps, allowing each participant to complete the narrative so I could capture the true essence of the lived experience (Giorgi, 1985).

I conducted interviews via a cloud-based video communications app, Zoom. I allowed for alternative interview mediums, such as a telephone or written interview via email, if technical occurred or a participant opted out of a video conference interview during the interview process. I recorded the interview using the transcript feature in Zoom; the feature in Zoom captured a verbatim transcript of each interview unless the participant opted out of a recording. I provided the participant with a copy of the transcript within 72 hours to validate the data exchange, known as member checking.

The member checking or respondent validation strategy allowed for the accuracy and validity of the data exchange and fostered a valid record of the qualitative interview (Madill & Sullivan, 2018). Member checking is a tool, philosophy, technique, and process to ensure the validation of my findings. Member checking is intended for qualitative research designs involving a verbal interview. Member checking confirms the accuracy and cross-checks the information exchange between each participant, allowing a participant to expand or minimize a response. Mero-Jaffe (2011) recommended maintaining ethical procedures in qualitative research. I requested each participant to approve their responses after data analysis and make edits within two days, not including weekends, of reviewing the data analysis summary, excluding weekends (see Appendix F). If a participant did not respond, they agreed with the analysis. This procedure assured the member checking validation strategy to enhance the trustworthiness of the finance and, indeed, echo the participant's voice and significantly reduce bias.

Using Moustakas's (1994) guidance, I conducted the interviews, starting with a casual social conversation to ease tension and create a relaxing and trusting atmosphere. I prompted the participant with an introductory question to resolve possible pre-interview stress, requiring them to reflect on their experience as the manager of the tuition discount rate at a private HBCU. In the exit strategy of the interview process, I emphasized the participants' objectives, protocols, and procedures to allow them to feel comfortable sharing information.

Data Analysis Plan

A data analysis plan is essential in qualitative analysis because it conveys the order of the data collection process to others (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The data analysis plan includes participants' analysis in a step-by-step plan to collect and provide logical answers to the research question in the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Data analysis involves deconstruction, whereas phenomenological inquiries seek to analyze the phenomena as a whole; the data analysis plan describes an investigation of the phenomena (Hycner, 1999, p. 161; Peoples, 2020). A key tenant of transcendental phenomenological research focuses on describing the experiences as lived by the subjects via epoché (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Moustakas, 1994; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Descriptive themes emerged from the data collection, including the essence and meaning of participants' lived experiences (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This data analysis plan consisted of the data types, instruments, coding procedures, possible software used in the analysis, and the treatment of discrepant participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data were collected from interviews, sorting and labeling interview transcripts, identifying significant statements in the transcripts, clustering statements by thematic labels, eliminating irrelevant themes, synthesizing themes, and finally, interpreting the data. A general flow of data analysis was used for each participant's responses in the study. I read the entire transcript and removed nonessential language (um, you, well, etc.). I then generated preliminary final meaning units for each interview question. After this step, I reflected on the meaning units and bracketed or suspended any biases, prejudice, or preconceived ideas so that the phenomenon clearly understood the participants' experience (Bevan, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). I then synthesized the final meaning units and categorized them into narratives for each participant. Next, I synthesized all significant themes for each participant. From these themes, I generated a general description of each question. The specific data analysis plan involved phenomenological reduction and imagination variation to reach the essence of the experience as lived by each participant.

The data analysis method planned for this research study was the modified van Kaam method of analyzing phenomenological data (Moustakas, 1994). Developed by Adrian L. van Kaam, the van Kaam method is a qualitative data analysis technique commonly associated with transcendental phenomenological studies (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022). Clark Moustakas developed the Modified van Kaam method, also known as the van Kaam Modified approach, which requires careful analysis of each interview and analyzing it to find the horizon in the experience (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022; Moustakas, 1994). After the interviews, the transcribed statements and quotes were reduced to expressions and thematic labels. Seven steps are in the Modified van Kaam method; the first five involve the phenomenological reduction phase, Steps 6-7 concern the imagination variation phase, and Step 7 reaches the phase that reaches the essence of the research (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022; Moustakas, 1994).

1. Horizonalization: In this step, I identified all expressions from the interviews and treated them equally by listing and grouping them (Moustakas, 1994).
2. Reduction and elimination: In this step, I eliminated quotes from interviews that are not essential to the participant's experience and are irrelevant to the overall meaning of the study (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022; Moustakas, 1994).
3. Clustering and thematizing: In this step, I grouped expressions into thematic clusters and thematic labels to identify and represent the core experience of each participant (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022; Moustakas, 1994).

4. Application and validation: In this step, the researcher validates and checks the themes from Step 3 and discards them if they do not support the overall thematic labels (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022; Moustakas, 1994).
5. Create individual textural descriptions: In this step, I crafted individual textural descriptions of the participants' lived experience using the validated invariant constituents (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022; Moustakas, 1994).
6. Construct composite structural descriptions: In this step, I created individual structural descriptions; any identified common themes (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022; Moustakas, 1994).
7. Synthesize the texture and structure of an expression: In this step, I synthesized the essence of each participant's lived experiences (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022; Moustakas, 1994).

I thoroughly followed the seven-step Modified van Kaam data analysis method and applied it to participant data (Sullivan & Bhattacharya, 2017). The data analysis plan answered one research question: What are the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBUCs who manage the tuition discount rate?

Coding

Coding is essential to qualitative research, allowing the researcher to collect, consolidate, reduce, and interpret data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Williams & Moser, 2019). Codes represent words, phrases, quotes, or comments that a researcher assigns during the data collection for further meaning (Saldaña, 2015). Coding manages data by categorizing and thematically sorting the interview data (Williams & Moser, 2019).

Coding in this study began with the Modified van Kaam data analysis method after producing a transcript and field notes (Moustakas, 1994). A transcript can be coded line-by-line, has an accurate written record, and can be coded with or without software (Craig et al., 2021). The Modified van Kaam data analysis method includes thematic labels that give meaning to the phenomena. When I developed the codes, I managed a codebook with descriptions to support the trustworthiness and rigor of the collected data (Rogers, 2018).

Software

I did not utilize computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to support this data analysis plan. Many scholars agree that CAQDAS helps organize large qualitative data sets (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Other advantages are the efficiency and transparency of the data (Vignato et al., 2021). However, some phenomenologists agree that researchers should become familiar with the interview text in phenomenological studies, and CAQDAS limits that engagement (Peoples, 2020). Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software has disadvantages, such as a heavy emphasis on coding rather than data analysis and time to learn the system for less experienced qualitative researchers (Maher et al., 2018; Vignato et al., 2021). There is also the potential to inhibit adaptive reasoning when using CAQDAS (Moustakas', 1994; van Manen, 2014). For these reasons, I hand-coded the data collected from the Modified van Kaam method; it may allow me to navigate complex elements of analyzing data with control during the data analysis process (Saldaña, 2013).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is associated with the truth value of the data, analysis, and interpretation of the data gathered from participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Amin et al. (2020), trustworthiness ensures the quality and rigor of qualitative research so that the findings are worthy of attention. Qualitative research has received criticisms using personal impressions, a lack of reproducibility, and a lack of generalization aspects. The rigor of the research process is related to the quality of qualitative data; therefore, it is essential to validate the integrity of the data collected (Amin et al., 2020; Hadi & Closs, 2016). As proposed by leaders in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1895), truth value in qualitative research is explained using four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The Lincoln and Guba criterion and ethical procedures in the study addressed issues with trustworthiness in this study.

Credibility

Credibility is the accuracy of the findings, according to participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1895). Credibility is an attempt to assess to others that the research reflects the participants' message and not the researcher's message (Shenton, 2004). The appropriate strategy I used to establish credibility in this study included member checks. The only data source gathered in this transcendental phenomenological study is interviews, and credibility was based on accurately reflecting the participants' lived experiences.

Member checking is a strategy to guarantee the internal validity of the data gathered in qualitative research and deepen the dialog with respondents, allowing participants to review the researcher's interpretation of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1895; Motulsky, 2021). I asked participants for feedback to confirm that the researcher themed the responses correctly, based on the researcher's interpretation of the interview responses, thereby testing the veracity with stakeholders of the study (Birt et al., 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1895). Member checking via a document or follow-up email is the most straightforward way to validate the participants' experiences (Birt et al., 2016). I noted any disagreements with thematic labels from member checking and made appropriate updates. During interviews, there were follow-up questions to clarify the understanding of the lived experiences of each participant (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

Transferability is the external validation of the findings; it refers to the application of the research in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1895; Treharne & Riggs, 2015). I explained the behavior and context of the research, so it is meaningful to the external reader. The appropriate strategies I used to establish transferability were thick descriptions and rich, detailed descriptives such as the clinical characteristics, exclusion criteria, interview j, interview guide, sample size, sample strategy, and setting to give context to how the research was conducted for applicability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The idea was to give enough detail to permit future researchers to model the findings. The external reader will ultimately judge transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). With thick and rich information, the findings from the study can go beyond the research sample and be generalized for the population it represents, in this case, business officers and other employees at private HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate (Shkedi, 2019).

Dependability

Dependability, also known as consistency, is the trust in trustworthiness due to the reliability and objectivity of the data in this study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability for this study is an audit trail of the documentation, data reduction, and synthesis. The appropriate strategy I used was a detailed record of methodology in the data collection process for the audit trail so similar findings can be duplicated (Forero et al., 2018; Miles et al., 2014). An in-depth description of the participants' lived experience was documented for dependability. Dependability explicitly describes the researcher's lens.

Confirmability

The fourth criterion in Lincoln and Guba's (1895) trustworthiness framework for qualitative research is conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1895). Confirmability relates to the researcher's ability to get close to the objective reality of the findings without bias (Forero et al., 2018; Stahl & King, 2020). The appropriate strategy I used to meet conformability is reflective journaling and bracketing to achieve reliability and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1895; Stahl & King, 2020). Hurrsel's bracketing enables the researcher to reduce preconceptions about the phenomena, suspending all biases temporarily, and reflective journaling allows the researcher to note those biases (Peolples, 2020; Stahl & King, 2020). The transcendental phenomenological researcher also seeks the lived experiences of the participants and not their thoughts and feelings; this can be noted in reflective journaling and data analysis, verifying that data is derived from the data (Nowell et al., 2017).

