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Effective Leadership in Nongovernment Organizations

Kevin James Morris
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Kevin J. Morris

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the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Gregory Campbell, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Anne Hacker, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and
Provost Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2024

Abstract

Effective Leadership in Nongovernment Organizations

By

Kevin J. Morris

MA, Walden University, 2019

MAT, Covenant Seminary, 2017

BA, Fontbonne University, 1999

AS, Florissant Valley Community College, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

February 2025

Abstract

Nonprofit, Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) often face the challenge of limited resources, which means they require effective leaders to address innovation, decision-making, performance, and problem-solving. From a public policy perspective, this study addressed the problem of NGOs needing effective leaders to sustain their operations using limited resources and identifying competencies the leaders needed to qualify as effective. The purpose of this study was to explore the competencies of leaders in NGOs that influence their effectiveness and performance. The theoretical framework was the transformational leadership theory, which highlighted those leaders can promote organizational performance through intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. A generic qualitative design was employed with a sample size of 20 participants using semi-structured interviews to gather data. The results indicated that NGO leaders needed competencies of collaboration, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, and effective communication to improve performance and financial stability. The social change implications of this study were that this research added to the existing body of literature as to the influence of certain leadership qualities on the performance of public administration organizations; the findings may facilitate the identification of various aspects of leadership effectiveness and the associated implications for organizations; and how different leadership competencies help address public policy issues, such as the lack of collaboration with federal agencies and the lack of capacity to achieve NGO goals.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to leaders of NGO's everywhere that work tirelessly for their organizations yet receive little thanks or financial support for their gargantuan efforts.

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I want to acknowledge and thank my committee chair, Dr. Gregory Campbell, for his mentorship, guidance, and encouragement throughout this process. I would also like to thank committee member, Dr. Anne Hacker, for her feedback and scholarship. Finally, I would like to thank my wife Lorena for putting up with me during this work and giving me encouragement as well.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are crucial in addressing environmental and social issues, including climate change, poverty, and gender inequality. Effective leadership is essential for NGOs to ensure they achieve their goals because it inspires and motivates staff to achieve their goals, builds partnerships, and secures funding (Ali & Yildiz, 2020). The complexity and ever-changing nature of the NGO sector require effective leadership to address the unique challenges and take advantage of opportunities in the sector (Demir & Budur, 2019). One such opportunity is the U.S. federal grants, which NGOs can access through the Federal Grant and Cooperative Act of 1977 (FGCAA) only if the leaders can effectively address social issues and hence meet eligibility criteria (Grants.gov, 2023). This study is needed to improve the ability of NGOs to acquire effective leadership and achieve their goals. In this regard, this research is connected to public policy administration (PPA) because it seeks to show leadership qualities needed to improve the capability and performance of nonprofit NGOs. Specifically, the leaders must showcase and build NGO capacity and enhance collaboration with federal entities.

By exploring the aspect of effective leadership, I aimed to develop best practices that can steer NGOs to positive social implications. This research is aligned with PPA because I sought to investigate leadership strategies that can ensure leaders build and showcase their capacity and demonstrate efficient use of resources in NGOs. I also provided important insights into how leadership in NGOs differs from leadership in other sectors, revealing the unique opportunities to enable a better understanding of the sector.

In this chapter, I cover several subtopics, including background, research questions, problem statement, key definitions, and study significance.

Background

The purpose of this research was to address the research question regarding the effectiveness of leaders in private organizations, which is aligned with the PPA goals of promoting capacity and collaboration. In such instances, leaders should ensure successful collaboration with federal entities while building and showcasing the NGO's capacity. Existing research shows it is difficult to establish the conditions under which leadership makes a difference in the public sector (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). Additionally, evidence reveals that there is ambiguity in ensuring policies are well-designed and implemented, which further necessitates support through training (Hudson et al., 2019). Backhaus and Vogel (2022) argued that it is difficult to identify conditions influencing leadership effectiveness and performance in the public sector. Therefore, I worked to reveal competencies promoting positive outcomes among NGO leaders.

From available literature, effective leadership in NGOs is central to their success. Specifically, Bartram et al. (2017) highlighted that NGOs effectively can enable the success of organizations because they enable the motivation of employees, the building of relationships and collaborations with other stakeholders, the navigation of the complex landscape of the sector, and inspiring volunteers. Similarly, Mufti et al. (2020) underlined that effective leadership in NGOs influences job satisfaction and leadership styles, hence mediating the enhancement of the success of these organizations. From a different perspective, Diaz and Rees (2020) posited that effective leadership in NGOs ensures that

checks and balances are in place so that the activities of NGOs are geared towards meeting the set visions. This research builds on the available evidence on effective leadership by exploring the main leadership competencies used by NGO leaders to enhance the performance of their organizations.

Primarily, this study is connected to the main concepts of PPA involving collaboration and capacity, where leaders facilitate collaboration with federal agencies while also building the capacity of employees to achieve set goals and ensure the NGOs positively impact more children affected by poverty (see Khan, 2017). In this respect, exploring leadership issues in NGOs enables an in-depth understanding of how the organization's performance can be improved. According to Ali and Yildiz (2020), effective leadership is essential to NGOs in enhancing their performance and meeting the set visions. According to existing research, effective leadership is critical in NGOs due to the various benefits associated with its application. However, there is a knowledge gap as regards the specific leadership qualities and strategies that can improve leadership effectiveness in NGOs.

Additionally, most studies, such as Mufti et al. (2020), only focused on large and established NGOs. Therefore, their findings may not be applied to all NGOs, presenting a significant research gap. Therefore, this study is needed to contribute to developing best practices in NGO leadership. By gaining a better understanding of the aspect of effective leadership in NGOs, this study improves insight into the effectiveness and impact of NGOs. As such, it enhances the positive social effects of NGOs and their overall benefits to the public.

Problem Statement

Although NGOs need effective leaders to sustain their operations using limited resources, there is a problem of identifying competencies the leaders should possess to qualify as effective. The problem is related to PPA, which focuses on the need for effective collaboration with federal agencies and enhanced leaders' capacity through continuous management training to achieve higher organizational productivity (see Tavares et al., 2021). Addressing the problem is essential in generating insights regarding the most appropriate leadership development strategies that should be adopted to ensure that desired outcomes in policy development are achieved. The larger problem I addressed in this research regards establishing the underlying factors that lead to differences in the performance and effectiveness of policy development.

The underlying research goal entails exploring the leadership competencies that positively influence NGOs' performance. Gupta et al. (2017) observed that public administrators must demonstrate diverse competencies, including decision making, planning, solving problems, coordination and implementation, innovative thinking, and self-control to achieve the set organizational objectives and contribute to the public's well-being. Although effective leadership is crucial for organizational success, there is little literature on the specific leadership qualities that NGOs can adopt to make leaders successful in the context of the sector. Additionally, studies focusing on leadership as an individual trait rather than a process involving interactions and collaborations have not been conclusive in pointing out how this can be adopted in the context of NGOs (Ali &

Yildiz, 2020). Therefore, there is a need to conduct a more elaborate analysis of effective leadership competencies needed to improve the performance of NGOs.

Effective leaders are also crucial in ensuring that the specific organizational aims and objectives are achieved by influencing employees toward the desired goals.

Competent leaders influence their followers in the organization by impacting their motivation and performance levels, as well as the public, who receive the benefits of effective administration services (Richter-Killenberg & Volmer, 2022). Earlier research by Aboyassin and Abood (2013) established that poor leadership in public institutions encompassed aspects such as ethical violation, ineffective leadership characteristics, failure to work towards a similar goal, and a negative impact on labor relations. The authors further revealed that ineffective leadership in public organizations was associated with poor individual and organizational performance (Aboyassin & Abood, 2013). Therefore, from the gathered evidence, effective leadership is directly related to organizational success.

Besides, Benlahcene et al. (2022) reported that unethical leadership behaviors arose due to ineffective training programs and the delivery of poor education within public institutions. Subsequently, addressing this problem is essential to ensure that appropriate leadership training is provided for public administration leaders to ensure they can generate value for the larger public. This research builds upon previous work undertaken in this topic, where minimal work has been conducted to establish whether the characteristics of effective leaders in public administration can be developed or if they are inherent to different leaders. Therefore, the research problem is focused on gaps

in research-based literature regarding the development of effective public administration leadership in nonprofit organizations and how leaders can be developed in the future.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine NGO leaders' experiences on the competencies that lead to effective performance. Addressing the research purpose helps in understanding how to solve PPA issues related to the misuse of resources that hinder the ability of NGOs to achieve their goals of providing crucial services that benefit the general public. In line with the research purpose, a crucial objective of this research was to explore how leadership in NGOs contributes to better public policy outcomes, policy advocacy, and service delivery. The broader problem I addressed in this research was identifying appropriate leadership development strategies that ought to be adopted to enhance nonprofit NGO leaders' skills.

The leadership competencies I explored help promote PPA goals of collaboration with federal agencies and improve leaders' capacity through effective decision making that considers long-term risks (see Head, 2022). Additionally, Hudson et al. (2019) observed that policy failure is a persistent challenge in public organizations. As a result, governments have begun taking an interest in identifying ways to strengthen the policy process, particularly its implementation phase. Phulkerd et al. (2017) also established that where government policies are required to be implemented, leaders face different challenges associated with the limited skills and knowledge needed to implement the developed policies. Such insights indicate that developing leaders in policy formulation and implementation within public organizations is essential to ensure government

compliance. However, difficulties arise when training leaders without understanding how leaders perform concerning public policy formulation, development, and implementation.

Research Questions

The research questions which are addressed in this research include:

RQ1: What leadership competencies promote NGO leaders' ability to achieve PPA goals of improved collaboration with federal entities and building leaders' capacity to achieve organizational goals?

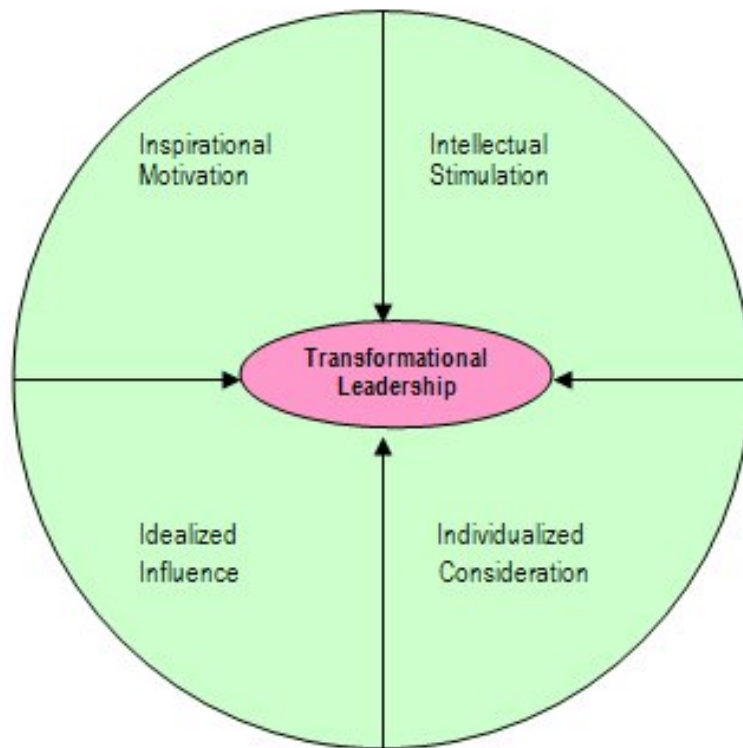
RQ2: What leadership training should be given to NGO and federal agency employees to improve their effectiveness in supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds?

Theoretical Framework

The critical theoretical framework I used to support this research was the transformational leadership theory (TLT). Burns developed TLT, and the main idea of the theory is that leaders empower their followers to go beyond their task requirements and achieve high-level performance (Brown et al., 2019). The TLT model is summarized in Figure 1, showing four key aspects.