Ethical Procedures

Ensuring the well-being and safety of study participants is crucial when handling qualitative data (Elliott & Resnik, 2019). The phenomenological transcendental technique for this study captures participants' lived experiences concerning a particular phenomenon using "think" descriptions. I was the sole collector of the research and kept it confidential to protect the participants' privacy (Ross et al., 2018). As a qualitative researcher, I adhered to ethical conduct consisting of informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy of participants with integrity to protect their privacy (Kang & Hwang, 2021). I complied with Walden University Institutional Review Board's (IRB) ethical standards, requirements, and United States federal regulations that protect humans in the research process (Antes et al., 2018). After receiving IRB approval (IRB approval number 05-03-24-0563582), I followed the subsequent ethical procedures for the research study:

- Each willing participant was given an identifying number (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7) and asked to reply "I Consent" in an email after reading the consent form for volunteering to participate in the research study and have results published in the form of a student dissertation.
- Voluntary participants were informed of the overall design of the study, its specific protocols, and all IRB rules—including those about rights, data storage, and participant identity.
- I addressed ethical concerns related to data collection intervention activities by informing voluntary participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. I addressed ethical concerns related to data collection

intervention activities by informing voluntary participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

- I addressed ethical concerns related to recruitment materials by incorporating Walden University's policy. Per Walden University's policy, all hard-copied research data, notes, and interviews were locked in a home office storage and destroyed after five years. To protect confidential data, I have password-protected all electronic data on a complex/drive and plan to destroy the data after five years. I am the only person who knows the password to the data. Deleting identifying information fulfills the commitment to protect the identity of volunteer participants (Babbie, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I addressed other potential ethical issues by disclosing my affiliation to a private HBCU as a former student who has received a tuition discount and an employee of an HBCU. Any biases were bracketed during bracketing or epoché to arrive at the essence of the voluntary participant's lived experiences of managing the tuition discount rate at a private HBCU (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, member checking, thick and rich detailed descriptions from the interviews, and reflective journaling were used to establish the trustworthiness of the qualitative transcendental findings.

Summary

This chapter presents the study and research methodology that aligns with the overall research goals and answers the research question. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological research approach was applied to describe the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate. The goal of this chapter was to expose the research process to find the true essence of the participant's experience so that readers can trust the findings, other stakeholders can apply the results in similar contexts, and future researchers can duplicate the study. This chapter specifically addressed the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodology, and issues with trustworthiness.

The research design and rationale for the phenomenological approach were chosen over quantitative, mixed-methods, and other qualitative research traditions such as narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study because they did not address the study's purpose and central research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, a phenomenological approach described the experience of those associated with the phenomena. Transcendental phenomenological was chosen over the hermeneutic approach because of the ability to suspend bias temporarily using the bracketing or epoché process. I used a semistructured interview, as it provided a balance of information, allowing disciplined guidance through prepared questions and spontaneity if the participant has additional information relevant to the research (Giorgi, 1985; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The role of the researcher is to plan the data collection process, collect the data, analyze, and store the data that meets the research and design protocol in an ethical.

The methodology portion of the chapter established the participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data, and collection plan. Participants were recruited from private HBCUs; the employees had experience managing or working with the tuition discount rate. LinkedIn and other professional platforms were used to recruit participants. The sampling strategy included both purposive and snowball sampling. I required a sample size of 5-10 or until the point of thematic data saturation; no formal sample size has been established for transcendental phenomenological studies. However, guidance is given from other scholars and similar studies (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The main instrument of any qualitative study is the is me as the researcher, and semistructured interviews and follow-up interviews were used to collect data to analyze findings (Alase, 2017; Crawford, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I incorporated reflective journaling in the bracketing process to suspend biases or personal perspectives during the data analysis process.

Procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection involved the collection of open-ended questions appropriate for transcendental phenomenological studies to capture the essence of the participants' lived experiences. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the data collection plan was be applied using the seven steps in the Modified van Kaam method, which includes thematic labeling that can be understood and reproduced by other researchers conducting a similar study. The data in this study was hand-coded to become engaged with the data, taking nothing for granted from the data collection process.

I used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) creation to manage issues with trustworthiness involving credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Member checks were made to ensure the participants' experience is reflected in the findings, a form of internal validation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick and rich descriptions were also used to establish transferability and similar thematic labels to port and understand in similar contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1895; Treharne & Riggs, 2015; Shkedi, 2019). I illustrated this by keeping an audit trail of all the data to account for the naturally occurring phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I also used conformability to establish the rigor of the qualitative study using reflective journaling for the bracketing process, or epoché, to reach the true essence of the experiences as lived by the participants (Peoples, 2020). Finally, I addressed ethical procedures for the well-being and safety of the voluntary participants and the application of Walden University's IRB procedures and certification. I will discuss the data collected and analyzed using the methodology and application of trustworthiness from Chapter 3 in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

In Chapter 4, I explain the data collection process, data analysis process, and interpretation of my findings. Chapter 4 includes the seven research participants' thick and rich perspectives, highlighting their lived experiences of managing the tuition discount rate in private HBCUs. In this transcendental phenomenological study, I explored the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate to provide management strategies. This approach allowed me to explore and describe the human experiences of seven participants related to the phenomenon by arriving at the essence of each participant's experiences (Peoples, 2020). I conducted this study to extend the literature and explore of the lived experiences of business officers and others managing the tuition discount of private HBCUs.

The data collected from this transcendental phenomenological study allowed me to uncover six themes organized into four categories. The seven participants in the study had experience managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs. The gap in the literature for the study shaped the following research question and guided the transcendental qualitative analysis: What are the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBUCs who manage the tuition discount rate?

In Chapter 4, I first discuss the recruitment and research setting. Secondly, I describe the inclusion criteria for participation in the study. After that, I discuss data collection. Next, I share my data analysis process and the evidence of the trustworthiness of this study, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Finally, I present findings from the study and provide a summary to conclude Chapter 4.

Recruitment

Data collection activities commenced after obtaining IRB approval from Walden University's to conduct the study on Monday, May 3, 2024. Participants for the study were selected from 4-year HBCUs. The data collected for the study emerged from seven semistructured interviews. Because the participants were dispersed across the United States, I conducted the interviews via Zoom meetings, phone, or email exchange. Zoom semistructured interviews had an average length of 23 minutes. Six semistructured interviews took place using Zoom, and one interview was facilitated via Walden email exchange due to the communication challenges of one participant.

I recruited 13 participants from private HBCUs, but only seven participants completed interviews. After receiving this notification from Walden's IRB, I searched private, 4-year HBCU leadership of the president's cabinet and within the administration including but not limited to chief business officer, chief executive officer or president, chief of staff, director of operations, director or associate director of enrollment, director or associate director of financial aid, and provost. I used emails, social media, and word of mouth to recruit participants.

The emails (see Appendix A) were sent from my Walden University email account. At the same time, the social media invitations were sent from my personal Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn (see Appendix B) accounts (see Stokes et al., 2017). I gathered contact information from potential volunteers, which was publicly available on the institution’s website and some social media profiles. Some leaders of private HBCUs agreed to forward the social media invitations to additional participants if they did not meet the requirements to participate in the study; this was permitted because I included both purposive and snowball sampling as a tool in my IRB application. The email invitation provided additional information such as a subject line, an email message explaining the aim of the study, two bullet points summarizing the duration of the semistructured interview, and specifics on privacy requirements and contact information. The social media invitation included an image and caption to capture the participant’s attention. Additionally, two bullet points summarized the length of the semistructured interview and presented a statement about privacy concerns and participation requirements. Lastly, I provided my Walden email address for interested participants or those requiring additional information.

I shared the emails and social media invitations with over 100 potential participants from Monday, May 7, 2024, to Saturday, May 31, 2024, a week after IRB approval. I used the first week to gather contact information. The data collection phase began Monday, May 13, 2024, with individual, virtual, semistructured face-to-face interviews via Zoom. Many prospective participants replied to the email stating that they had scheduling issues due to conflicts with the May and June commencement, vacations, or the end of the fiscal year preparation period, which was June 30, 2024, for most private HBCUs. A few prospective participants replied that they did not meet the requirements to participate in the study. A total of 13 private HBCU leaders agreed to participate in the study; however, six were excluded from the study because they had scheduling conflicts within the data collection period after multiple reschedules. There were seven participants in the final study. Three participants were recruited using social media invitations, specifically LinkedIn. The other four participants were recruited via email. The participants responded to my invitation by replying to my email or social media invitations.

After potential participants expressed their willingness, availability, and additional contact information with me, I confirmed their inclusion criteria to participate in the study. I shared the consent form, which formally invited them to the study, and gave additional details about the number of participants I was seeking, the study's purpose, procedures, risks and benefits, and sample interview questions. I also described the voluntary nature of the study and the nature and potential risks of the study. Additionally, I informed the potential participants that they would not receive payment for participating. I addressed their privacy and provided a phone number to Walden University's research participant advocates along with my contact information. Lastly, I provided details on consent and the right to opt out of the study at any time.

Table 3 presents the recruitment efforts in relation to each willing participant during the data collection period. Initially, 13 potential participants expressed their willingness to participate in the study. Seven of the 13 potential participants completed the interview process, resulting in thick and rich detailed descriptions.

Table 3

Recruitment of Participants

	Participant												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Willing participants during data collection phase	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Excluded from the study due to schedule								x	x	x	x	x	x
Scheduled an interview	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Confirmed inclusion criteria	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Consented to the study	x	x	x	x	x	x	x						
Responded to interview questions	x	x	x	x	x	x	x						
Face-to-face interview via Zoom	x	x	x		x	x	x						
Email interview				x									
Agreed to a video recording	x	x	x		x	x	x						
*Opted out of the recording						x	x						
Edited member checking email for validity	x				x		x						
No edits during member checking		x	x	x		x							

Note. P1 through P13 = a code to de-identify participants. P1 through P7 participated in the study.

Research Setting

Personal and organizational conditions, such as interview platform, timing within the higher education calendar, and schedules for leaders in higher education, could have influenced the participant's experiences at the time of the study, which may have influenced the interpretation of the study results. The study was conducted via Zoom. I was in the state of Alabama, and the participants were in their respective states; no participants were from the same state. I conducted the study at the end of the spring semester for some private HBCUs, at the beginning of the summer semester, and at the height of commencement season for prospective graduates of private HBCUs. Scheduling interviews with participants during this time frame required flexibility. Initially, I planned to recruit five to 10 participants for this study. I was able to recruit 13 participants but included seven participants.