Figure 1

Four Critical Factors in the Transformational Leadership Model



Note: From “A review of the relationship of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration with sustainable employees’ performance,” by Hosna et al., 2021, *International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies*, 25(1), 322-326.

The four TLT concepts include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Hosna et al., 2021).

Essentially, inspiration motivation indicates the extent to which leaders challenge followers to develop a strong sense of purpose and achieve high standards, while intellectual stimulation shows the extent to which leaders encourage and nurture their followers’ creativity (Chan et al., 2019). In this case, the leaders encourage the followers to seek better and unique ways of solving organizational problems. Additionally,

idealized influence how much a leader instills trust, respect, and ethical behaviors among followers, while individualized consideration involves the extent to which leaders address their followers' needs by mentoring, showing empathy, and providing support (Chebon et al., 2019). The characteristics of transformational leaders have been pointed out to include the ability to influence their followers to go beyond their self-interest and work towards a larger organizational goal with benefits for the entire organization.

In TLT theory, a researcher considers that transformational leadership is achieved by creating a sense of shared purpose, vision, and values that lead to followers' intellectual stimulation (Siangchokyoo et al., 2020). In this way, employees' efforts are aligned with organizational goals, ensuring increased overall output. From the theory, transformational leaders are charismatic and can communicate their values and visions in a manner that energizes and inspires their followers. In this manner, these leaders create a supportive work environment, fostering innovation and creativity (Asbari, 2020). Through this theoretical framework, this research supported the view that leadership goes beyond cognitive knowledge and that soft skills or emotional intelligence are essential.

The TLT supports my research questions by indicating that when leaders motivate and address the welfare of their followers, they improve the latter's well-being, which translates to increased job satisfaction and individual productivity, enhancing overall organizational performance. The TLT framework is also aligned with the PPA principle of building leaders' capacity and improving collaboration with federal entities (Campbell, 2018). Specifically, TLT emphasizes that leaders should provide a supportive work environment and clear communication channels (Hosna et al., 2021). As such, TLT

promotes teamwork and helps address the PPA issue of communication barriers between departments by promoting cross-team collaboration and ensuring a holistic approach to decision-making that reduces the waste of resources (Head, 2022). Prioritizing followers' welfare in TLT also ensures that leaders use a preventive approach suggested in PPA to manage human resource challenges such as strikes, high turnover rates, and low job satisfaction.

Nature of the Study

The critical concept I investigated in this research regards the competencies influencing effective leadership among leaders in nonprofit organizations. The investigation was based on the PPA principle of capacity and collaboration. In particular, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID, 2023) regulations underline the need to enhance the capability of NGOs by building leaders' capacity that enables collaborations with federal agencies. Essentially, my goal was to understand how the leadership effectiveness of NGOs can be promoted to ensure it meets PPA goals of improved collaboration between teams, adoption of prevention strategies that tackle workplace inequality, and balanced decision making that considers immediate benefits and future risks. I used a qualitative method to guide the study's research design based on the need to examine in-depth insights regarding the factors affecting leadership effectiveness in nonprofit organizations. Subsequently, only qualitative data were analyzed to address the formulated research questions.

The qualitative method is valuable as it collects subjective data that directly aligns with the research problem (Evans, 2017); for this research, qualitative data was gathered

from participants sampled from Organization A, an NGO located in St. Louis, Missouri, whose primary mission is to reduce child poverty. Additionally, participants were sampled from U.S. federal agencies. A total of 20 participants are targeted for interviews, which is in alignment with Shetty's (2023) views that at least 10 participants are needed in primary qualitative research to develop robust findings. A thematic analysis was considered for data analysis, where themes that succinctly summarize the findings were derived (see Braun & Clarke, 2022). I also employed a generic qualitative design to understand the main issues of effective leadership in NGOs.

A generic qualitative design is used, with the aim of exploring the experiences of participants and how they make meaning of a phenomenon (see University of Nottingham, 2023). The use of a generic qualitative approach in this research is justified by my study goal, which was to understand leadership competencies that work best in the context of nonprofit NGOs based on the observation of participants. The exploratory research design is also justified by the fact that it was effective in setting the foundation of the research. The critical concept that I investigated as the effective leadership role in NGOs' success. I identified the specific qualities and characteristics that make leaders effective.

I conducted interviews to gather data and then used a thematic analysis technique to synthesize and identify themes existing in the data. The patterns identified in the themes were recorded as the study's findings. The data was summarized in tables for ease of comparison.

Definitions

Effective Leadership: Effective leadership refers to leaders exhibiting certain competencies that facilitate the development of a positive organizational culture, improve employee productivity, and ensure the achievement of organizational goals (Iordanoglou, 2018). For this study, effective leadership refers to the ability of NGO leaders to achieve PPA goals involving effective decision-making that considers long-term organizational needs, promotes cross-team collaboration, and implements preventive measures to ensure minimal resource wastage.

Leadership Competencies: Leadership competencies refer to the combined abilities, knowledge, and skills that enable effective leadership within a specific organization (Ruben, 2019). For this study, the leadership competencies focused on the knowledge and behaviors of NGO leaders required to ensure they achieve the goal of safeguarding children and addressing child poverty in line with PPA goals.

Leadership Skills: Leadership skills refer to character traits that leaders can exhibit to enhance their capacity to achieve the set organizational goals (Martins, 2018). The traits emphasize the ability of the leader to guide a team in working to achieve a common goal. For this study, leader skills focused on the abilities of leaders that enable them to achieve the NGO's goal of addressing child poverty in the United States.

Nongovernment Organizations (NGOs): NGOs refer to organizations formed for a social or political goal such as environmental protection, reduction of crime, or humanitarian goal and functions independent of the government. Usually, NGOs are nonprofit because they aim to do the general good in society (Lewis et al., 2020). For this

study, the NGOs considered were those that strive to end child poverty in the United States.

Nonprofit Organization: The general definition of an organization whose mission is to provide crucial social services and does whose activities are not motivated by financial benefits but rather solving a specific problem in society (Agard, 2015). In this respect, nonprofit organizations rely on donors to implement different operations and achieve their objectives. For this study, the nonprofit organization considered involves those that seek to address the child poverty problem in the United States by providing free meals and shelter to children.

Assumptions

Assumptions refer to study principles that are plausible or truthful, although they are founded upon scientific evidence (Coates, 2021). According to Willig (2019), ontological assumption is based on the idea that certain reality constructs are universal, observable in different cultures, and can be applied to diverse contexts. For this study, the ontological assumption I made is that leadership competencies, including traits, soft skills, and emotional intelligence, are effective in improving NGOs' performance from the perspective of participants and can be generalized to all NGOs. This way, suitable theories on effective NGO leadership can be developed to improve practice. The assumption also aligns with the PPA view that leaders' competencies primarily aim to optimize resource utilization to ensure the general public obtains maximum benefits from the programs.

Moreover, I considered an epistemological assumption, which underlines that conducting research produces positive outcomes that enable the development of suitable policies to improve the socio-economic environment (see Capella University, 2023). For this study, the epistemological assumption I made was that the findings obtained regarding the competencies of leaders helped in understanding how to promote effective leadership that enhances NGOs' performances. Further, I considered axiological assumption, which explains that a researcher's subjective values and biases are crucial in data interpretation to ensure appropriate conclusions are made in a study (see Shan, 2022). For this study, the axiological assumption was applied by considering ethical values of transparency and integrity in ensuring data analysis is based on accurate reporting of gathered data and accurate referencing of the work to avoid plagiarism issues.

I assumed that effective leaders exhibiting a high level of competence were available in the NGOs selected in the research. In this case, I assumed that the leaders understood the role of NGOs as being aligned with PPA principles, which emphasize collaboration and capacity and entail building leaders' capacity to improve NGOs' capability while also improving collaboration with federal agencies. The assumption is aligned with the view that assumptions made in research should enable the gathering, analysis, and development of conclusions in research (see Bell et al., 2022). Likewise, I assumed that the employees could distinguish the traits of their leaders and link them to their performance. The assumptions were necessary to enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Scope and Delimitations

Scope refers to the major concepts covered in a study, including the extent to which the study is explored and the parameters within which it operates (Diego, 2020). The research scope considered leadership effectiveness within nonprofit NGOs in the United States. The scope also focused on data collection only from employees who have worked in the organizations for more than 5 years within the same department. Qualitative interviews were collected and thematic analysis was used to assess the findings. The research findings are generalizable and transferable to the population on the potential of developed leaders in leading such organizations.

A research delimitation describes the boundaries set by the researcher in the study that have not been undertaken (Greener, 2018). The first delimitation is that the research did not include for-profit organizations in the United States. The narrow scope of the study focused specifically on nonprofit NGOs, hence excluding other firms. I also excluded employees who are not U.S. citizens and have worked in different departments in their organizations. The need to focus only on U.S. citizens working in NGOs and who have more than 5 years of experience in the same department arises from the emphasis on the reliability and transferability of the findings.

Limitations

Limitations describe weaknesses in research that impact the research outcomes and conclusions generated (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). One limitation of this study was the narrow scope, where data were only sourced from nonprofit NGOs and federal agencies in the United States. Additionally, data collection methods were limited to

online strategies due to social distancing challenges which were associated with COVID-19. Due to this constraint, other data collection methods such as focus group discussions that require physical interaction could not be undertaken.

Further limitations arose in relation to the exploratory research design where my bias in collecting qualitative data from the participants through interviews hindered data collection. In this case, my bias may have led me to avoid examining emotional responses from the participants during data collection. To reduce the limitations, I employed measures that eliminated bias in data collection, such as adhering to a transparent process in conducting thematic analysis. I did not collect data on the emotional perceptions of the respondents regarding their leaders.

The other limitation involved resource and time constraints, which meant that only a few participants were included in this study. The impact of the limitations was that the findings of this study could have limited transferability to other contexts due to the small number of participants. The study topic also limited the analysis to the achievement of PPA goals by organizations. As such, leaders' skills, which enable them to achieve other goals, did not motivate the implementation of this research. Nonetheless, I implemented several counterstrategies to minimize the impact of these limitations, including engaging federal agency employees to improve the quality of data and reduce findings bias.

Significance of the Study

Significance to Theory

The outcomes from this research added to the existing body of literature where important insights were established regarding the influence of certain leadership qualities on the performance of public administration organizations. The research findings revealed the traits of effective leaders and identified how they influence policy development within the organizations. The findings of this study addressed the theoretical foundation of the leadership traits that could steer productivity and performance in an organization. By studying the main competencies for effective leaders, the findings guide the empirically grounded generalizations to reinforce the theory of which leadership styles are best or worst in an organizational context.

Significance to Practice

The findings may facilitate the identification of various aspects of leadership effectiveness and the associated implications for organizations. Notably, the findings revealed key leadership traits such as honesty, persistence, being decisive, being futuristic, and goal-oriented, which are associated with effective leaders. This implied that leaders from different organizations ought to shape their leadership skills towards achieving the desired skills, leading to increased productivity in their entities. Moreover, the study showed how different leadership competencies help address PPA issues, such as the lack of collaboration with federal agencies and the lack of capacity to achieve NGO goals.

The findings highlight the genesis of effective leaders, a parameter important in changing organizations' considerations when recruiting and retaining leaders. The research provided essential recommendations to enhance leadership development professional practice in non-governmental organizations in the United States. In this view, the research outcomes identified strategies that can be adopted to guide training the leaders on different approaches to develop and implement public policy.

Significance to Social Change

The understanding of leadership traits, as enumerated in the findings, highlights the power struggle and social status attributed to leaders in proportion to the evaluation of the potential the leader contributes relative to the followers. This ideation resulted from the assessment of the effectiveness of leaders in understanding the qualities that enable them to improve the overall organization's productivity. Additionally, the research impacted social change by illuminating the impact of identifying leaders early in life and developing them further to ensure they can achieve different goals. Understanding the leadership traits specified in the findings also established the power struggle and social status associated with leaders relative to their followers. As a result, assessing the competencies of effective leaders facilitated social change and guided leadership development processes.