After determining the participants met the study's requirements and consented to the study, I scheduled an individual face-to-face interview via Zoom. Two of the participants met me on Zoom from their home office because they were working from home, allowing them to feel comfortable in their settings during the interview process. The others met me from their offices, enlisting the help of their administrative assistants. No participants reported any levels of distress before, during, or after our times of contact; therefore, I assumed the participants' comfort levels in their surroundings allowed me to collect thick and rich detailed descriptions of their shared lived experiences. The seven participants communicated via email a convenient time for the interview. The participants did not communicate, verbally or nonverbally, distress before, during, or after our interactions. As a result, I presumed that the participants' comfort in their environments enabled me to gather detailed and comprehensive descriptions of their lived experiences. The participants' responses were detailed and precise. The fourth participant asked me to email all questions and reported an inability to speak clearly due to health issues during our interview time and did not believe a Zoom recording was appropriate; I accommodated the participant's inability to speak and agreed to the request because member checking was included in my validation strategy to confirm the accuracy of the data.

Inclusion Criteria

To ensure confidentiality and protect participants' privacy, I did not include specific demographics in this study, such as level of education, age, gender, or role in the HBCU. Additionally, the purpose of my research, research question, methodology, interview questions, and framework did not require participant demographics to capture the lived experiences of each participant. I included an inclusion criteria questionnaire on the social media posts, email, consent form, and additional form during the interview (see Appendix C).

If the participants met the criteria, we continued with the interview process. No participants were employed at the same institution during the data collection period. No participant had the same job title, although they had similar roles and were all in leadership positions. All participants met the inclusion criteria for participation in the study. The planned recruitment strategy was straightforward: I invited each participant, who agreed to participate by responding to my Walden University email or LinkedIn message. I then confirmed the inclusion criteria, shared the consent form, received the consent form, and scheduled the interview meeting. After scheduling the interview, I sent a link to the participant with the date, time, time zone, and link and included the interview guide (see Appendix E).

Data Collection

The number of participants from whom the data were collected for this study was seven. Originally, the intent was to use purposive sampling and move to snowball sampling if additional participants were needed, but this proved unnecessary. The number of participants in a phenomenological study can range from five to 25 or until point of data saturation, which is reached when no further codes are attained that align with the study (Paul, 2017; Saunders et al., 2017). I intended to interview five to 10 individuals, but after five semistructured interviews, the data from the participants' lived experiences became redundant. Two additional interviews were conducted to ensure that data saturation had been reached.

I conducted individual face-to-face semistructured recorded interviews with six of seven of the participants. I conducted one interview via email change from my Walden email account due to a participant's inability to speak clearly due to health issues during our interview time. Seven semistructured interviews were conducted using two mediums: Zoom conferencing for Participants 1 through 3 and Participants 5-7; I conducted Participant 4's interview via email. Each face-to-face Zoom interview took place from my home or work office, conducted in privacy to align with each participant's time zone and schedule. Additionally, each Participant chooses their location to participate in the individual, virtual, and semistructured to minimize background noise and protect the respondent's privacy. The individual, semistructured, face-to-face, and semistructured interviews ranging from 15 to 30 minutes, had an average interview time of 23 minutes.

The six semistructured interviews that were recorded via Zoom included features that provided both the host and the guest options, such as but not limited to opting out of the recording, disabling video, muting the microphone, transcribing the interview, sharing the screen, and chatting. The Zoom features for recording assisted with privacy and accuracy in data collection. After I confirmed the Participant consented, I reviewed the interview guide to introduce myself and provide an introductory protocol for a qualitative phenomenological interview, ensuring their privacy and letting recorded participants know they had a right to opt out of the study at any time (see Appendix E). I began the recording, starting with the first interview question. Zoom allows users to agree or disagree with the recording. A transcript automatically generates a file if the feature is selected on Zoom and each Participant agrees to a recording. I used Zoom speech recognition software to record a meeting transcript; however, two opted out of the recording. Each Zoom participant had an option not to share their face; however, all but one Participant shared their face during the recording. I shared my face and screen with the six interview questions during the Zoom interviews. As the Participant spoke, I muted my microphone to minimize the noise during the transcription. I would unmute to read each question. I then stopped the recording, thanked each Participant for contributing to the research, and informed them about the following steps: a member checking email and a summary of the study upon the finished and completed dissertation. I then ended the Zoom.

One of the seven interviews was performed via email. We corresponded through LinkedIn emails, initially arranging a Zoom interview. The participant was rescheduled and requested not to talk during our interview. The Participant solicited an exchange over email. I accommodated the Participant owing to their incapacity to communicate during the interview. The planned method for data collection is expressed in Chapter 3 under the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection plan allows for an email, phone, or virtual exchange.

There were no variations from the data plan, and other mediums of interviews were acknowledged to accommodate participants. Participants 6 and 7's interview recordings were partially cut off, and the transcript was not captured. An error may have caused the cut-off video during the download process, or the Participant opted out of the recording, which the Participant had a right to do. I shared my notes during the member checking validation strategy, and responses were approved or edited during the member checking, a strategy for validating the data that was not a variation from the data collection plan in Chapter 3.

After each interview, I sent a transcription within 72 hours, not counting weekends and holidays. I reviewed each voice recording and downloaded a copy of each transcript into a Microsoft Word document. I made minimal edits to the transcripts to de-identify each Participant; I replaced their Zoom names with one name. I also added their responses in bold and changed the font color of my questions to gray to highlight their responses. To preserve the natural flow of the conversation, I did not edit the participants' grammar. I individually sent a transcript to each fully recording Participant and a Member Checking email (see Appendix F), thanking them once again and asking each Participant not to update grammar and style and check the comments. Each Participant had 48 hours, except weekends, to respond. I explained to the member checking email that if they agreed, they did not have to answer; however, four of the seven responded with feedback or minimal edits. One Participant did not respond; another sent responses directly and did not require member checking for validation.

Participants 1 through 3 were the only straightforward meetings; the remaining four interviews had one of the four additional layers: additional follow-ups, rescheduling, discussions with administrative staff, or a request for me to read the consent form to them (Table 2). Although there were further steps to capture the rigorous thought and rich information, I appreciate all seven lived experiences shared to add to the literature of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate. Certain comments were direct, but others were exceedingly comprehensive. All participants provided competent, reflective, and exhaustive responses to the interview questions. Basic background information was not required. However, I started the data collection with the first interview question, asking each Participant to share their typical day without sharing any proprietary information to warm up the conversation. As leaders, they shared information that was both enlightening and added value to the following five probing interview questions. I allowed each Participant to follow up with me if they had additional questions, and they offered me the same opportunity. Question 5 allowed each

Participant an opportunity to share their thoughts or feelings about the topic or any other concerns. They provided even more strategies for managing the tuition discount rate that I had not seen in the literature for private HBCUs at the time of this study.

Data Analysis

As a preliminary step, I created a sense of epoché by suspending biases and prejudgments using reflective journaling to understand the true essence of the phenomena and absorb experiential information analysis-free (Martirano, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; van Kaam, 1996, p. 259). During the data analysis, I moved inductively from coding units during phenomenological reduction to more extensive representations, including categories, themes, and general narratives, to arrive at the true essence of the phenomenon. Six themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) connection, communication, and collaboration; (b) enrollment and retention initiatives; (c) advanced data management and information systems; (d) comprehensive budget balancing; (e) diverse sources of financial support; and lastly; (f) diverse, high-performing, and empowered teams. These themes were further aligned against four main categories: (a) strategies; (b) challenges; (c) skills; and (d) resources. There was no apparent evidence of discrepant cases in qualitative research or instances where the seven participants' lived experiences significantly deviated from the overall emerging themes during the data analysis.

I described the phases, steps, specific codes or meaning units, categories, and themes that emerged from the data, using participant quotations to emphasize their importance. I finally described the qualities of semistructured interviews and how they were factored into the analysis. To understand the essence of the experiences of the Business Officers and other employees of private HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate, semistructured interviews were conducted to collect data. Face-to-face semistructured interviews allow researchers obtain concrete descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants (Giorgi et al., 2017; Peoples, 2020; Shenton, 2004).

The collection of data and careful analysis provide logical answers to the research question in the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I began the data analysis with the seven-step modified van Kaam method of analyzing phenomenological data, popularized by Moustakas (1994). I employed this approach as it aligned with transcendental phenomenology, and I anticipated several data pages from transcripts and field notes to bracket. I also utilized this method to identify descriptive themes related to the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBUCs who manage the tuition discount rate. The modified van Kaam method consisted of two phases: (Phase 1) phenomenological reduction and (Phase 2) the essence of the research. These phases included seven steps: (Step 1) horizontalization by listing and grouping, (Step 2) reduction and elimination, (Step 3) clustering and thematizing, (Step 4) application and validation, (Step 5) construction of textural descriptions, (Step 6) construction of themes, and (Step 7) synthesizing expressions (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022).

Before the data analysis process, I undertook the task of preparing and organizing the information efficiently. The transcriptions and notes were systematically arranged in a corresponding document and stored on my personal computer in a designated folder on the desktop. The documents included consent forms, video recordings, transcripts, and revised transcripts if a participant made edits during member checking. Next, I created a Microsoft Excel workbook to streamline the analysis; every step in the analysis process had a separate spreadsheet tab. I hand-coded the data, entitled the first data analysis tab, Step 1. The first row included the seven participants, and the first column represented the six interview questions. The corresponding cells included each Participant's responses to the interview questions. The phenomenological reduction phase includes the first five steps in the Modified van Kaam analysis method. Step 1, horizontalization, allowed the treatment of all the data equally without assigning greater importance to any quote or snippet over another. In Step 1, I initiated the preliminary categorization and categorizing process by compiling a comprehensive list of all quotes pertinent to the research. For this step, I reviewed the participants' responses, which I placed in the spreadsheet. I listened to the recordings and compared them to the transcriptions. During the comparison, I removed any language that did not relate to the study; for example, I removed terms like you know, um, etc. Next, I reread each line in the transcripts and approved edits. Regardless of its relevance to managing the tuition discount rate, I emphasized every quote.