Summary and Transition

In Chapter 1 I introduced the study and addressed background information and the problem statement. Based on the formulated research questions, the selected problem regards the comparison of the effectiveness and performance of leaders with regard to

policy development in nonprofit organizations. The study also aligns with PPA principles of understanding what NGO leaders should do to ensure efficient resource management for the general public benefit. I collected qualitative data using interviews from selected employees in a non-governmental U.S. organization to address the research questions. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative interviews.

The theoretical framework was the TLT, which outlines important ideas that influence this research. I outlined the assumptions and scope of the study, identifying the fundamental assumption that the NGO comprised effective leaders. Finally, limitations and delimitations guiding the study were outlined. In Chapter 2, I elaborate on theoretical and empirical findings from existing literature. I also establish essential insights into current knowledge of the research area and the selected topics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Although NGOs need effective leaders to sustain their operations using limited resources, there is a problem of identifying competencies the leaders should possess to qualify as effective. The problem is related to PPA, which focuses on the need for effective collaboration with federal agencies and enhanced leaders' capacity through continuous management training to achieve higher productivity in an organization (Tavares et al., 2021). The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of NGO leaders on the competencies that lead to effective performance. In this study, I provide insight into how NGO leaders can address PPA issues related to resource wastage by revealing competencies to promote effective decisions, improve teamwork, and advance workplace equality.

Examining qualities that make leaders effective is crucial in ensuring individuals chosen as organizational leaders achieve the expected goals. According to Harrison (2017), leaders' capacity to motivate employees to achieve an organization's goals is a key aspect of leadership effectiveness. Hall (2016) suggested that consistent with leadership qualities manifested by an individual, a leader may motivate their juniors to coordinate and work hard in their activities, resulting in improved service delivery or demotivating them, resulting in poor performance. Further, Le Comte and McClelland (2017) indicated that good leaders can effectively foster the development and achievement of organizational goals. The studies show that effective leadership qualities are closely linked with how a leader engages with employees to improve productivity.

Apart from employee management skills, effective leaders should also exhibit certain inherent personal qualities that give them the confidence to carry out their responsibilities. Specifically, Baron (2016) noted that a leader should possess self-efficacy for effective leadership. Leaders with high self-efficacy were viewed to be more effective in dispensing the duties assigned in the leadership position and fostering a solid vision among the institutions where they lead. Similarly, Seidle et al. (2016) argued that leaders with low self-efficacy are less effective in fostering good leadership, which promotes the achievement of the set aims and objectives. I explored leadership qualities and focused on how they help achieve PPA goals of capacity and collaboration. Specifically, USAID regulations require leaders to demonstrate their capability to achieve NGO missions by collaborating with federal agencies.

This chapter is organized into three main sections: the literature search strategy, theoretical framework, and literature review. In the search strategy section, I present essential insights on the relevant databases that were searched and keywords that were used, while in the theoretical foundation section I describe the key concepts regarding the leadership domain as well as critical perspectives that are characteristic of the construct. In the literature review section, I detail relevant studies that examined previous work on how effective leaders were developed. The core focus was to identify leadership skills, leadership roles, and leaders' degree of participation in policy development. I conclude the chapter by identifying the research gap and providing a summary of the key findings.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategy is crucial in gathering detailed evidence about a specific phenomenon. According to Dawson (2019), a literature search strategy should be guided by comprehensive inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the gathering of detailed and relevant evidence on a topic. I adopted a literature search based on prior research on leadership, focusing on the effectiveness of leaders in organizations.

Comprehensive inclusion and exclusion criteria were employed to identify relevant materials to address the topic of leadership competencies and included choosing only studies published in English. Moreover, articles irrelevant to the research topic, based on nonempirical research, and those not peer-reviewed were excluded from this study. I used online databases, including ProQuest, EBSCO, CADAL, and SAGE, which publish leadership and business research papers. Notably, the search was performed to isolate potentially relevant results using definite search terms, a combination of keywords and phrases including *effective leadership*, *competencies of leaders*, *effectiveness of leaders*, and *quality leadership in nonprofit organizations*. From the article search, 50 articles were sampled, which were used to complete the following sections on theoretical foundation and empirical review.

Theoretical Foundation

Transformational Leadership Theory

I used TLT, first proposed by Burns (1978), as the theoretical foundation of my study. According to Brown et al. (2019), TLT is based on the assumption that effective leaders can inspire and motivate their followers to achieve an agreed goal. Similar views

on the transformational leadership theory were also given by Reza (2019), who noted that in TLT, leaders strive to improve the capacity of employees to solve complex problems and improve overall organizational performance. Transformational leaders can do this by enhancing innovation, creating a vision, and promoting creativity. The studies show that transformational leaders effectively generate success in their organizations by empowering and supporting employees to go beyond their expected roles to achieve the set organizational goals.

TLT is also concerned with the ability of leaders to create change and exhibit leadership commitment to transform the organization. The view is explained by Burns (1978), who posited that transformational leaders inspire employees to a higher level of morale and motivation to ensure that the performance of individual goals is aligned with the overall organizational goals and missions. As asserted by Burns, a leader is considered to be effective when their actions raise the level of their morals, motivation, beliefs, perceptions, and association with the organization's objectives. TLT was suitable for this research because it motivates employees and improves their capacity to be innovative, hence depicting higher productivity. The strategy is aligned with the research purpose of improving NGO leadership to ensure PPA objectives are met, including efficient resource management, improved collaboration among team members, effective decision-making, and adaptability to navigate challenges.

Transformational Leadership Theory and Organizational Performance

TLT is related to this study by providing insight into competencies required to enhance the performance of nonprofit NGOs. Previous studies on the relationship

between TLT and organizational performance have indicated a positive relationship (Arif & Akram, 2018; Hilton et al., 2021). In particular, Arif and Akram (2018) focused on Pakistan's manufacturing sector and noted that transformational leadership ensures leaders encourage and inspire employees, leading to increased innovation, which in turn causes increased organizational performance. Similarly, Hilton et al. (2021) explored the two variables in the Ghanaian banking sector and observed that transformational leadership causes intellectual stimulation and motivation of employees, improving their level of job satisfaction and translating to increased organizational performance. The positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance has also been observed in the hotel sector (Buil et al., 2019), the educational sector (Andriani et al., 2018), and the transportation sector (Eliyana & Ma'arif, 2019). A key point noted in the literature is that transformational leadership promotes a proactive personality among employees, leading to increased innovation and productivity that culminates in improved organizational performance. However, from the literature review, no scholarly research has been done to show how TLT can influence nonprofit NGO performance, making this study relevant to increase knowledge on the topic.

Key PPA Concepts of Organizational Capability and Collaboration

In the context of this study, organizational performance is considered not in terms of profitability but the ability of NGOs to increase their capability to support disadvantaged children and improve their collaboration with federal entities. Organizational capability refers to operations that improve the overall outcomes of the organization and make them competitive in a specific sector (Wang & Zeng, 2017). Some

of the strategies needed to improve organizational capability include enhancing employees' skills through training, providing professional development programs to increase employees' knowledge, and deploying resources to support employees' efforts. Similar to Wang and Zeng (2017), Costa et al. (2023) pinpointed that capability requires organizations to enhance employees' ability to reliably complete a specific mission. In this regard, organizational performance in the context of this study emphasizes the need for leaders to improve the capability of nonprofit NGOs to support children affected by poverty. Meanwhile, collaborative leadership refers to sharing information among stakeholders in the same sector to better address unique challenges and improve organizational output (Maalouf, 2019). To ensure increased collaboration among stakeholders and enhance performance, there is a need to boost trust to ensure parties involved are willing to share information (Mendez, 2023). For this study, NGOs collaborating with federal entities was deemed crucial in ensuring the organizations provide better services to disadvantaged children affected by poverty.

Literature Review

The Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act

The Federal Grant and Cooperative Act of 1977 (FGCAA) was developed to guide the U.S. government agencies in deploying federal funds by providing a clear distinction between grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts (Grants.gov, 2023). The goal of FGCAA, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, 2023), is to minimize the misuse of federal funds by creating uniform agency practices and ensuring public funds are allocated where they are effectively used for the intended

purpose. A key point emphasized under the FGCAA, sec. 504 is that NGOs must compete in the award of grants, and only those who meet the set standards and requirements are eligible to receive the funds (USAID, 2022). Previous law cases, such as *Palmiter v. Action [1984]*, have shown that federal grants are not subject to garnishment action and hence should only be used for the purpose for which they were appropriated, which does not include paying for pending debts of the organizations (U.S. Department of Justice, 2023). In this regard, for nonprofit NGOs to access federal funding and meet their missions, such as ending child poverty, their leaders should demonstrate competence and effectiveness in managing resources. Therefore, this study could help NGO leaders identify the essential qualities they need to acquire to increase their leadership capability and ensure the ability to collaborate with federal agencies.

Primary Qualities of Effective Leaders

One quality of effective leaders is communicating effectively by concisely and clearly explaining problems and solutions (Rodríguez-Carvajal et al., 2018). The view was supported by Madanchian et al. (2017), who showed that effective leaders could influence group performance and perform roles with positive organizational outcomes. Through good communication, effective leaders can mentor their subordinates and improve their skills by providing relevant feedback, thereby improving the quality of their output (Rodríguez-Carvajal et al., 2018). The results imply that good communication by leaders can positively impact change by effectively communicating their vision and enhancing group problem solving. In this regard, I explored leaders'

effectiveness in this study to understand how they use communication to achieve PPA goals of problem solving.

Apart from using an effective approach to communicate with employees, leaders should convey messages that resonate with the needs of the followers. Specifically, Tunison (2020) evaluated the concept of leadership decision making by collecting data from Grade 12 administrators in a mid-sized Canadian school district and observed that effective leaders search for relevant evidence on a problem and effectively communicate proposed solutions. Tunison also indicated that those who were willing to develop themselves through continuous learning made better decisions. Similar views were also posited by Ibrahim (2019), who noted that to solve problems effectively, leaders are expected to be wise, a trait that can be developed through learning and experiences. The results imply that effective leadership can be developed and improved through a continuous learning curve to improve problem-solving abilities and communication.

Moreover, effective leaders oversee processes and guide initiatives toward achieving goals. In supporting this view, Harrison (2020) evaluated leadership development and noted that problems such as conflict, complexity in tackling organizational issues, or other ill-defined problems are primarily found in an untrained work setting. The results imply that training leaders can effectively improve their ability to guide initiatives to achieve specific set goals. Further, Englefield et al. (2019) noted that effective leaders must have appropriate interpersonal leadership skills for effective leadership. In this respect, it is noted that effective communication skills are critical in

ensuring leaders can quickly identify any potential barriers to production and address the challenges to provide higher performance.

Leaders should also provide feedback to employees to improve organizational performance. In examining this idea, Kearney et al. (2020) enrolled undergraduate students in a public university in the Southwestern United States to understand how video-based feedback helped train aspiring school leaders in coaching strategies. Kearney et al. indicated that providing crucial feedback and broad perspectives in creating solutions is an effective leadership trait. Similar evidence was provided by Sanyal and Rigg (2021), who indicated that taking time to listen to juniors and subordinates and listening more helps to make better decisions and provide high-quality feedback. The findings imply that effective leaders should provide feedback to their juniors to effectively influence change.

Another key trait of good leaders is the awareness of a team's needs and working towards their achievement. Cheng and Szeto (2016) enrolled 20 novice teachers teaching in Hong Kong to collect their perspectives on teacher leadership development and principal facilitation. Cheng and Szeto noted that principals who are aware of the needs of teachers are more effective in fostering teacher leadership in schools. Similar views were posited by Iovinelli (2020), who asserted that working towards a vision with enthusiasm, persistence, and tenacity encourages and inspires others to do the same effect, leading to the success of an organization or group. Based on the evidence, articulating goals passionately and clearly ensures employees understand individual efforts contributing to higher goals.