In Step 2, reduction and elimination, I determined the invariant constituents by instances not explicitly expressed but were understood to be an integral component of the lived experiences based on the responses from the interviews that were selected. The Step 1 tab in the spreadsheet was duplicated and designated as Step 2. Subsequently, I engaged in the task of revisiting and scrutinizing each expression, followed by posing two inquiries: Is this expression essential for comprehending the participant's lived experience of the phenomenon, and can the expression be classified to reach the level of experience specified by van Kaam, known as the horizon? To avoid elimination, both responses must be affirmative. However, eliminated expressions could be considered for future research.

In Step 3, clustering and thematizing, I analyzed the underlying meanings of the data and organized expressions into theme groups (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022). The Step 2 tab in the spreadsheet was duplicated and designated as Step 3. I examined the expressions in Step 3 and deliberated on labels that would accurately convey the significance attributed by the Participant searching for themes. I modified the font color of each expression to match a likely corresponding theme cluster, ever Theme Cluster had a unique font color. As an example, the font colors of the theme clusters were medium blue for Theme Cluster 1, light blue for Theme Cluster 2, orange for Theme Cluster 3, and so on. The remaining expressions were edited to a light gray shade to emphasize the theme clusters. In addition, I created a key to accompany the respective theme clusters or invariant constituents.

In Step 4, application and validation, I reviewed and validated invariant constituents against the data and discarded themes that did not support the overall thematic labels. This was to ensure the themes represented the participants' experience. The Step 3 tab in the spreadsheet was duplicated and designated as Step 4. I queried my initial themes and meanings against the dataset. I reviewed my notes to avoid personal biases and considered my bracketed thoughts when classifying the themes. I evaluated the themes to determine if they were compatible with the research question and the lived experiences of the participants. During the theme audit, I reflected on each theme to ensure that they were essential to the phenomenon and could be explicitly expressed in the original transcripts, and if not, the meaning of the lived experiences of the participants to the phenomenon, without bias.

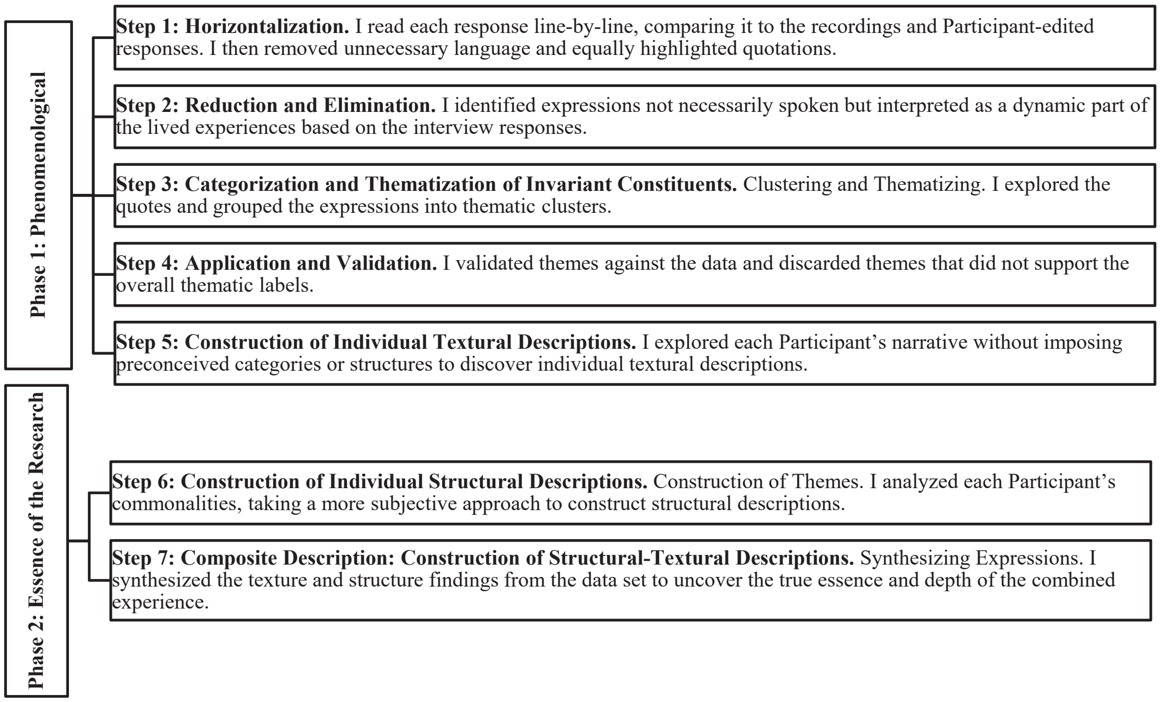
In Step 5, construction of individual textural description, I composed textural descriptions using verbatim text from the transcripts. I explored each Participant's narrative without imposing preconceived categories or structures to discover their textural descriptions and created a table of themes. I first added a new tab and labeled it Step 5; the first row represented the seven participants, and the first column represented the finalized themes from Step 4. The corresponding cells included an "x" if the Participant was associated with the theme. The themes were in order based on the number of "x" in the row, highest to lowest. I analyzed the Step 5 tab and listed the individual textural descriptions verbatim. Step 5 included objective components; however, Step 6 is subjective from the researcher's imagination.

The essence of the research phase includes Steps 6 and 7 of the Modified van Kaam analysis method. Step 6, construction of individual structural descriptions, the construction of the themes where each participant's emotional, social, and cultural commonalities are explored, taking a more subjective approach to construct structural descriptions solely based on the combined dataset and themes. I duplicated the Step 6 tab in the spreadsheet, inserted it into a new tab, and assigned it the label Step 7. Step 6 builds an individual abstract structural description of the experiences, looking for words like "I think," "I feel," "I believe," etc. I then analyzed possible meanings, adopting different perspectives of the phenomenon, resulting in individual textural descriptions and imaginative variation.

In Step 7, composite description: construction of structural-textural description, I synthesized the texture and structure of Steps 5 and 6. I copied the Step 6 tab in the spreadsheet, pasted it into a new tab, and labeled it Step 7. Step 7 is a fundamental amalgamation of Steps 5 and 6, providing a comprehensive depiction of the core of each participant's personal encounter. I authenticate the identity of important elements by comparing them to real-life experiences that are profound and meaningful.

Figure 1

Data Analysis Flow Chart



The general image above illustrates the general flow of data analysis. Using the seven-step Modified van Kaam method, the analysis for this transcendental study, I organized the data and arrived at the true essence of the phenomenon for the seven participants based on their semistructured interviews (Galinha-De-Sá & Velez, 2022; Moustakas, 1994).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

In qualitative research, establishing trustworthiness is paramount to ensure the credibility and validity of the study findings. I reached data saturation and used member-checking to ensure the research findings were credible. I initially sought to include 5-10 interviews until the point of data saturation and no new data appeared (Saunders et al., 2017). After seven interviews, no new codes emerged from the interview transcripts; themes became repetitive. After reaching data saturation, I comprehensively explored the research topic, business officers and employees of private HBCUs: managing the tuition discount rate, a transcendental phenomenological study. I captured a diverse range of perspectives and experiences; every Participant met the requirements for the study; all participants represented a different state, and no participant had experience from the same private HBCU; the dataset represented a rich and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

I used a transcendental phenomenological methodology for this study; therefore, I did not use triangularization as evidence of trustworthiness, as additional sources of information could influence the interpretation of the data (Peoples, 2020). I did, however, use member-checking. The member-checking technique is a fundamental strategy to enhance trustworthiness by validating the accuracy and authenticity of the research outcomes. Through member-checking, each Participant received a Member Checking email (see Appendix F) transcript and or field notes with an opportunity to actively review, clarify any misunderstandings, offer insights, verify, and provide feedback on the research data collection, ensuring the data set represented their lived experiences with accuracy. By using member checking, I could emphasize a participant-centered research environment, sustain the rigor in data, and enhance credibility, strengthening the study's trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1895; Motulsky, 2021).

Transferability

This study includes rich and thick descriptions of the research process, participants' experiences, and the study outcomes to facilitate the transferability of the study results to similar settings. According to Patton (2015), transferability supplies information on the study that can be interpreted similarly between studies to which findings are transferred. The framework was comprehensive and clear to ensure transferability for understanding the research context and participants' experiences, such as exclusion criteria, interview procedures, interview guide, sample size, sample strategy, and setting to give context to how the research was conducted for applicability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Additionally, the transferability of this study was improved by thoroughly describing the research background and assumptions. I used direct email and social media to recruit participants who possibly met the study's requirements and were willing to describe their lived experiences. The participants were business officers and other employees with experience managing tuition discount rates at private HBCUs. Detailed demographics were not shared to protect the leader's privacy. However, thick and rich detailed descriptions of the phenomenon were shared in this research study.

Future researchers could simulate this study to attain similar outcomes by using this study as a guide. All seven interviews conducted in the study were recorded and transcribed. The interviews produced rich and thick descriptions in the form of elaborate and comprehensive descriptions, commonly referred to as thick descriptions. All seven participants gave rich and detailed accounts of their experiences managing the tuition discount rates of private HBCUs. The data captures the diverse experiences, various states, different private HBCUs, distinct leadership roles, and the narratives of each participant. These findings can offer valuable insights and practical applications for all private HBCUs, tuition-dependent institutions, and private colleges and universities.

Dependability

Dependability is also known as consistency, and its assurance is crucial to establishing the reliability of the transcendental phenomenological study's research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). With seven participants contributing their unique perspectives and experiences to the study, maintaining dependability is essential to uphold the integrity of the research outcomes. Adhering to the methodological procedures, which included data collection techniques, analysis methods, and interpretation processes, enhances the dependability of the study findings. A comprehensive explanation of the research process was given and adhered to maintain dependability. Replicating the procedures of this study for further investigation of the same issue in a similar setting is likely to provide comparable results. I presented an extensive record of the study process in Chapter 3, which allows for the exact reproduction of the study.

Furthermore, I meticulously adhered to each step as outlined. The dependability of a transcendental phenomenological study was further reinforced through transparent documentation and detailed recording of research procedures and decisions by meticulously documenting the steps taken throughout the research process, including data collection, coding, theme development, and member-checking activities. Microsoft Excel workbook served as a depository for the interview questions, participants' responses, and data analysis steps, with a description for each step. The spreadsheet is stored in one file and includes password protection on my device in my home office.