Effective leaders should also delegate duties and ensure the responsible completion of assignments given. According to Cheng and Szeto (2016), learning the attributes of the various employees assists executives in ensuring that jobs are delegated to the right people. Similarly, Strawn et al. (2017) noted that good leaders should delegate duties to provide employees with new experiences, build credibility, and gain the respect of others. The results imply that delegating duties enables leaders to better engage and mentor employees. In this respect, delegating tasks enhances employees' trust and morale, strengthening their motivation to continue giving their best.

Effective leaders should also recognize and reward employees for good performance. Traut (2016) explained that leaders should review performance numbers and ensure that performers are never taken for granted, hence achieving team performance. Smith et al. (2017) agreed with Traut and underlined that to expect high performance from juniors, leaders must reward hard work. In this regard, the studies show that good leaders understand how to recognize the hard work and appreciate the efforts of employees to ensure the latter remain motivated and go beyond their expected output. The identified qualities are aligned with PPA principles of capacity and collaboration, which highlight that leaders should showcase and build NGO capacity while collaborating with federal agencies to provide better services to disadvantaged children.

Major Cornerstone of Effective Leadership

Effective leadership is defined by specific traits exuded by the leaders, including agreeableness. In that respect, Prochazka et al. (2018) explored the relationship between

individuals' personalities and the leadership effectiveness of students in managerial and subordinate roles and realized a significant relationship between perceived leadership effectiveness and conscientiousness. Specifically, the traits of conscientiousness and agreeableness were linked to successful group performance (See Prochazka et al., 2018). Prochazka et al. views were supported by Hitt and Player (2019), who investigated the leadership effectiveness of school principals by surveying 8,524 participants and observed that collaborative decision-making was a crucial construct of effective leadership. The results imply that building rapport and consensus is an essential leadership quality that improves employees' performance.

Moreover, leaders' ability to forge strong positive relationships with their followers is crucial in enabling team cohesion. Vaskinn et al. (2021) pointed out that relations-oriented behaviors of leaders, such as facilitating cooperation and providing support, were more important for establishing effective leadership for residential youths. In the three studies, the researchers (Hitt & Player, 2019; Prochazka et al., 2018; Vaskinn et al., 2021) revealed that teamwork and role models are major cornerstones of effective leadership. The findings indicate that effective leaders must work with others and become role models to impact their subjects positively.

Besides, an effective leader is concerned about the welfare of the subjects and improves the working conditions. In agreeing with this view, Leithwood et al. (2020) showed that school leaders attracted high ratings based on performance on staff motivation, improved working conditions, and learners' satisfaction. Day et al. (2020) also noted that the development aspect of effective leadership can be demonstrated either

directly or indirectly. Meanwhile, Boamah et al. (2018) reported that effective leadership was attached to the ability to inspire and motivate workers. An implication of the findings is an effective leader is expected to empower subordinates to make reasonable decisions and have sufficient confidence in their roles.

Effective leaders should also be willing to learn and improve their skills continuously. In particular, Hickman and Akdere (2018) observed that formal training was an essential aspect of effective leadership by demonstrating that effective leadership in IT required formal mentoring anchored on robust feedback. The stance by Hickman and Akdere contradicted Benmira and Agboola (2021), who pointed out that effective leaders need certain innate qualities such as charisma as well as Bass (2019), who showed that effective leadership is founded on personal traits of humility, integrity, optimism, mature emotional intelligence, and commitment. The views present a gap of contestation, which is essential for this study to explore when identifying effective NGO leaders. Nevertheless, the evidence from the literature shows that effective leadership is subject to personal traits and the working environment.

Leadership Skills

One skill expected of effective leaders is problem-solving ability. To evaluate creative leadership skills that can drive change, Proctor (2018) assessed the decision-making and problem-solving abilities of leaders. Proctor posited that even though effective leaders have additional knowledge from training, creativity skills require general knowledge to solve organizational issues. From the findings of Proctor, problem-

solving can be taught in schools, but effective leaders portray a natural ability to relate effectively with others, hence superior problem-solving skills.

Effective leaders are also decisive in how they stand on an issue. Marshall et al. (2020) observed that good leaders are decisive, especially when the organization faces a crisis. Marshall et al. views were supported by Forster et al. (2020), who highlighted that during COVID-19, leaders needed to be decisive in reducing the number of employees and providing flexible working conditions to ensure the survival of their organizations. The findings imply that leaders should be able to make decisions faster to influence organizational growth. In such instances, the leaders should communicate their views and reasons for making certain decisions that may not be popular among employees.

The social dynamics in various settings are essential in observing the impact of different factors on leaders' effectiveness. Brinia et al. (2016) argued that the goals of a people being led could overlap, influencing individual views on what effective leadership entails. However, Brinia et al. posited that there are standard points that are universally considered. As such, leaders are tasked with influencing their people to define and realize a goal (Van Wart, 2017). As such, a leader's effectiveness largely depends on the ability to influence people and achieve their goals continually.

Personal traits also play a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of leaders. In particular, Rupp (2016) on effective leaders established that the common personality traits include emotional stability, determination, self-confidence, diplomacy, personal integrity, creativity, and originality. Other researchers explored the importance of physical traits in describing an effective leader and identified that attributes such as

weight, height, age, and physical appeal were important (Baldwin, 2018). Outside the innate personality, traits of individuals, personal behavior, and styles acquired through learning are equally significant. From the literature, effective leaders balance expressing their views and considering the opinions of their followers.

People using a consultative leadership style have been described as seeking ideas and opinions of others in developing their goals but identifying the most critical goals to execute and, ultimately, the tasks to assign the followers. Nonetheless, Laissez-faire leadership has been associated with extremely laid-back leaders who allow their followers to choose their adept actions (Pendleton & Furnham, 2016). The capacity to lead effectively, direct, and motivate other people in different institutions requires a composite skill set, primarily acquired through subsequent learning and experiences and self-development (Stiehl et al., 2015). The findings regarding the skills of good leaders, such as good decision-making, personal integrity, and emotional stability, help address the research purpose on NGO leaders' competencies that can help improve organizational performance. Moreover, the findings on integrity and emotional stability are aligned with PPA concepts of financial stewardship, which NGO leaders require to ensure they are transparent in managing resources meant to benefit the general public.

Leadership Roles

Creating mentorship programs is crucial for effective leaders. This view was supported by Ahlquist (2017) and Blake-Beard et al. (2021), who reported that leaders exercised mentorship where they supported the needs of their followers. Hubbard Murdoch et al. (2021) presented similar arguments where they reported that mentorship

positively impacted well-being, satisfaction, and perceived success, leading to organizational commitment. The results imply that those who eventually make good leaders are interested in pursuing leadership development.

Collaboration and building rapport are also crucial leadership qualities that can enhance organizational performance because they promote mentorship. Kumari et al. (2022) established that the leaders' openness to new experiences, agreeableness, and emotional stability influenced the job satisfaction levels among their mentees. Similar to Kumari et al., Kim et al. (2022) argued that peer mentorship in organizations impacted leader-member exchange and team performance. Ellinger and Ellinger (2020) also revealed that leaders who mentored and coached their followers impacted strategic leadership and learning. The insights from these studies imply that the leadership role of mentoring others also influences the further self-development of the leaders, hence an indication of the critical role that training plays in developing effective leaders.

Leaders' effectiveness is also determined by the ability to develop research and development programs that increase production within their organizations. In supporting this view, Van Droffelaar and Jacobs (2017) investigated the roles leaders play in improving organizational efficiency by conducting interviews among management staff and reported that good leaders develop specialized programs that yield diverse advantages, including improvement of leadership role performance. In agreement with Van Droffelaar and Jacobs, Yukl et al. (2019) reported that managerial effectiveness was associated with behaviors such as change-oriented, task-oriented, and relations-oriented tasks, which facilitated problem-solving and improved organization performance. As

such, it is realized that leaders have the role of conducting continuous development within their organizations to ensure that the organizations are on course in terms of focus on goal achievement.

Leaders are also effective when they continually develop training programs for employees to upgrade their skills. Boak and Crabbe (2019) explained that organizations with training programs follow a pre-determined path that influences their focus on role performance and their ability to impart leadership experience to others. In support of Boak and Crabbe, Gilar-Corbi et al. (2019) demonstrated that skills such as emotional intelligence could be improved through training within the business environments. The obtained findings on leadership roles such as mentorship and developing training programs are crucial in addressing the research purpose of exploring competencies that promote PPA goals. In this case, it is realized that mentorship and training help improve the organization's PPA goals of adaptability and resilience because employees are empowered in a manner that enhances their problem-solving capacities.

Policy Development

Policy development is critical in evaluating the effectiveness of leaders in an organization and includes procedures for decision-making. According to Harris and Jones (2021), consistency of effective leadership in organizations is achieved through effective mentorship programs to ensure new employees are informed and trained on the organizational culture and vision. Similarly, Alexander and Lewis (2014) indicated that training leaders in public policy improve their ability to organize work. Alexander and Lewis explained that trained leaders tend to portray a passion for making changes in

society at large and acquiring skills in public policy. In this respect, the leaders' decision-making process from the start should be aligned with the organization's goals and mission, ensuring high performance in the long term.

Effective leaders' policies should promote collaboration and align operations among different departments. In particular, Zakowski (2015) argued that organizations promote leadership effectiveness by coordinating activities among different departments of public bodies that implement policies. Hirt (2016) agreed with Zakowski by explaining that through clear coordination, cooperation is earned between positions of authority, ensuring smooth working among individuals. Harmony of work is brought about by developed leaders exercising authority over their juniors. Organizing has proved effective in administration when public policies are revised by government or NGOs and has been helpful in definitions of roles performed by different leaders.

Leadership effectiveness is also demonstrated by developing clear policies on budgeting. Lyon (2015) argued that public budgeting promotes leadership effectiveness in public policy leadership. MacKinnon (2015) also shared similar views by showing that leaders have articulated the importance of budgeting in public policy. Therefore, a good leader's perspective focuses on the accountability value in budgeting, which analyses the amount budgeted to the actual expenditure. The findings are aligned with PPA goals of collaboration and capacity, which highlight the need to build the capacity of leaders in policy development and compliance and collaborate with federal entities to promote advocacy for social justice and policy change.

Monitoring and controlling the effective use of resources is also a crucial role of leaders. Poterba (2017) posited that apart from budgeting, control of the budget is necessary for ensuring that spending limits are adequate for effective leadership in public policy. Effective leaders should control budgets to ensure public funds are equitably shared in regions and government entities. Specifically, Web et al. (2017) showed that control of the budget is necessary for countries due to large expenditures that are difficult to tackle without budget control through past reference. Some of the expenditures that control the budget are the annual changes in welfare payments, state pensions, and social security schemes.

Financial management is also an essential requirement of effective leaders. According to Ward and Forker (2017), financial management helps ensure leadership effectiveness in public policy. One of the roles of financial management in public policies is using financial resources to turn and implement public policies, like setting modalities for raising revenue through levies or exploiting natural resources. Some of the strategies that effective leaders use in decision-making include planning and analysis, reporting, transaction processing, and control (see Zakowski, 2015). In this respect, good leaders express high levels of accountability and transparency in their decision-making process.

Effectiveness of Leadership within a Nonprofit Organization

Leadership in a nonprofit making organization presents many challenges. It requires a unique set of skills due to the core competencies among board members in executive monitoring. Agard (2015) explained that leadership in nonprofit organizations is about exemplary leadership, and enough study is needed to understand and appreciate

the complexities of a firm. The section provides insights into methods/styles of leadership used by trained and natural-born leaders, like the facilitative style and dictatorial style, respectively.

NGO Leadership Characteristics, Roles, and Challenges

Competencies and characteristics of NGO leadership. The competencies and characteristics of NGO leadership define the distinct roles of individuals and organizations. Demir and Budur (2019) noted that NGOs featured transformational and ethical leadership, as seen in how the respective leaders engaged with followers to motivate and empower them towards the set objectives and uphold workplace morals. The strategy was essential for promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Similar views were presented by Aldashev and Navarra (2018), who pointed out that the type of leadership displayed by development NGOs encouraged community participation. In that respect, NGO leadership has a responsibility to the employees and the communities served.

Cross-cultural competencies are crucial to enable leaders to engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Charleston et al. (2018) showed that NGO leadership has evolved to include cross-cultural competencies for equitable management. Whereas Demir and Budur (2019) and Aldashev and Navarra (2018) focused on the external role of the community, the primary concern of Charleston et al. (2018) was human resource management. On that note, enhanced engagement with employees was accomplished by leaders who exhibited certain qualities, including effective

communication, adaptability, curiosity, empathy, and passion. These features were essential for cross-cultural engagement as an NGO leader.

The same aspect of cross-cultural competencies in NGO leadership was highlighted by Caligiuri et al. (2019). The implication is that cultural issues are also present within the NGOs, as can be the case within the communities served. Meanwhile, Zajda and Pasikowski (2018) narrowed down crucial competencies of NGO leaders to include cooperative competencies, social resourcefulness, and assertive competencies as for the implementation of social innovations. The submission implies that leadership competencies in NGOs are demonstrated at the individual level, and this ensures the success of each role undertaken by the respective institutions for the benefit of the community at large.

Influence on the Work Environment. NGO leadership has been shown to influence the work environment in various ways, including employee commitment. On that note, Aboramadan and Dahleez (2020) showed that transformational and transactional leadership styles in NGOs were positively related to employees' work commitment and engagement. Similarly, Mufti et al. (2020) acknowledged the significant association between transactional and transformational leadership styles, and employee job satisfaction in NGOs. Notably, both Aboramadan and Dahleez and Mufti et al. used quantitative surveys; hence the findings are highly generalizable. The results imply that good leadership creates a conducive work environment that encourages NGO workers to uphold high productivity.

Leadership also influences the level of innovation in an organization. Si Dah et al. (2022) determined that leadership was a significant predictor of innovation climate in NGOs, influencing employee innovation. Contrary to Aboramadan and Dahleez (2020) and Mufti et al. (2020), Si Dah et al. did not specify leadership types, thereby presenting a practical limitation. However, Si Dah et al. pointed out that organizational support was the critical mediating factor between leadership and innovation climate in NGOs, thereby providing a practical bearing on the work environment. The finding implies that depending on the nature of leadership, NGOs can formulate new ideas for better service provision to the communities.

Leadership also impacts employee job satisfaction. Omolo and Mose (2019) established that the perceived satisfactory work environment for the participants is dependent on the leadership's response to salary and work guidance. Similarly, in a broader context, Mwai et al. (2018) found that leadership style significantly influences the organizational effectiveness of NGOs. In particular, the research established that a leadership style comprising concern for employees, clear instructions, and employee consultation had a positive influence on organizational effectiveness defined by process efficiency, goal attainment, and stakeholder satisfaction. In that respect, the literature shows that NGO leadership influences work conditions, which affects organizational performance.

Challenges Faced by NGO Leadership. NGO leadership challenges have been explored by researchers, including the allocation of finances to fund different projects. Arhin et al. (2018) highlighted the challenge of leadership sustainability in NGOs caused

by changing funding landscapes. In other words, leaders could not commit to decisions as aid shifted, causing instability in NGOs governance. For instance, Arhin et al. noted that cost-cutting negatively affected workers, causing difficulty in accomplishing transformational leadership. The findings imply that NGO leadership is marked by constantly changing strategies due to the shifting aid landscape.

Legal obstacles can also affect the NGO leaders' effectiveness. Musila (2019) reported on the effects of anti-NGO measures in Africa and indicated that certain government actions, such as restrictions on foreign funds, lengthy registration requirements, bans, and other legal issues, interfered with the effective running of NGOs. In such cases, establishing an effective leadership structure was problematic due to constant political interference. On the other hand, Adem et al. (2018) highlighted the challenge of leadership collaboration where local NGOs are to merge with international NGOs. The trend implies that the operations of the NGOs would be limited, affecting the quality of leadership.

The submission by Adem et al. (2018) resonated with that of Guha (2019), who investigated the education NGOs in India. Guha established that a major leadership challenge of the NGOs was to collaborate and build working relationships with the schools and the government. The result implies that a lack of collaborative leadership framework for NGOs and other institutions inhibits potential partnerships. From the literature evidence, most challenges affecting NGO leadership are externally motivated. However, the resultant influence directly interferes with the internal organizational structure, which can paralyze NGO operations.

Building Organizational Leadership Capacity

There is limited literature on how organizational leaders can influence others to lead organizational goal achievement. Hence, it is crucial to probe how leadership capacity can be developed in organizations. Different factors influence the development of organizational leadership capacity, which further gives snippets as to the effectiveness of leaders. Organizational leaders need to be aware that their influence affects the ability of organizational members to lead effectively.

Employees need to be influenced to act according to the organization's values, to ensure achievement of the organizational goals. According to Griffith et al. (2019), a key leadership role is to nurture others to become leaders, hence improving the leadership capacity of their organizations. Moreover, Anning-Dorson et al. (2017) illustrated that ensuring employees have the proper training and are exposed to opportunities for learning about leadership is a crucial strategy by which leaders can develop leadership capacities within their organizations. The views imply that leaders can develop leadership capacities in their organizations by providing training and professional development opportunities to employees.

Based on the analysis of leadership effectiveness within nonprofit organizations, leaders need to depict certain traits related to human resource management, such as empathy, adaptability, and effective communication to ensure positive results. The findings noted help me to address the research goal of exploring how NGO leaders can ensure optimal utilization of resources. In this context, communicating tasks to followers

and showing empathy and adaptability can help achieve PPA goals of building capacity and improving collaboration with federal entities.

Leadership Theories

There are several theories that explain organizational performance. However, certain theories, such as contingency and trait, have limitations that could hinder their use in explaining nonprofit NGOs' performance. The basis of contingency theory is that no leadership style can stand alone because every leader is influenced by several factors that range from the quality needed by those offered the service to the situations surrounding the followers of the leadership, among other key variables (Cunha et al., 2019; Uslu, 2019). In contrast to Uslu (2019) explaining contingency theory, Khan et al. (2016) noted that in trait theory, people are either born or instilled with certain qualities that enable them to become effective leaders and excel in every role they are assigned. Prentice et al. (2022) also observed that such traits are perceived to include a sense of responsibility, intelligence to make neutral judgments, dependable decisions, and creativity. Therefore, one limitation of trait theory is that it considers leadership competency as restricted to specific talented individuals, while one limitation of contingency is that it does not prioritize leadership competencies but rather uses different styles based on context.

Contingency theorists assert that a specific leadership style regarded as effective in a given organization may not be effective in other organizations (Park, 2020; Uslu, 2019). Further, Javed et al. (2020) explained that contingency theory is built on the belief that the success of leadership style is dependent on the relationship between the leader and the subordinates. Therefore, in contingency theory, individuals are perceived as

effective leaders if they can balance between task-oriented and relationship-oriented approaches. Javed et al. (2020) view is shared by Jayawickreme et al. (2019), who observed that in trait theory, becoming a leader requires the development of certain qualities that are socially accepted and promote the achievement of the organization's vision without neglecting the needs of stakeholders. Therefore, trait and contingency theories fail to consider leadership competencies that can address the needs of followers and improve their output.

The limitations of contingency and trait theories are addressed by TLT, which advocates for leaders to focus on the needs of their followers and strive to offer the inputs needed to motivate them towards transforming their lives (Turnnidge & Côté, 2018). Moreover, according to Khattak et al. (2020), transformational leaders have the potential to identify the need for change, collaborate with others, and commit to abide by the set vision and mission purposing to promote change. In this study, I selected TLT because it considers the individual strengths of leaders and the social skills needed to support employees and enhance organizational output.

Relationship Between Leadership Competencies and Organizational Performance

Improving leadership competencies is often expected to increase organizational performance. In this section, I explored the different leadership competencies which lead to increased organizational performance to understand their context. The organizational performance is analyzed to understand its relationship with self-management competency, self-awareness competency, social skills competency, and social awareness competency.

Self-Management Competency and Organizational Performance

Self-management competencies include problem-solving abilities, conflict management, and interpersonal skills, which ensure that a leader can handle different challenges identified in an organization. According to Malaza (2020), self-management competencies improve organizational performance because they enable the leader to effectively manage changes. In the context of this study, organizations need to envelope leaders with self-management competencies to improve their capacity to support disadvantaged children. Wehmeier et al. (2020) also explained that self-management competencies can enhance positive outcomes in complex and diverse situations when dealing with individuals from diverse backgrounds. The two studies are similar in that they consider self-management competencies to improve the ability of leaders to handle complex and unpredictable situations with others, such as disadvantaged children. Further analysis of self-management competencies and their relationship with organizational performance were done by Steyn and Van Staden (2018). According to Steyn and Van Staden, team leader skills and competencies such as self-management competencies, are based on the general belief that self-management leadership competencies often have a direct influence on the performance of teams. In the quantitative research conducted, Steyn and Van Staden noted a significant correlation between integrity, ethical conduct, self-management, and a leader's ability to drive the performance of their organization. Taking the arguments into context, leaders can deal with issues directly related to organizational performance, such as managing funders and disadvantaged children.

Consistent views on self-management competency and organizational performance were obtained by Krén and Séllei (2021). Using a quantitative methodology Krén and Séllei collected data from 22 organizational leaders from Hungary and noted that the leadership skills needed to positively influence organizational performance include technical, communication, and emotional intelligence skills. Similarly, Hirschi et al. (2022) developed a conceptual framework for whole-life career self-management, and pointed out that business leaders with higher empathy are more effective. Put in context, such leaders are more likely to increase organizational performance by identifying the unique challenges facing disadvantaged children. The evidence gathered reveals that self-management skills are crucial in enhancing the ability of leaders to positively influence their organization through crucial skills such as empathy and people organization skills. These skills help improve the level of support that NGOs can offer for disadvantaged children.

Self-Awareness Competency and Organizational Performance

Self-awareness competencies are mainly related to managerial knowledge, inquisitiveness, and goal orientation, and hence, influence leadership styles used, such as transactional and transformational, based on the specific needs of individuals and organizational contexts. Indal and Arriola (2022) investigated the influence of transformational and transactional leadership competencies on the performance of different agencies in Basilan province. Indal and Arriola interviewed 30 heads of organizations and realized that transformational leadership competencies enable leaders to stimulate their followers to enhance their performance and achieve beyond their

expectations. However, Indal and Arriola also noted that transactional leadership results in good personal relations with subordinates, hence improving organizational performance. From the research evidence, transformational and transactional leadership competencies are crucial in achieving high-level employee motivation, which can influence NGOs to better collaborate with funders such as the U.S. government and handle disadvantaged children more effectively. Consistent observations were provided by Zhurham et al. (2023), who investigated transactional leadership competency and level of employee satisfaction. Zhurham et al. pointed out that transactional leaders take an interest in the subordinates and ensure that they achieve their goals. In both Zhurham et al. and Indal and Arriola, the self-awareness component by leaders has a direct influence on the subordinates and organizational performance.

Further, Tamunomiebi and Owzorji (2018) explored emotional self-awareness as a crucial competency for management and indicated that self-awareness among leaders enables them to listen to others and, and assess the value that others have to offer. In this case, self-awareness is closely related to openness and value diversity. However, inconsistent views were presented by Mokhtar et al. (2022), who examined the determinants of emotional intelligence on the work performance of employees. Mokhtar et al. indicated that self-awareness begins from an understanding of one's image, roles, values, and assumptions. In essence, the evidence points out that self-awareness should encompass personal mastery before understanding and influencing the roles played by others. Supportive arguments by Lawson et al. (2019) revealed that personal understanding is crucial for personal development and transformation. The evidence

noted indicates that self-awareness is crucial in improving organizational performance by positively influencing others and enhancing personal performance, which results in improved organizational performance and efficiency.