Confirmability

I only included the lived experiences of participants, free of my personal bias, to achieve neutral and objective results or confirmability (Forero et al., 2018; Stahl & King, 2020). To safeguard the integrity of the research, I identified potential sources of bias in Chapter 3. I used bracketing to suspend my biases and anticipated any subjective interpretations that may arise in pursuing knowledge (Peolples, 2020; Stahl & King, 2020). I intentionally concentrated on the lived experience of the participants. I approached each interview without preconceived assumptions and reflected on the original transcripts of the interviews when formulating theme clusters and finalizing study results.

Study Results

In the Study Results, I have objectively presented a detailed account of the findings from this transcendental phenomenological study. The following sections support an in-depth examination of the seven participants' responses in narrative form, derived from six semistructured, open-ended research questions. six fundamental themes organized by four categories were observed as congruous to the purpose of the study in addition to the research question. Table 4 displays the emerging categories, themes, and participant alignments to the emerging codes. All six themes evolved from data collection and analysis provided by the research study participants based on the seven-step modified van Kaam method (Figure 1). No disparities, unorthodox, or nonconforming data emerged while gathering, describing, and summarizing the results of this study. The gap in the literature shaped the following research question, served as a guide for the data analysis, and influenced the qualitative transcendental study results: What are the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBUCs who manage the tuition discount rate?

The research question aligned with the study's goal and guided the study's title, which was used as a methodological roadmap and guideline to help with the coding process. I explained the results by six themes and four categories. After the data analysis, I identified six unique themes based on the research question. Through the process of imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994), the six themes were further clustered into four categories, which helped provide structure to the textural descriptions and the six themes. The six themes include (a) connection, communication, and collaboration; (b) enrollment and retention initiatives; (c) advanced data management and information systems; (d) comprehensive budget balancing; (e) diverse sources of financial support; and (f) diverse, high-performing, and empowered teams. These themes were further aligned against four main categories: (a) strategies; (b) challenges; (c) skills; and (d) resources. Table 4 provides a summary of the categories and themes manifested by each participant.

Table 4

Categories and Themes by Participant

Category and Theme	Participant						
	1	2	3	4*	5	6**	7**
1 Strategies							
(1) Connection, communication, and collaboration	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
(2) Enrollment and retention initiatives	X			X	X	X	X
(3) Advanced data management and information systems		X	X	X			
(4) Comprehensive budget balancing	X	X	X		X	X	X
(5) Diverse sources of financial support	X				X		
(6) Diverse, high-performing, and empowered teams	X	X			X	X	
2 Challenges							
(1) Connection, communication, and collaboration		X				X	
(2) Enrollment and retention initiatives				X	X		
(3) Advanced data management and information systems		X	X	X		X	
(4) Comprehensive budget balancing	X		X		X	X	X
(5) Diverse sources of financial support	X						
(6) Diverse, high-performing, and empowered teams		X		X			
3 Skills							
(1) Connection, communication, and collaboration		X	X		X		
(2) Enrollment and retention initiatives	X				X		
(3) Advanced data management and information systems		X	X		X		X
(4) Comprehensive budget balancing			X		X	X	X
(5) Diverse sources of financial support	X		X				
(6) Diverse, high-performing, and empowered teams	X	X			X	X	X
4 Resources							
(1) Connection, communication, and collaboration	X					X	
(2) Enrollment and retention initiatives	X				X		X
(3) Advanced data management and information systems		X			X	X	X
(4) Comprehensive budget balancing	X	X			X	X	
(5) Diverse sources of financial support	X	X					
(6) Diverse, high-performing, and empowered teams	X	X					
Summary							
(1) Connection, communication, and collaboration	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
(2) Enrollment and retention initiatives	X			X	X	X	X

		Participant						
	Category and Theme	1	2	3	4*	5	6**	7**
(3)	Advanced data management and information systems		X	X	X	X	X	X
(4)	Comprehensive budget balancing	X	X	X		X	X	X
(5)	Diverse sources of financial support	X	X	X		X		
(6)	Diverse, high-performing, and empowered teams	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note. P1 through 7 = a code to de-identify participants. P1 through P7 participated in the study.

Research participants expressed a range of strategies, mainly related to Interview Questions 1, 2, and 6 (Table 5). One hundred of participants' perceptions and lived experiences of managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs. Some themes occurred more than others in terms of strategies. Table 5 below displays how many participants shared a strategy they experienced in Questions 1, 2, and 6. The most frequently expressed theme from participants was the existence of Connection, Communication, and Collaboration.

Theme 1: Connection, Communication, and Collaboration

The first theme that emerged from semistructured interviews, journal notes, and data analysis emphasized the importance of Theme 1, Connection, Communication, and Collaboration. The most frequently expressed strategy by participants was the existence of Theme 1. The interview responses were transcribed verbatim to preserve authenticity, provide contextual understanding, increase trust, aid interpretation, and guarantee reproducibility (Peoples, 2020). All participants made contributions to Theme 1. Specifically, when Question 1 was asked, 86% of participants contributed to Theme 1, categorized as Strategy (Table 5). Theme 2 appears in three of the four categories:

strategies, skills, and resources. (Table 4). The table below displays the frequency of occurrence of this theme in interview questions.

Table 5

Theme 1: Connection, Communication, and Collaboration

	Question	Participant	Number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
1	Describe your typical day at your private HBCU without sharing any proprietary information.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7	6	86%
2	Describe strategies that you find are most effective in managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs.	4, 5, 6	3	43%
3	What challenges do you believe private HBCUs generally have in implementing strategies to manage the tuition discount rate?	2,6	2	29%
4	Describe skills needed to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	2, 3, 5	3	43%
5	Describe resources required to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	1, 3, 5, 6	4	57%
6	What additional information would you like to share regarding your strategies to manage tuition discount rates and your experience without sharing any proprietary information?	2, 5	2	29%

Note. P1 through P13 = a code to de-identify participants. P1 through P7 participated in the study.

Below are four samples from the seven participants' transcripts to illuminate the rich and diverse perspectives shared during the data collection, offering valuable insights into Theme 1 from their lived experiences.

Participant 2 stated:

> P2, Q3 … I think communication and transfer of information matters, especially when you're trying to make, create strategies and manage strategies together as an institution. That fluid communication across the board matters. Also withholding information from students and parents alike, people are very private. A lot of people don't want to share. What's going on in their personal lives or what challenges that they are having So in order to provide assistance to people, you need to be able to understand. What's needed. And you can't do that unless information is shared with you. So I think that's probably one of the biggest challenges across the board is with all the information just trying to keep everything close to hip.

Participant 3 stated:

> P3, Q2: …working with our coaches and again, our admissions, our vice president of enrollment management and any other campus partners that participate in awarding students' scholarships. That's part of the strategy because they must understand the reasons behind why we can't give every student a scholarship, reasons behind as to why there are speculations on certain scholarships. And that would include. For example, with our academic scholarships, presidential scholarships are covering tuition fees, room and boards. Provost covering tuition fees. and other various academic scholarships. They're all in range in the amounts. To strategically keep the institution as a whole within the confines of the overall discount rate. Where that rate could be, just as an example, could be 30%, and that is basically coming from our CFO, collaboration with the president and

> other vice presidents to see where we can get the most thing for our book as far as using discount rates or AKA scholarships in order to recruit students, but yet and still, not break the bottom line.

Participant 5 stated:

> P5, Q4: …we meet every single day…anyone who is who is part of the operational team that's gonna be financial aid that's going to be housing this company. The Bursar are all of us absolutely, we meet every single day to talk about our numbers for getting that crack into class, in the Fall for continuing students in terms of who they are and what numbers they are for registration for the fall. So we meet absolutely every single day.

Participant 7 stated:

> P7, Q1: We have several meetings to address ongoing matters such as strategy, budget, enrollment, and new facility development. We also deal with collaborations involving external partners.

Theme 2: Enrollment and Retention Initiatives

The second theme that emerged from semistructured interviews, journal notes, and data analysis emphasized the importance of Theme 2, Enrollment and Retention Initiatives. Seventy-one of participants contributed to Theme 2. When Questions 5 and 6 were asked, 71% of participants contributed to Theme 2 (Table 6). Theme 2 appears in all four categories: strategies, challenges, skills, and resources. (Table 4). The table below displays the frequency of occurrence of this theme in interview questions.

Table 6

Theme 2: Enrollment and Retention Initiatives

	Question	Participant	Number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
1	Describe your typical day at your private HBCU without sharing any proprietary information.	1	1	14%
2	Describe strategies that you find are most effective in managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs.	1, 4, 7	3	43%
3	What challenges do you believe private HBCUs generally have in implementing strategies to manage the tuition discount rate?	4, 5	2	29%
4	Describe skills needed to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	5	1	14%
5	Describe resources required to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	1, 4, 5, 6, 7	5	71%
6	What additional information would you like to share regarding your strategies to manage tuition discount rates and your experience without sharing any proprietary information?	1, 4, 5, 6, 7	5	71%

Note. P1 through P13 = a code to de-identify participants. P1 through P7 participated in the study.

Below are five samples from the five participants' transcripts to illuminate the rich and diverse perspectives shared during the data collection, offering valuable insights into Theme 2 from their lived experiences.

Participant 1 stated:

> P1, Q2 … So you have to create these marketing strategies to try [to] get these students in or get that attention. So one of our focuses is with scholarship and with that I was giving these scholarships out. … when we got the students there, the

stars came in, it became an issue in financial aid and fiscal affairs. Because now the school, okay, now we're doing a discounted price.

Participant 4 stated:

> P4, Q3 … it is imperative for financial aid to be an office to assist colleges/universities in achieving enrollment targets, institutions must be comfortable in letting data guide their decision-making.
>
> P4, Q6 … We cannot be short-sighted in looking for "immediate gratification" as it relates to enrollment.

Participant 5 stated:

> P5, Q6 … If you also don't want students to think that you're cheap. …they may have low discount rate but what's the quality of the education that you're going to get so you really do it is a bit of a dance. So you have to make sure that you are communicating to prospective students. That when you come to this institution this is what you can expect. And be very clear and confident about how you are branding and how you are marketing your institution so that there is no ambiguity that this is a quality education that I'm going to get.

Participant 6 stated:

> P6, Q6 … In summary, recruit from the international market that will pay the full tuition.

Participant 7 stated:

> P6, Q7 … attract some students who do not require much financial assistance.