Social Skills Competency and Organizational Performance

Social skills competency entails the ability to inspire followers and foster collaboration and social judgment, which are crucial in improving individuals' ability to enhance organizational performance. Social competencies in NGOs have been linked to enhancing collaborative leadership, better quality of work-life, and improved organizational performance. Specifically, Sabuhari et al. (2020) investigated various social skills competencies and employee performance and noted that social competency among leaders enhances their ability to involve others in decision-making. The finding implies that in nonprofit NGOs, the ability of leaders to improve personal relationships with subordinates can support efforts to support disadvantaged children and better collaborate with federal agencies. According to Lawson et al. (2019), social skills competencies can propel organizations to commanding positions due to the embrace of participatory leadership competencies. Consistent observations were also made by Pascual (2022), who explored emotional intelligence and performance, and concluded that organizations should adopt a flexible leadership hierarchy that encourages social competency. Social skills competencies and leadership that employ networking skills were observed to be more innovative. The observations imply that social skills competencies among leaders enable employees to understand organizational vision.

Social skills are described by Tyson and Tyson (2020) as involving person-to-person interaction. As such, social skills play a role in improving the effectiveness of leaders to inspire change. In effect, the evidence implies that socially competent leaders can take charge and inspire others toward an organization's vision. Further evidence by Coombs (2021) indicated that social skills competence leads to building bonds and reaching common ground with employees irrespective of their ranks. The social skills competencies noted by Tyson and Tyson, and Coombs are considered useful for nonprofit NGOs in enhancing consensus building, needed to better support disadvantaged children and enhance collaboration with federal agencies. Supporting evidence by Imakwuchu and Billy (2018) showed that social skills enable leaders to perform well in cross-cultural communications, negotiations, and persuasions and enhance their ability to interact with others. All these aspects are considered to be central to enhancing the ability of nonprofit NGOs to better support disadvantaged children through better collaboration with federal organizations. As such, social skills are central in bringing out the best in people and compelling organizations to better handle diversity and work with other people towards the organization's visions.

Social Awareness Competency and Organizational Performance

Social awareness competency covers integrity issues and working with culturally diverse employees, and can be considered from two elements, including ethical leadership and ethical decision-making. In further elaborating on these aspects of social awareness competency, Ratasuk and Charoensukmongkol (2019) indicated that social awareness demands that leaders act ethically in how they treat and work with others, in

their statements, and in their public behaviors and decisions. Consistent views were presented by Hodgkinson and Sadler-Smith (2018). In their study on organizational ethical decision-making, Hodgkinson and Sadler-Smith concluded that social awareness points to how a leader works with and treats others. In this sense, social awareness can help nonprofit NGOs treat disadvantaged children with dignity, hence reflecting their commitment to supporting the vulnerable. In turn, federal organizations would enhance their financial support due to the strides made by the organizations in enhancing social inclusivity. Decker and Cangemi (2018) further illustrated that social awareness can also be seen in leaders' character and decision-making process. The wider component of these leadership traits also encompasses the leadership mindset, values, and principles and the courage to be ethical in the decisions made, even in difficult situations. In essence, this means that social awareness enables leaders to maintain a sense of humanity even when faced with tough situations. Causing no harm based on their decisions is the guiding principle in the decision-making of such leaders.

In further demonstrating the importance of social awareness competency in leadership in enhancing organizational performance, Svalgaard (2018) conducted a quantitative study on the crucial role of ethical leaders in public perception of organizations. Svalgaard found out that ethical leadership demands leaders to become socially competent not just because someone is watching but as a guiding principle of their organizational leadership. The findings implied that social awareness competency enables organizations to have moral perception, moral management, and moral judgment. High levels of ethical leadership enhance collaboration with federal agencies for

nonprofit organizations, improving the financial support available to aid disadvantaged children. Supporting evidence by Mwanja (2023) involving 71 interviews of managers from a Kenyan University's leadership indicated that social awareness competency in leaders is directly linked to employee performance. Therefore, demonstrating a lack of ethical behavior by leaders adversely affects the organizational performance and the general public perception of the organization. In essence, the findings denote that nonprofit NGOs which demonstrate ethical conduct and decision-making are more likely to attract funding and support from federal organizations to enhance support for disadvantaged children.

Gaps in Literature

Literature has established that effective leaders' qualities influence their problem solving and management approaches. Leadership is a critical area of concern in most departments of the organization across the globe, and hence, researchers have conducted studies to explore how training and leadership workshops impact the leadership ability of an individual with others exploring how a person's social, cultural, and religious environment influence leadership ability. Additionally, adequate studies have been conducted to establish effective leaders in the NGO context.

Limited studies have been conducted to compare and contrast the leadership qualities possessed by individuals seeking to promote PPA goals. Although there is substantial research, such as Aboramadan and Dahleez (2020), Charleston et al. (2018), and Aldashev and Navarra (2018), that have focused on exploring NGO leaders' skills that can improve performance, they took a general approach and not focused on PPA

goals. In this respect, I conducted this study to increase knowledge on leadership skills that enable not only increased service quality but also achievement of PPA goals. Similarly, limited studies have been conducted on how leaders can be supported to exhibit competencies that enable the achievement of PPA principles. Most of the available studies, such as Anning-Dorson et al. (2017) and Griffith et al. (2019), have focused on how employees can be supported to improve their satisfaction and overall performance, but little evidence is present on the type of training leaders can be given to enhance their capacity to achieve PPA goals. Therefore, I explored in this study the competencies that should be depicted by NGO leaders to ensure improved resource utilization.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter provided detailed insight into the major themes of leadership competencies already covered in the literature. Besides, the existing theories on leadership competencies were analyzed to gain detailed insight into the foundation upon which the literature is developed. Through a comprehensive explication of transformational, trait, and contingency theories, a detailed insight was obtained into the concept of leadership development and the factors that influence the acquisition of leadership qualities. This laid the foundation for the exploration of the variables that are pertinent to the development of this study. Moreover, the incorporation of trait, contingency, and transformational theory in this chapter promoted a deeper understanding of the factors that promote or inhibit the development of leadership qualities. In transformational leadership theory, leaders strive to inspire and encourage

employees to be innovative and take a proactive approach in seeking solutions to organizational problems. The theory was deemed crucial in this research because nonprofit NGOs have less financial benefit appeal, and hence, leaders who inspire and motivate their followers can help improve employee satisfaction and enable consistently high performance. Meanwhile, the main idea of trait theory is that some leaders are born with certain traits, such as a sense of responsibility, which make them effective. Lastly, in contingency theory, leadership styles cannot be generalized for all organizations because each one has a unique mission and objectives that require a particular leadership strategy to be achieved. The theory was important in revealing that leadership competencies for nonprofit NGOs could be different from those of for-profit organizations, which makes it crucial to explore the topic in detail to increase knowledge.

Equally, a detailed analysis was done on leadership roles and competencies as well as how varied leadership qualities influence organizational performance. A crucial finding from the review was that leaders should exhibit certain qualities such as empathy, passion, adaptability, and good communication to enhance their cross-cultural competencies and ensure they can work together with employees and stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds. The analysis also revealed that effective leaders should continuously learn and improve their professional skills, motivate their employees, and depict problem-solving skills to ensure consistently high performance. Meanwhile, the roles of effective leaders were realized to be diverse and included financial management, coordination of organizational activities, policy development, and mentorship. Lastly, the review revealed that certain self-management competencies, such as emotional

intelligence, effective communication, and good interpersonal skills, can lead to significant improvement in organizational performance in the long term. The FGCCA of 1977 was also analyzed to understand the potential benefit of effective leadership for NGOs. The analysis showed that NGO leaders who demonstrate a high level of performance and a positive impact on society can be awarded federal grants to facilitate their operations. In this respect, understanding leadership competencies that enhance the performance of NGO leaders could provide benefits beyond building employee capacity and improved resource management to ensure increased access to federal grants. The next chapter indicates the methods used to implement this research and achieve the set objectives. The methodology chapter also shows the data collection and analysis strategies.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore NGO leaders' experiences on the leadership competencies that lead to higher performance. The performance, in this case, is aligned with PPA goals of capacity and collaboration, where USAID regulations highlight that leaders can enhance NGOs' capability by improving leaders' capacity and collaboration with federal entities for the optimal public good. In this chapter, I present the sections that make up the entire methodology for addressing the research problem and achieving the research purpose. The first major section is the research design and rationale. Specifically, the design outlines the approach that was used to integrate the research components to fit the research purpose. The key elements of the research design section include a qualitative method and an inductive approach. In the second section of the chapter, I outline my role as the researcher in the study. I was involved in collecting data and the subsequent interpretation. Additionally, I played an essential role in identifying the right participants based on the specified section procedures. I also present information on the data collection and analysis process. I then describe issues of trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability. This section also includes information on the ethical procedures I used when collecting and handling data. The chapter is concluded with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

In this study, I examined the following research questions:

RQ1: What leadership competencies promote NGO leaders' ability to achieve PPA goals of improved collaboration with federal entities and building leaders' capacity to achieve organizational goals?

RQ2: What leadership training should be given to NGO and federal agency employees to improve their effectiveness in supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds?

The central concept of this study involved analyzing NGO leaders' competencies to understand how they can be enhanced to achieve PPA goals of capacity and collaboration, which involved promoting collaboration with federal agencies and building the capacity of leaders to make balanced decision making that considers present and future organizational needs (see Head, 2022). Addressing the PPA issues is expected to promote effective and efficient utilization of resources and improved collaboration with federal entities to ensure NGOs provide optimal benefit to the general public.

The research method for this study was based on a generic qualitative design, which involves exploring a phenomenon by gathering diverse views of participants to understand how they make meaning of a situation due to their different backgrounds (see Fowler, 2023). One benefit of generic qualitative design is that it gives the researcher the flexibility to gather detailed data while deviating from methodological rules and ensuring they can gather descriptive and interpretive data (Jahja et al., 2021). Unlike other qualitative methodologies such as ethnography, phenomenology, and action research, which have distinguishing features such as understanding the cultural rules of targeted participants, focusing on participants' lived experiences, or analyzing the change in

practice, the generic qualitative design gives researchers the flexibility to choose any approach of gathering qualitative data that ensures the research problem is comprehensively addressed.

There is little existing empirical research on leaders' competencies in NGOs that can help to improve organizational performance, making a generic qualitative design appropriate for this study. Typically, a generic design is best applied where there is little empirical research on a topic because it enhances understanding of how individuals perceive and interpret a phenomenon (Kahlke, 2014; Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Liu, 2016). Therefore, in applying generic qualitative design in this research, the main focus was to provide a comprehensive description of different competencies of leaders that enhance their performance by developing different themes based on subjective data from participants. Applying a generic qualitative design also allows the adoption of best research practices (Cooper & Endacott, 2007; Pati et al., 2016). In agreement, several authors have highlighted that generic qualitative design improves the quality of evidence gathered by enabling the use of diverse approaches in data collection (Milne & Oberle, 2005; Sandelowski, 2000). Although research by Doyle et al. (2020) and Rolfe (2006) have noted that generic design presents challenges related to lack of transparency, Kim et al. (2017) and Elliott and Timulak (2021) identified that the generic design is similar to other qualitative approaches because it involves describing, classifying, interpreting data while providing more flexibility to researchers. The generic qualitative design also focuses on gathering evidence with practical applications, which makes it suitable for research related to service improvement (Caelli et al., 2003; Kholomeydik, 2012).

Because generic design focuses on real issues with practical implications, semi-structured or fully-structured interviews and surveys should be used in data collection instead of unstructured data collection techniques such as field observations (Percy et al., 2015). Nonetheless, Bellamy et al. (2016) explained that data collection in generic design should be informed by the research question and objectives as well as available resources, logistical barriers, timeframe, and ethical considerations. For this research, a generic qualitative design was applied by using semi-structured interviews to gather data.

Role of the Researcher

I assumed an observer-participant role in the research. Backed by the principle of interpretivism for qualitative research, the researcher is expected to actively engage in the data collection process (Karagiozis, 2018). As a participant, my role was to integrate with the employees of NGOs, help them understand the interview questions, and offer guidance during the interview sessions. Therefore, from a participation perspective, my roles included interpreting the research and filling in the missing gaps from responses (see Fleet et al., 2016). On the other hand, the observatory role was carried out in the analysis process whereby, as a researcher, I am only to accept the data from the participants.

Taquette and Borges da Matta Souza (2022) contended that the researcher plays a central role in the research process. In qualitative studies, the researcher has to gather the opinions of the research participants. This is not an easy task, as the researcher has to develop effective ways through which the perception of the participants can be revealed without compromising or influencing their responses. Hence, it means that the researcher

should carry out a delicate balance between collecting in-depth data and ensuring that the study stays within its defined boundaries. In the data collection procedure, my role included participating in sampling, preparing interview questions, and conducting interviews. During the sampling procedure, the first step is to develop the inclusion criteria for filtering out the participants for the most relevant sample. The next step involved confirming participation for each participant. In the meantime, when generating questions, I ensured that the research objectives were reflected. The other step was to assess the quality of the questions. During the interview stage, my role as the researcher included engaging the participants by asking questions and gathering responses (see Fleet et al., 2016). Throughout the sessions, the participants' comfort was considered to ensure they did not experience emotional or physical harm.

For this study, I sampled participants who did not demonstrate any personal or professional relationship. According to Guillemin et al. (2018), researchers should select participants from organizations with solid institutional structures while avoiding selecting participants with whom they have close ties. The strategy can help to improve the trustworthiness of data gathered while reducing sampling bias related to friends and family expressing specific views based on their perceived expectations from the researcher (Råheim et al., 2016). The participants did not have any personal or professional relationship with me and were given autonomy to share their honest views and ensure reliable study outcomes.

Although I selected participants with no personal relationship to me, there was a possibility of forging a relationship during the interview process, which can cause

performance bias issues. Performance bias is exhibited when a researcher tends to favor particular participants and fails to scrutinize their responses (Noble & Smith, 2015). Performance bias was adequately addressed by maintaining professionalism throughout the study. Further, there is a possibility for sampling bias whereby individual feelings and perceptions drive the choice of participants for the study (Wadams & Park, 2018). I addressed this by following and sticking to verified inclusion criteria. Also, there were possibilities for reporting bias in which parts of the data may be eliminated or manipulated for personal or audience interest (Wadams & Park, 2018). The bias was addressed by observing the ethics of integrity.

Moreover, the risk of reporting bias was addressed using bracketing, where the researcher asked an experienced person to conduct the interview using the developed questions (see Janak, 2018). Bracketing enabled me to act as a participant and gain clarity and improved engagement with the questions, hence noting the areas that may need adjustments before actual interviews are conducted. Moreover, reflexive journaling was used to reduce reporting bias by reflecting and checking whether the responses from the research align with the reasons for conducting the research and only including those that can help to achieve the research aim.

Other than bias, I encountered additional ethical issues during the research. Firstly, there is the question about conducting the research in the workplace (Roger et al., 2018). To address this issue, I sought permission from Organization A management to conduct interviews on the organization's premises and ensure an effective data collection process. Essentially, the work environment seemed the ideal location, yet the participants

have been unwilling to share information there for fear of eavesdropping. This meant that the interviews were conducted outside working hours. Therefore, I resolved to channel invitations to personal emails rather than work emails for convenience.

Secondly, some participants were unwilling to participate without financial incentives. In other words, they demanded payment for information shared. As a solution, the dialogue was used to explain that the research was for academic purposes and that no financial gains are attached, even for me. Further, the participants were duly informed that it is against research ethics to provide incentives to participants as it may influence the accuracy of the information shared in research (see Bahrami et al., 2016). Thirdly, a conflict of interest was noted between the NGO management and me in the early stages of the study. Specifically, the management indicated that only the senior staff were interviewed and not the subordinates. However, the diversification of views was important for quality data. Therefore, I described the significance of different leadership skills to gain in-depth insight into the topic.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The population targeted in this study included leaders of nonprofit NGOs and related stakeholders. The research population was from St. Louis, Missouri, in the United States, where nonprofit NGOs that help to tackle child poverty were selected for data gathering. For this study, the study population involved leaders of Organization A located in St. Louis, Missouri, as well as the federal agency that collaborates with the NGO to ensure the well-being of disadvantaged children. The consideration of the two

organizations was expected to reduce issues of selection bias. Notably, only the nonprofit organizations belonging to the NGOs category were considered for the study. Therefore, there was no state or federal government interference.

I employed purposive sampling to recruit the participants. In purposive sampling, the researcher picks candidates based on prior knowledge of their potential regarding the researched topic (Campbell et al., 2020). The sampling technique is justified by its simplicity, which saves time and financial resources, hence ensuring that the researcher can concentrate on other crucial aspects of the research (Andrade, 2021). In this manner, the research depth could be enhanced, hence improving the quality of the evidence gathered. Moreover, Ames et al. (2019) explained that purposive sampling is crucial in improving the validity and trustworthiness of findings because the data is based on individuals with extensive experience on a specific topic.

I ensured that the participants met the eligibility criteria of the sample. Inclusion criteria were used to determine the target population and narrow it down to the right sample. The first inclusion criterion involved selecting individuals who have leadership positions in the chosen NGO and federal agency. The strategy ensured that the participants had first-hand experience of the different leadership competencies and understood what is required to improve the performance of nonprofit NGOs. The second criterion involved recruiting individuals who were above 18 years old to ensure they could provide the consent needed to recruit them as participants in this study.

The PPA aspects I considered in the process included collaboration with federal agencies and building the capacity of leaders to solve complex problems. The questions

set the ground for me to establish whether the individuals were conversant with the leadership competencies that impact organizational performance. Further, the eligibility of the participants was tested by enquiring whether they could identify the main qualities of leaders who post better performance than others. Moreover, the eligible participants were required to prove that they have certain leaders who are more effective in their organizations than others. Some of the questions to be asked include the characteristics of the effective leaders. The right answers acted as proof for me that the participant had interacted with the target leader and was useful to the research.

From the population, the study sample was determined for data collection. The first step of the sampling process involved identifying the organizations. According to Shetty (2023), a sample of at least 10 is needed in qualitative research to ensure accurate and reliable outcomes. In this respect, a total of 20 participants were sampled. To achieve the target sample of 20 participants, 10 participants were sampled from employees of Organization A, which is a nonprofit NGO located in St. Louis, Missouri, whose primary mission is to provide food, housing, and shelter to disadvantaged children. The other 10 participants were employees of federal agencies that do business with Organization A. The involvement of participants from the targeted NGO and federal agencies provided detailed insight into leadership competencies that can ensure a high level of performance in a nonprofit organizational context. The number of organizations selected as the representative sampled is deemed sufficient based on the requirements for qualitative research of small samples for detailed evaluation.

The second step in determining the sample was to contact the human resource managers of the respective organizations for permission to include the employees in the study. The step was necessary, as detailed in research ethics, for studies involving people in institutions. Partnership agreements were drafted and signed. Once the organizations agreed to have their staff interviewed, I emailed the potential organizations and participants, and I stated the purpose and details of the research. The email communications contained an attachment of the invitation form (see Appendix A and Appendix B) developed from the Walden University template to be signed as an agreement for participation. In total, 20 participants were identified and recruited as the study sample. Notably, the number is smaller compared to the entire target population. However, this was essential for deeper inquiry per individual. The interviews lasted about 60 minutes for each session and were conducted online via Zoom.

I also applied the concept of data saturation to justify the appropriate sample size. Generally, saturation is the point during interviews whereby no additional opinions, views, issues, or insights apart from the ones already stated can add value to the findings (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Instead, further interviews only present a repetition of responses. At this point, an adequate sample size was attained and is considered sufficient for capturing the depth of the phenomenon. In this research, I used data saturation to ensure that the qualitative data gathered was robust and valid. In that respect, I recruited 20 participants with different leadership positions as the sample size based on the saturation concept. To reduce bias in purposive sampling, Klar and Leeper (2019) indicated that clear research questions and objectives should be developed to ensure that

the targeted population is aligned with the research requirements. In the context of this study, I involved experienced researchers before sampling participants to help develop the qualities and knowledge regarding leadership expected from participants before recruitment.

Instrumentation

I employed semi-structured interviews as the instrument of data collection. Essentially, interviews are used to obtain one-on-one information from the participants using direct asking and responses (Roberts, 2020). A major benefit of using interviews in research is that it enables the collection of detailed information not only about respondents' opinions and experiences regarding a topic but also their attitudes and feelings towards the subject of interest (Jain, 2021). Moreover, unlike other data collected in methods such as surveys, interviews offer the opportunity to seek clarification regarding a specific response by participants, ensuring detailed insight into a phenomenon studied (Oliffe et al., 2021). At the same time, the interviewees can seek clarification for ambiguous questions to provide the most precise response. For this research, I considered interviews appropriate because they enabled the collection of detailed insight into how different leadership competencies influence the overall performance of NGOs, enabling an understanding of the critical leadership skills needed to improve productivity.

Further, using interviews is common for qualitative research because it provides the interviewer authority over the data collection process. In other words, the interviewer retains control of the question-answer sessions and offers effective moderation such that

the conversation conforms to the research objectives (Alamri, 2019). For the structure, I used the same semi-structured interview protocol to gather information from all participants. A semi-structured type of interview aligns the questions with the research objectives and adopts a systematic pattern of administering the questions (McGrath et al., 2019). The interviews consisted of two parts, the first part focusing on demographic information and the second part covering research topics. The interview form which was used in this study is presented in Appendix C.

The interview questions were developed by considering previous questions developed by Carter in 2016, who focused on the competencies of leaders in nonprofit organizations but considered different sectors. The interview questions framework by Carter (2016) has also been used by other researchers who have explored leadership issues in nonprofit organizations, such as Chick (2019), Dowdell (2020), and Gallup (2019). The interview questions developed by Carter (2016) were appropriate for this study because they covered issues of leadership competencies in nonprofit organizations, which is also of interest in this study. The study by Carter (2016) was also conducted in the United States, which implies a socio-cultural context similar to this research. However, modifications were needed to align the questions with these research goals, which include improving collaboration between nonprofit NGO leaders and federal agencies and enhancing the capacity of the NGOs. The context-specific issues considered in developing the interview questions included leadership issues when supporting children affected by poverty.

The sufficiency of data collection instruments has been indicated by Yoon and Uliassi (2022) as being the core aspect in ensuring that the study obtains results that are both reliable and aligned with the objectives of the study. Hence, the sufficiency of the data collection instruments should be carefully determined so that the observations made can be confirmed even if the study were to be conducted again in similar settings. The research sought to address the research question of understanding the competencies of some leaders, which make them post higher performance than others. Semi-structured interviews are deemed a sufficient instrument for answering the research questions.

The semi-structured interview presents the benefit of allowing the participants and the interviewer to ask questions and provide further clarification on an issue (Striepe, 2021). In this regard, semi-structured interviews emphasize the use of probe questions to better understand emerging issues from the answers provided by participants during the interview (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). By using semi-structured interviews, I extracted sufficient information from the employees depicting various features of the leaders. Moreover, the selected instrument provided sufficient room for gaining insight into the leadership character in a nonprofit setting based on training background. Using the interviews, the participants could understand the effective leadership skills that can enable the improvement of NGO operations. Moreover, asking related questions in an interview provided the participant with the room to reflect on the organization and recommend practical measures.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the interviews were in audio format and were first transcribed before analysis. The research adopted verbatim transcription whereby the audio files are transcribed word by word (McGrath et al., 2019). This helped in retaining the originality of the data as given by the respondents. The qualitative data transcribed were analyzed using the thematic analysis technique. The goal of thematic analysis was to extract repeating ideas and opinions from the data to form themes that address the research questions.

The major step in the analysis process was coding. Essentially, coding refers to the process of making short-hand notations for common ideas emerging from the data to develop themes (Deterding & Waters, 2021). For this research, inductive coding was used, whereby the themes were derived directly from the data rather than based on preconceived notions (Deterding & Waters, 2021). The Delve software for qualitative analysis was used to assist with the coding process because it is available online, easy to use, and allows analysis of large datasets. The method is appropriate for the research questions because this study is based on exploratory design, which aims at identifying fresh concepts.