Theme 3: Advanced Data Management and Information Systems

The third theme that emerged from semistructured interviews, journal notes, and data analysis emphasized the importance of Theme 3, Advanced Data Management and Information Systems. All but one participant contributed to Theme 3. Eighty-six percent of participants contributed to Theme 3. When Question 6 was asked, 86% of participants contributed to Theme 3. (Table 7). Theme 3 appears in all four categories: strategies, challenges, skills, and resources. (Table 4). The table below displays the frequency of occurrence of this theme in interview questions.

Table 7

Theme 3: Advanced Data Management and Information Systems

	Question	Participant	Number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
1	Describe your typical day at your private HBCU without sharing any proprietary information.	-	-	0%
2	Describe strategies that you find are most effective in managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs.	2,4	2	29%
3	What challenges do you believe private HBCUs generally have in implementing strategies to manage the tuition discount rate?	2,6	2	29%
4	Describe skills needed to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	2, 3, 5, 6, 7	5	71%
5	Describe resources required to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	6	86%
6	What additional information would you like to share regarding your strategies to manage tuition discount rates and your experience without sharing any proprietary information?	2, 2	2	29%

Note. P1 through P13 = a code to de-identify participants. P1 through P7 participated in the study.

Below are five samples from the six participants' transcripts to illuminate the rich and diverse perspectives shared during the data collection, offering valuable insights into Theme 3 from their lived experiences.

Participant 2 stated:

> P2, Q2 … So, but I think strategies, first, you need the research behind what your student body looks like. And that's biographical geographical. And also, what their finances look like per student not every student comes in with the same

> eligibility for aid, whether it be federally or institutional waivers. Or even outside in scholarships, in grants. So I think research is important. I think research is probably the biggest strategy. To be efficient. In managing the tuition discount rate of any private HBCU or any school for that matter.

Participant 3 stated:

> P3, Q4 … if that person does not have the analytical skills to see what's happening to review the data. And to use that data, the historical data in order to make decisions going forward. They're more than likely they more than likely will make a decision that would be detrimental. To the institution versus helpful and they won't know that until after they've already experienced it versus it'll make them reactive versus proactive. A data management system. Is crucial. I've worked for a PWI institution who did have, a management, a data management system when operating with their scholarships.

Participant 4 stated:

> P4, Q5… robust enterprise resource planning (ERP) software, robust customer, relations management (CRM) software, appropriate data analytics tool or company.

Participant 5 stated:

> P5, Q5… knowledge and information is very important. I'm a real big stickler for competition from the standpoint of, I think it's also important to know. What you're competition is been with and what peer institutions are doing. And from the standpoint of learning from.

Participant 6 stated:

> P5, Q4… Strong financial analysis! We need information to make decisions and strong human resources skills to avoid discounting too much.

Theme 4: Comprehensive Budget Balancing

The fourth theme that emerged from semistructured interviews, journal notes, and data analysis emphasized the importance of Theme 4, Comprehensive Budget Balancing. All but one participant contributed to Theme 4 (Table 4). Eighty-six percent of participants contributed to Theme 4. When Question 2 was asked, 86% of participants contributed to Theme 4 (Table 8). Theme 4 appears in all four categories: strategies, challenges, skills, and resources. (Table 4). The table below displays the frequency of occurrence of this theme in interview questions.

Table 8

Theme 4: Comprehensive Budget Balancing

	Question	Participant	Number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
1	Describe your typical day at your private HBCU without sharing any proprietary information.	-	-	0%
2	Describe strategies that you find are most effective in managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs.	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7	6	86%
3	What challenges do you believe private HBCUs generally have in implementing strategies to manage the tuition discount rate?	1, 3, 5, 6, 7	5	71%
4	Describe skills needed to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	3, 5, 6, 7	4	57%
5	Describe resources required to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	1, 2, 5, 6	4	57%
6	What additional information would you like to share regarding your strategies to manage tuition discount rates and your experience without sharing any proprietary information?	1, 2, 5	3	43%

Note. P1 through P13 = a code to de-identify participants. P1 through P7 participated in the study.

Below are seven samples from the six participants' transcripts to illuminate the rich and diverse perspectives shared during the data collection, offering valuable insights into Theme 4 from their lived experiences.

Participant 1 stated:

> P1, Q3 … Major challenges. I would say major, and the reason why I say that is finding that balance of between, … I wanna give these students this opportunity to go to college give them some scholarship give them this opportunity financially to

assist them but then I want to make some money. We have to make payroll. We have to pay people.

Participant 2 stated:

P2, Q2 … Yeah. usually when you talk about tuition discounts it's not really real money that you're referring to, it's providing a discount to students who are looking to pay for school to get their education, right? So it's, a waiver so the speed of partial payment.

P2, Q6 … Financially, the percentages in different categories that the funds are going to understand what my particular department has in place budget wise to help with the student body. I think these are things, personally that help in strategies myself.

Participant 3 stated:

P3, Q2 … I'm looking at the institutional budget. Excuse me, institutional budgets and constraints. In order to decide what that discount rate should be as a whole. Kind of narrowing that down a little bit and further.

Participant 5 stated:

P5, Q4 … we never used the term really discount rate. In our discussions because automatically we are understanding what the bottom line is. We know that the baseball coach, … knows that you just [spent] your last, dime of scholarship money. And so. you, you understand the baseball coach knows you've got your goal is 50. Basketball coach knows your goal you know is 15 the honors director. Your goal is 25.

Participant 6 stated:

> P6, Q5 … We need to know how much we charge for the dormitory and the unit cost for a student to live in the dormitory to make decisions that are best for the student and the institution, in summary, a strong budget.

Participant 7 stated:

> P7, Q3 … Our student need more financial aid to attend. HBCUs tend to have greater than half of students eligible for PELL grants. Most students will receive enough financial aid. Even with the modest tuitions of many HBCUs, the list price will appear too high. The list price of most HBCUs is lower than that of comparable institutions.

Theme 5: Diverse Sources of Financial Support

The third theme that emerged from semistructured interviews, journal notes, and data analysis emphasized the importance of Theme 5, Diverse Sources of Financial Support. Fifty-seven percent of participants contributed to Theme 5. When Questions 2, 3, and 5 were asked, 29% of participants contributed to Theme 5, categorized as Strategies, Challenges, and Resources (Table 6). Theme 5 appears in all four categories: strategies, challenges, skills, and resources. (Table 4). The table below displays the frequency of occurrence of this theme in interview questions.

Table 9

Theme 5: Diverse Sources of Financial Support

	Question	Participant	Number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
1	Describe your typical day at your private HBCU without sharing any proprietary information.	5	1	14%
2	Describe strategies that you find are most effective in managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs.	1, 3	2	29%
3	What challenges do you believe private HBCUs generally have in implementing strategies to manage the tuition discount rate?	1, 3	2	29%
4	Describe skills needed to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	1	1	14%
5	Describe resources required to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	1, 2	2	29%
6	What additional information would you like to share regarding your strategies to manage tuition discount rates and your experience without sharing any proprietary information?	1	1	14%

Note. P1 through P13 = a code to de-identify participants. P1 through P7 participated in the study.

Below are four samples from the three participants' transcripts to illuminate the rich and diverse perspectives shared during the data collection, offering valuable insights into Theme 5 from their lived experiences.

Participant 1 stated:

> P1, Q2 … now we're looking for opportunities to alumni and institution advancement to find. Which we already had these components. But we need to

find more components to have other pockets that we can go into. When students need scholarship versus use at university funds.

Participant 1 stated:

P1, Q3 … Challenges, I would think, and like, like you said, in the recent one is finding those funds. This is happening. Like, for students I worked at, finding funds to make up for that tuition discount and in a lot of cases, of previous school that I worked at, HBCU.

Participant 2 stated:

P2, Q5 … You need to have endowment. You need to have some type of funding to back yourself as an institution. And whatever funding you're trying to provide for students.

Participant 3 stated:

P3, Q3 … the resources, definitely endowments, and other financial resources to help offset that discount rate. Prime example would be, I know an example of a PWI would be Harvard, for example, and when you compare it to. Which is PWI and compare it to HBCUs. There is a strong difference. A noticeable difference in the amount of endowment scholarships and other resources or financial resources available so that at that PWI institution, they are actually receiving funds to cover the difference or the cost that they actually give out to students from that discount rate to students versus when.

Theme 6: Diverse, High-Performing, and Empowered Teams

The sixth and final theme that emerged from semistructured interviews, journal notes, and data analysis emphasized the importance of Theme 6, Diverse, High-Performing, and Empowered Teams. Like Theme 1, all participants contributed to Theme 6. One hundred percent of participants contributed to Theme 6 when Questions 4 and 5 were asked. Theme 6 also appears in all four categories: strategies, challenges, skills, and resources. (Table 4). The table below displays the frequency of occurrence of this theme in interview questions.

Table 10

Theme 6: Diverse, High-Performing, and Empowered Teams

	Question	Participant	Number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
1	Describe your typical day at your private HBCU without sharing any proprietary information.	1, 2, 5	3	43%
2	Describe strategies that you find are most effective in managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs.	-	-	0%
3	What challenges do you believe private HBCUs generally have in implementing strategies to manage the tuition discount rate?	2, 4	2	29%
4	Describe skills needed to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	7	100%
5	Describe resources required to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	7	100%
6	What additional information would you like to share regarding your strategies to manage tuition discount rates and your experience without sharing any proprietary information?	1, 2, 5	3	43%

Note. P1 through P13 = a code to de-identify participants. P1 through P7 participated in the study.

Below are three samples from the three participants' transcripts to illuminate the rich and diverse perspectives shared during the data collection, offering valuable insights into Theme 6 from their lived experiences.

Participant 1 stated:

> P1, Q6 …Your team is what is going to determine your success or your failure. So the team It's gonna be the center point finding the right specific people and if I had to formulate a team. Specifically focused on assisting or funding for tuition

> discount. …I say someone from, fiscal affairs, but preferably the CFO, so you got to see it because then you're getting the peek, you're getting who you need is going to make decisions to find decisions so you don't have to go back and get. Further feedback you got from the financial aid director, CFO.

Participant 2 stated:

> P2, Q5 …the right people with the right answers in the right place. You need to have assistance Both as an institution and with people across the board. In order to make it work.

Participant 5 stated:

> P5, Q4 …everyone needs to understand that he or she in their leadership role and in their role dealing with students. Everybody has a role to play. In order to make sure that our students are being well served. And so as part of that. There are some folk in the system who may otherwise feel like, oh, well, you know, those are the people over there in admissions, you know, let them do that with their job. All those are the people over in financial aid. They'll do their job and never the twain show me. That strategy does not. That's not a good strategy for a small institution.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented an analysis of the data results concerning the lived experiences of employees or other employees managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs. The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore and understand business officers and other employees of private HBCUs who manage the tuition discount rate and describe their lived experiences. The gap in the literature shaped the following research question, served as a guide for the data analysis, and influenced the qualitative transcendental study. This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of individuals to answer the central research question: What are the lived experiences of business officers and other employees of private HBUCs who manage the tuition discount rate?

This chapter further encapsulated the rich narratives and insights from seven research participants' semistructured interviews that included six interview questions. I used the seven-step modified van Kaam method (Figure 1) to analyze the data (Moustakas, 1994). Using the Modified van Kaam method, each participant's transcript was reviewed considerably. All nonrelevant data were removed, participant descriptions pertinent to the research question were coded, and meaning units were merged into six themes. The six fundamental themes that were found to be relevant to the purpose of the research question include (a) connection, communication, and collaboration; (b) enrollment and retention initiatives; (c) advanced data management and information systems; (d) comprehensive budget balancing; (e) diverse sources of financial support; and (f) diverse, high-performing, and empowered teams. These themes were further aligned against four main categories: (a) strategies; (b) challenges; (c) skills; and (d) resources. Furthermore, detailed and specific textual and structural descriptions were created for each participant, effectively capturing and elucidating their own experiences related to the phenomena. Each of these six major themes and four categories supported the central research question.

In Chapter 5 I will further discuss these six themes organized by four categories regarding the interpretation of findings, recommendations, and implications. These discussions may further the study and advance the understanding of managing the tuition discount rates of private HBCUs. I will also summarize the implications for social change stemming from this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore and describe the experience of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs who manage the tuition discount rate. I conducted this study because there was a lack of understanding of the lived experiences of business officers or other employees of private HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate. I wanted to extend the literature regarding the intersection of private HBCUs, business officers, and tuition discount rate management to address the ongoing concern of private HBCUs. Additionally, I aimed to contribute to positive social change by sharing knowledge to help HBCUs maintain financial stability, academic excellence, and social equity, and to empower students from underrepresented communities.

After receiving IRB approval, I recruited seven participants using purposive sampling within the 44 4-year private HBCUs, who confirmed their experience managing the tuition discount rate at private HBCUs. I then used the seven-step modified van Kaam approach to analyze the data and present key findings. In Chapter 4, I shared those findings.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of key findings, the study’s value, and the literature extension. I discuss the interpretation of those findings, the limitations of the study, and recommendations. I also describe potential implications for positive social change and the use of different methods in future studies and practice, followed by the conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings represented the participants' lived experiences managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs. In this section, I explain how the findings extend knowledge in the discipline. Findings from analysis of the semistructured interview transcripts led to and four categories.

The interpretation of key findings in Chapter 5 has a broader perspective, summarized by a category to express the *noesis*, as described in Husserl's philosophy, thinking about or interpreting (Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2020). The six themes that were used to answer the research question included (a) connection, communication, and collaboration; (b) enrollment and retention initiatives; (c) advanced data management and information systems; (d) comprehensive budget balancing; (e) diverse sources of financial support; and (f) diverse, high-performing, and empowered teams. These themes were further organized into four categories: (a) strategies; (b) challenges; (c) skills; and (d) resources.

Category 1: Strategies

Six open-ended questions (see Appendix D) were posed during the seven individual semistructured interviews; each question correlated to a category, and some participants addressed several themes within each category. Category 1 aligned with three interview questions and all six themes. The three interview questions were (a) describe your typical day at your private HBCU without sharing any proprietary information, (b) describe strategies that you find are most effective in managing the tuition discount rate, and (f) what additional inssformation would you like to share regarding your strategies to manage tuition discount rates and your experience without sharing any proprietary information? Some of the research findings in Chapter 2 align with the findings from the current study.

Regarding Category 1, there are some commonalities and extensions of the literature, such as resetting the tuition prices, strong branding, diverse solid teams, and collaboration. Getting away from the tuition discount strategy was a strategy to manage the discount rate in both the study results and the literature review (W. R. Allen et al., 2018; Brock, 2020; Ward & Corral, 2022). Current findings extend the literature by stressing the importance of marketing if the tuition is lowered to move away from the discounting strategy; institutions must be confident in their branding to communicate the institution's quality. Having a robust and diverse team that collaborates often was emphasized the most to manage the tuition discount rate; this strategy was not found in the literature review. These findings align with connection, communication, and collaboration; and diverse high-performing; and empowered teams, highlighting the importance of fostering strong relationships and teamwork among leaders and stakeholders in HBCUs.

Category 2: Challenges

Regarding Category 2, there are some commonalities and extensions of the literature, including but not limited to the growing tuition discount rate among private HBCUs, low enrollment, and declining revenues. Although the NACUBO (2023) study included fewer than five private HBCUs, all seven participants in the current study acknowledged that they had experienced issues with a rising tuition discount rate in their current or previous roles. Carlson (2020), Behaunek and Gansemer-Topf (2019), Glenn (2018), and Williams and Davis (2019) also reported low enrollment and declining revenues. The current study extends the literature that private HBCUs must reduce their dependence on tuition revenue by building the endowment through alumni and the advancement office. Category 2 aligns with one interview question and all six themes. The interview question was (c) what challenges do you believe private HBCUs generally have in implementing strategies to manage the tuition discount rate?

Category 3: Skills

Regarding Category 3, there are some commonalities and extensions of the literature, including but not limited to the ability to treat students as unique individuals who possess strong technical, analytical, and budgetary skills to avoid overachieving and determine the actual unit cost of facilities to price tuition and fees accordingly. The skills highlighted in the current study align with the business officer's role addressed in Chapter 2 (Calver & Vogler, 1985; Delucchi et al., 2021; Kim & Chung, 2023; Samuels & Miller, 2021). Category 3 aligns with one interview question and all six themes. The aligned interview question was (d) describe skills needed to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.

Category 4: Resources

Regarding Category 4, there are some commonalities and extensions of the literature; both the literature and current study results emphasized the need for funding as a resource to manage the tuition discount rate (W. R. Allen et al., 2018; Bennett & Law, 2021; Clapp, 2021). The current study results extend the literature by acknowledging the need for competent staff, financial aid administrators, committed enrollment managers, and management information systems, including a robust enterprise resource planning software and customer relations management software appropriate data analytics tool. Category 4 aligns with one interview question and all six themes. The aligned interview question was (e): describe resources required to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this qualitative study are addressed to ensure the study's trustworthiness. Most qualitative studies have challenges; exposing the challenges enables the reader to apply the findings from a proper perspective (Shahriari & Rasuli, 2020). It was important to acknowledge certain limitations that may have impacted the research outcomes, including sample size, transcendental phenomenological approach, and transparency of participants.

One limitation pertained to the sample size of participants, which consisted of a specific number of individuals within a defined context. I sampled seven participants based on the recommendations from the literature for a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study. All participants expressed interest in the study; however, as leaders, there were distractions with other priorities of managing the institutions, especially toward the end of the fiscal year and during commencements. The findings may not be generalizable to all private HBCUs or other educational institutions because the experiences and perspectives shared by the participants may have been influenced by the unique characteristics of the institutions involved in the study.

Another possible limitation was that participants may have lacked transparency with their interview responses. The participants addressed experiences from institutions that reported to the NACUBO. Also, the study did not represent all private HBCUs; only five HBCUs were included in the study. Some participants in the study might have needed help discussing their experience with the cost model or may have misrepresented their tuition discount rate (see Rine, 2019). The study's literature review was limited to a few databases, such as Library Search (formerly Thoreau). Other databases may have provided a more balanced and comprehensive assessment of the recent research. Acknowledging the limitations helps to contextualize the findings and conclusions, enhancing the transparency and credibility of the study.

A possible limitation of a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study is the researcher may unintentionally introduce bias in the study's outcomes. Although I used bracketing to suspend any bias temporarily and maintained an attitude of curiosity, my background as a business operations manager and employee of a private HBCU or my religious affiliation may have influenced the interpretation of the data and the identification of themes. The horizon of a phenomenon cannot be bracketed. Additionally, the nature of qualitative research and phenomenological inquiry involves subjective interpretations of the data, which may introduce a level of subjectivity to the study findings. Also, the interview process and procedures, video conferencing versus face-to-face interviews, may have impacted data collection and analysis in the current study.

Questions addressing participants' demographics were not asked. To protect the privacy of participants, I did not collect demographic data in the study. Although some participants offered their titles, rank, and years of experience, I did not confirm population-based factors such as age, race, and sex. There was racial diversity in the study sample; therefore, the study was limited in terms of illuminating the phenomenon.

Recommendations

The recommendations for future research are grounded in the study's strengths, limitations, and literature review. It would be beneficial to diversify the participant pool, enhance transparency, use multiple databases for the literature review, mitigate researcher bias, and explore other research approaches. I may have missed some aspects of the experience within the horizon of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study.

Future studies should diversify the participant pool to include broader perspectives and experiences. This study was limited to private HBCUs; a future study could include public HBCUs or other racial-minority-serving institutions. Diversification in the study could involve expanding the study to include participants from more diverse educational institutions to enhance the transferability of the findings. Implementing measures to ensure greater transparency in participant responses is crucial. Researchers should establish protocols to encourage transparency in communication during interviews, fostering an environment in which participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences candidly.

The study is limited to a few databases, such as Library Search (formerly Thoreau), and may need to look at works relating to the study. Future studies could benefit from accessing a more comprehensive range of databases beyond Library Search (formerly Thoreau) to obtain a more comprehensive assessment of the research topic; Library Search cannot search every database. By exploring additional sources and databases, future researchers enrich their data collection process and capture a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under study. Researchers conducting qualitative studies should remain vigilant in mitigating potential biases that may influence the study outcomes.

Bracketing is a strategy that strengthens objectivity; I recommend that researchers continue this strategy for transcendental phenomenological research to minimize the impact of personal biases on data interpretation. Future studies should prioritize participant privacy and collect demographic data to further the understanding of participant characteristics. I recommend that researchers incorporate demographic information such as age, race, and sex in future studies to enhance the richness and depth of the study findings, offering insights into the diverse perspectives within the participant group. Further exploration into the impact of interview modalities, such as video conferencing versus face-to-face interviews, on data collection and analysis could provide valuable insights. Understanding how different interview formats influence participant responses and data quality can inform best practices for qualitative research methodologies.

Finally, researchers could incorporate other research traditions, such as quantitative or mixed methods approaches, to ignite the rigor. Incorporating the recommendations into future research endeavors could enhance the robustness, credibility, and applicability of future transcendental qualitative studies, thus further extending the literature regarding the intersection of private HBCUs, business officers, and tuition discount rate management to secure the ongoing concern of private HBCUs.

Implications

This study sought to illuminate the lived experience of business officers and other employees of private HBCUs who manage the tuition discount rate. This study provided valuable insights that align with the literature and extend the literature to provide a guide for private HBCUs to manage the tuition discount rate. The findings revealed that the effectiveness of managing the rate includes six themes that can be categorized into four categories: strategies, challenges, skills, and resources.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Positive social change is a transformation process in behavior and social relationships so that the outcomes benefit individuals, organizations, and society beyond the initial advantages that may be realized by those who instigate the change (Stephan et al., 2016). This research has outcomes that may lead to positive social change. The research results may guide private HBCUs that struggle with balancing the tuition discount rate for financial stability (Behaunek & Gansemer-Topf, 2019). The results of this study may help private HBCUs balance tuition discount rates. Martinez et al. (2020) and Stephan et al. (2016) contended that purposeful, collaborative, and responsible leadership results in positive social change and mobilizes societal well-being. Balancing the tuition discount rate and diversity may secure the intended use of revenue, quality education, cultural uplift, and access for all (Arroyo, 2017; Rine, 2019).

Implications for Practice

Regarding practice, this study offers several areas for organizational managerial changes. One of the primary implications of the study findings is the need for robust management information systems tailored toward enrollment and retention initiatives to bolster student enrollment and mitigate revenue losses. A data management system providing real-time budgetary, scholarship, and enrollment information with trained staff proved to be crucial in the findings. To develop targeted recruitment strategies, enhance student support services, and foster a welcoming campus environment, private HBCUs can attract and retain a diverse student body, increasing enrollment rates and revenue streams. Institutions can navigate financial challenges and maintain fiscal resilience by adopting sound financial management strategies, including effective budget planning, transparent financial reporting, and proactive risk management.

Implications for Theory

In the context of a transcendental phenomenological study, the implications of extend beyond financial considerations to encompass broader institutional well-being and academic excellence. By addressing financial challenges head-on and implementing evidence-based strategies informed by the study findings, private HBCUs can enhance their operational efficiency, academic offerings, and student outcomes. Furthermore, investing in the professional development of leaders, fostering a culture of collaboration and communication, and empowering diverse teams can strengthen the institutional capacity of private HBCUs to weather financial uncertainties and thrive in a competitive higher education landscape.

Ultimately, the implications drawn from the study underscore the importance of safeguarding private HBCUs to preserve the legacy and heritage of these institutions but also to ensure equitable access to quality education for underserved communities and future generations of students.

Conclusions

There were six themes further categorized into four categories from this study: The six fundamental themes that were found to be relevant to the purpose of the research question include (a) connection, communication, and collaboration; (b) enrollment and retention initiatives; (c) advanced data management and information systems; (d) comprehensive budget balancing; (e) diverse sources of financial support; (f) diverse, high-performing; and empowered teams. These themes were further aligned against four main categories: (a) strategies; (b) challenges; (c) skills; and (d) resources. The themes and categories relate to managing the discount rate for private HBCUs, a transcendental phenomenological study. During the time of the literature review, data collection, and analysis, there were no peer-reviewed studies on the subject matter, thus extending the literature.

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore and illuminate the experience of business officers and other employees of private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) who manage the tuition discount rate. I wanted to extend the literature regarding the intersection of private HBCUs, business officers, and tuition discount rate management to secure the ongoing concern of private HBCUs. The study aimed to contribute to positive social change by sharing knowledge to maintain financial stability, academic excellence, and social equity and empower students from underrepresented communities. Future research on private HBCUs and managing the tuition discount rate could inspire other private HBCU business officers and leaders to incorporate practices presented by the participants.

This study extended the literature for business officers and employees of private HBCUs managing the tuition discount rate. The thick and rich tapestry of insights and experiences participants share unfolds to illuminate the complexities and nuances of managing the tuition discount rate within private HBCUs. This study illuminated the lived experiences and perspectives of business officers and employees, uncovering a spectrum of strategies, challenges, skills, and resources from each participant's perspectives that shape their roles in navigating the financial landscape of HBCUs. The themes that emerged through transcendental phenomenology are that the study has provided a holistic understanding of the profound impact of managing the tuition discount rate on private HBCUs' financial and operational sustainability.

The lived experiences of the seven participants have resonated throughout Chapters 4 and 5, offering a glimpse into the intricate decision-making processes, budgetary considerations, and collaborative efforts that underpin the management of the tuition discount rate for private HBCUs. As the study concludes, it becomes evident that the think and rich data gathered from the participants hold valuable implications for enhancing financial management practices, promoting transparency, and fostering strategic decision-making within private HBCUs. The six themes, four categories, and narratives that have emerged from the research shed light on the multifaceted nature of managing the tuition discount rate and underscore the critical role that business officers and employees play in shaping the financial landscape of private HBCUs. As this chapter draws to a close, the study sets the stage for continued exploration, reflection, and action to advance financial sustainability and operational excellence in private HBCUs for the benefit of current and future generations.

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Appendix A: Email Invitation

Subject line:

Interviewing HBCU leadership on tuition discount rates (30-45 mins.)

Email message:

Your opinions are valuable and will help ensure that the next generation of research reflects diverse perspectives. Volunteer for an interview, and you may be helping private historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) while contributing to new scientific knowledge.

This is a new study about the experiences of people who manage the tuition discount rate at private historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), like business officers and enrollment officers, to better understand and help private HBCUs manage the tuition discount rate. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences managing the tuition discount rate without sharing proprietary information from your institution.

About the study:

- One 30-45-minute Zoom or phone interview that will be audio recorded (no videorecording).
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- Business Officers and other employees of private Historically Black College or University (HBCU).

- Manage the tuition discount rate, or discount process (determine the amount or who receives institutional scholarships).

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Angelia Brooks, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. Interviews will take place May 7, 2024, to June 15, 2024.

Please email angelia.brooks@waldenu.edu to let the researcher know of your interest.

Manage the tuition discount rate, or discount process (determine the amount or who receives institutional scholarships).

Appendix B: Social Media Invitation

Caption: There is a new study about the experiences of people managing the tuition discount rate at private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that could help private HBCUs better understand and manage the tuition discount rate. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences managing the tuition discount rate.

About the study:

- One 30-45-minute Zoom or phone interview that will be audio recorded (no videorecording).
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- Business Officers and other Employees of private HBCUs.
- Manage the tuition discount rate.

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Angelia Brooks, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. Interviews will take place in May 2024.

Please email angelia.brooks@waldenu.edu to let the researcher know of your interest.

Appendix C: Screening Questionnaire

Directions: Please answer the following screening questions. Please check the answer that best describes your status.

1. Do you work or have you worked at a private Historically Black College and University (HBCU)? Yes □ No□
2. If yes, do you have or have you managed the tuition discount rate or discount process (determine the amount or who receives institutional scholarships)? Yes □ No□

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Private Historically Black Colleges and Universities Employees

1. Describe your typical day at your private HBCU without sharing any proprietary information.
2. Describe strategies that you find are most effective in managing the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs.
3. What challenges do you believe private HBCUs generally have in implementing strategies to manage the tuition discount rate?
4. Describe skills needed to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.
5. Describe resources required to manage the tuition discount rate of private HBCUs effectively.
6. What additional information would you like to share regarding your strategies to manage tuition discount rates and your experience without sharing any proprietary information?

Protocol for Participants:

Explain the purpose, significance, and procedures for the phenomenological research study to each participant. Also, the researcher will go over the procedures for the interview and focus groups such as:

The researcher will go over the consent form and the nature of semistructured questions.

The interview will take place via Zoom or phone.

The interview is scheduled to take place 30 to 45 minutes.

The researcher will discuss the rights of participants to drop out of the study at any time.

The researcher will discuss the confidentiality and privacy protocols for the study.

The researcher will discuss that no compensation will be offered to participants in the study.

The researcher will discuss that the sessions will use an audiotape and transcription of the notes for the interview.

The researcher will thank each participant and explain the next step of the research study.

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Interviewee Identifier (Participants' Pseudonym): ____________

Interviewer: ____

Introductory Protocol

Hello, my name is Angelia Brooks, and I am currently a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am an Associate Professor of business at an HBCU in Alabama and have taught for over eight years. I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation in management. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in this study. I want to digitally record our conversation during this interview to facilitate notetaking and data analysis. Thank you for agreeing to participate. Your experience is a very critical component of this study. I have planned this interview to last between 30 to 45 minutes. Once the interview is complete, it will be transcribed. During this interview, I will have several questions that I would like to cover pertaining to business officers and other employees managing the tuition discount rate at private historically Black colleges and universities (HBUCs) that the U.S. Department of Education recognizes. You may end this interview anytime; all gathered data are confidential. Before we start, do you have any questions or concerns that still need to be addressed? Can I begin recording the interview?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix F: Member Checking Email

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank each of you for participating in this research study regarding the lived experiences of business officers and others managing the tuition discount rate. By sharing your insights, thoughts, and experiences, your comments will be informative and helpful because they will contribute greatly to my research study.

Enclosed is a copy of a summary of the audio transcripts for your review. In addition, I would like to request taking the time to make any corrections or comments in the margins. I will follow up with a phone call to further go over any parts of the transcripts or clarify any issues. Please do not edit any comments for grammatical errors or style content because it may change the tone or emphasis of the remarks. Finally, I'm requesting that all summaries of the transcripts be returned to me within two days (not including weekends).

Again, I want to personally thank you for your participation and patience in sharing your experiences, your personal identity will be kept confidential. If you have any additional questions about the study, please feel free to contact me, or you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312-1210.

Best regards,

Angelia Brooks, MBA, MAcc, MPhil

Walden University

PhD Candidate