The initial step in the coding process is referred to as open coding. In this step, I performed a round pass on the data and grouped the responses into discrete excerpts, which were labeled based on the message emitted (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). These codes from the open coding were tentative and subject to further evaluation and improvement. The initial coding stages also involved In Vivo coding, whereby the codes

were generated based on the participants' own words and intentions (Chowdhury, 2015). This ensured my ideas did not infiltrate the analysis process. In the next stage, the codes were organized into categories based on similarity.

Next, the third stage entailed a second round of the data in which I focused on thematic analysis coding. In thematic coding, the main aim was to identify patterns across the data set and apply a unifying code to the related excerpts (Neuendorf, 2018). Finally, the codes turned themes were composed into final narratives for the research findings. The entire analysis was performed manually.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data was tested by achieving credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reliability. Specifically, credibility measures the truth value of the data collected from the interviews (Kyngäs et al., 2020). This goal was achieved using data triangulation in which observers were engaged to ascertain the comprehensiveness and robustness of the information gathered. Meanwhile, transferability measures the extent to which the results apply to related circumstances (Nassaji, 2020). This aspect was addressed through a thick description in which adequate details were provided on the method used to accomplish the study, including the participants and target population.

On the other hand, dependability demonstrates the consistency of the data (Nassaji, 2020). This was accomplished by inviting an external audit of the research, a task to be undertaken by the supervisor. In the meantime, confirmability measures the extent to which the results accurately reflect the raw data of the participants (Kyngäs et

al., 2020). This was tested using an audit trail, which involves careful detailing of the processes utilized for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Finally, reliability measures the ability of the research method to replicate the results (Evans, 2017). Interrater reliability was tested by having three interviewers. By establishing the similarity in the results, the reliability of the methods was affirmed.

Ethical Procedures

Before engaging participants, I sought ethical approval from the university ethics committee. The institutional review board (IRB) approval number for this study is 05-07-24-0065077. Additionally, I considered ethical principles to protect the rights of the participants. The first ethical issue revolved around the consent of the participants (Goodwin et al., 2020). I prepared consent forms and sent them to the participants for signing. This step ensured that only willing candidates were recruited for the study. Seeking consent also served the right of the participants to information and autonomous decision-making.

The second ethical issue is confidentiality (Roberts, 2015). This touches directly on the safety of the participants because of the information involved. However, I maintained a high level of confidentiality such that the participants' data were not shared with third parties. In this study, confidentiality was implemented by hiding participants' details, such as real names, phone numbers, and email addresses, to ensure that the results cannot be traced directly to them, which can lead to victimization. Confidentiality also ensures that the emphasis of the research is on the data gathered rather than on those who shared the information.

The third ethical issue involved data security. Data security entails protecting data gathered from illegal access to avoid data breaches. In this case, the gathered data was stored in password-protected computer files, and the interview files stored in the cloud were protected with end-to-end encryption to avoid interception. The key goal of data protection is to ensure that it is used for the intended purpose of this study and not used in other different contexts. In this way, the participants' consent to engage and help achieve the goals of this study is respected.

The fourth ethical issue touched on anonymity, which involves using pseudonyms instead of actual names of participants when quoting their views in results (Arifin, 2018). The strategy is crucial because the identities of the participants were determined in the interviews. However, these details were not released during the data presentation. Instead, separate references were used to cover the identities and protect the participants from condemnation at the workplace.

Closely linked to anonymity is the principle of autonomy, which was also observed. According to Roberts (2015), autonomy entails giving participants the right to withdraw at any stage of the research if they feel uncomfortable or for no reason at all. The underlying goal is to ensure that participants' physical and mental well-being is prioritized and that they are not harmed in any way. Although there were no health risks in this study, the autonomy principle was implemented to give participants the freedom to choose when to stop the interviews to ensure the information shared was voluntary and not coerced.

Summary

The research adopted a qualitative method based on an exploratory design to answer the research questions. This is in line with the research problem, which requires an understanding of the performance and behavioral trends of trained and untrained leaders in nonprofit NGOs. For data collection, 20 participants were recruited using the purposive sampling technique from organizations in the U.S., including 10 participants from Organization A in St. Louis, Missouri, and 10 participants who were employees in the U.S. federal government. The participants were scheduled for online interviews where data were gathered. A crucial advantage of online interviews is that they provide flexibility to the interviewer and participants on where and when they can engage in the interviews because physical interactions and traveling are not needed. The data were analyzed thematically, and the results were presented in topics. Thematic analysis was considered relevant for this study because only qualitative data was gathered. Further, ethical issues were addressed by the research. Thus, the rights of participants were adequately protected during the main study. The ethical principles I considered during data collection and analysis included confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, and data security. Applying the ethical principles improved confidence in the results because it revealed that the well-being of participants was considered when engaging them in online interviews in this research. The next chapter presents the results of the analysis conducted. The results indicate the demographic data of participants and the different themes developed from the interview data collected.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore NGO leaders' experiences on competencies that lead to effective performance. Additionally, the results presented in this section help to address the set research questions, which included

RQ1: What leadership competencies promote NGO leaders' ability to achieve PPA goals of improved collaboration with federal entities and building leaders' capacity to achieve organizational goals?

RQ2: What leadership training should be given to NGO employees and federal agency employees to improve their effectiveness in supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds?

In this chapter, I present the findings from the analysis in which tables and figures are employed to show observed trends in the gathered data. The results were primarily developed using interview data collected from participants. The findings are based on preselected and discovered themes noted while analyzing the primary data gathered. I cover several pertinent subtopics, including the setting of the study, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, study results, and chapter summary.

Setting

This study's setting was in Missouri, United States, where participants were recruited from Organization A, a nonprofit NGO whose main mission is to support children from deprived backgrounds. Additionally, participants were recruited from the federal organizations that support the NGO. Organization A was selected in this study because I had previously been a volunteer at the organization and have personal

connections with friends who could help recruit NGO leaders to be participants. In brief, Organization A has a decentralized organizational structure with many executive managers in charge of different departments. The NGO in Missouri is part of a broader network in the country, which means that the leaders have benchmarks and a better understanding of the skills they need to improve their performance comparable to other NGOs. Meanwhile, the federal organizations were chosen to sample participants due to their accessibility as well as my connections with friends in the agencies. The recruitment of participants in the targeted organizations was implemented as planned. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in the next section. The participants were engaged using online interviews, which meant that there were no organizational and personal conditions that could influence them during the data collection process or affected their interpretation of interview questions.

Demographics

The demographic characteristics of participants recruited in this study are summarized in Table 1. In brief, 20 participants were recruited and engaged in the interviews.

Table 1

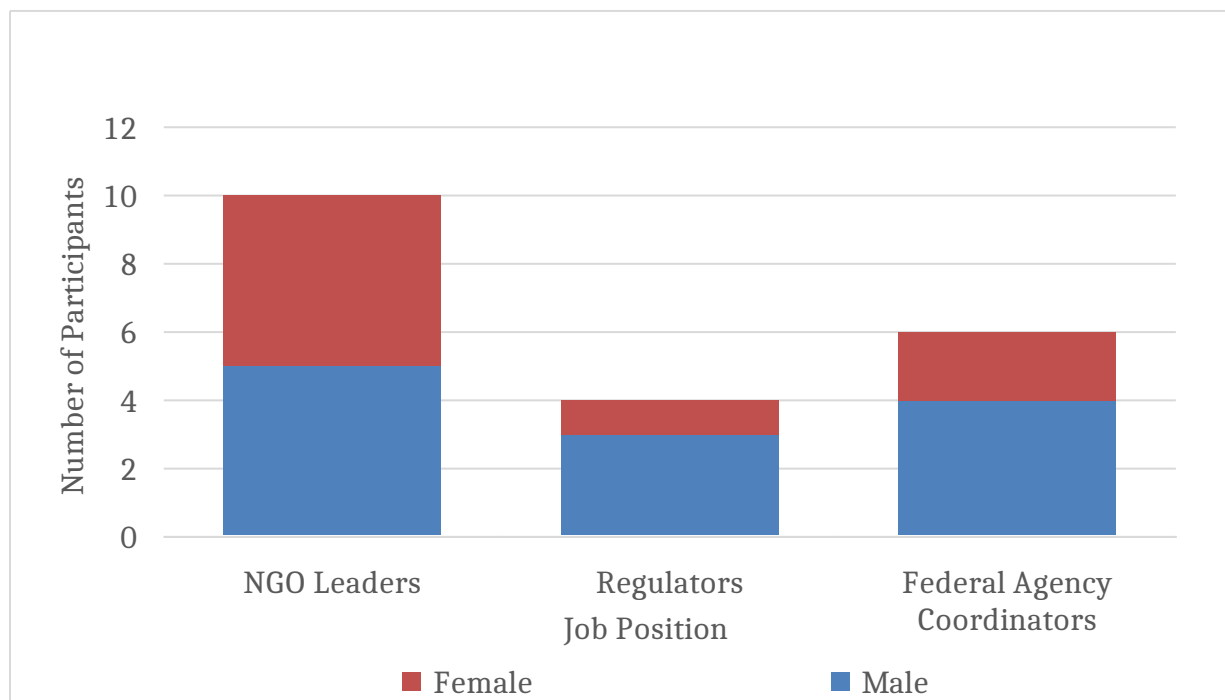
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Gender	Age (years)	Experience (years)	Job position	Industry
Male: 12	30-39: 2	5-9: 13	NGO Leader: 10	NGO: 10
Female: 8	40-49: 12	10-14: 5	Federal Agency Coordinator: 6	Federal Government: 10
	50-59: 5	15-19: 2	Regulator: 4	
	60-69: 1			

The demographic result in Table 1 was summarized in Figure 2, showing the distribution of participants based on job type and gender. The finding in Figure 2 shows that most participants were NGO leaders which means that data gathered could help in understanding their experiences on various leadership competencies to improve organizational performance. Nonetheless, the inclusion of federal agency coordinators and regulators helped to improve the reliability of the data because it enabled the gathering of different perspectives on issues related to leadership competencies.

Figure 2

Participant Distribution Based on Job Position and Gender



Data Collection

Data collection in this research was implemented as planned in Chapter 3, except for a few adjustments. In particular, 20 participants were involved in the interviews. Among the sampled participants, 10 were NGO leaders and 10 were federal employees. In this respect, the sampling process was consistent with the plan in Chapter 3. The data collection process was conducted using online interviews, with each session lasting about one hour. The interview data were audio recorded and later transcribed.

However, there were certain adjustments made in the actual data collection process due to challenges experienced by three participants in accessing the Zoom online platform to enable the interview. I addressed the problem by collaborating with the affected participants to change the data collection to telephone interviews. Each telephone interview lasted about 40 minutes and reduced my ability to build rapport with the interviewees by checking their body language and probing them more about the topic based on the responses. Nonetheless, the telephone interviews were conducted without any problems, and the audio data gathered was recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Meanwhile, the remaining 17 participants were engaged in online interviews as planned.

There were challenges in five of the cases where slow internet connections disrupted the interview process and led to the rescheduling of the interviews where they were completed. Additionally, in two of the cases, technical problems were encountered regarding inaudible speech, and lags in voice transmission made it difficult to maintain a continuous discussion on the topic. One of the cases was resolved after troubleshooting

the problems and supporting the participant, enabling the interviews to be completed. However, the other case was postponed for 1 week to give the participant adequate time to resolve the technical problem. Meanwhile, in three of the online interview sessions, there was intense background noise that interfered with the interview and the audio records. As such, I stopped the interviews and rescheduled them with the participants who were requested to find a quieter place to engage in the interviews.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis technique was employed to analyze the gathered interview data. The first step involved transcribing the audio interview data into a textual format. The second step involved the generation of relevant codes to identify key points related to NGO leadership competencies. A summary of the codes generated is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

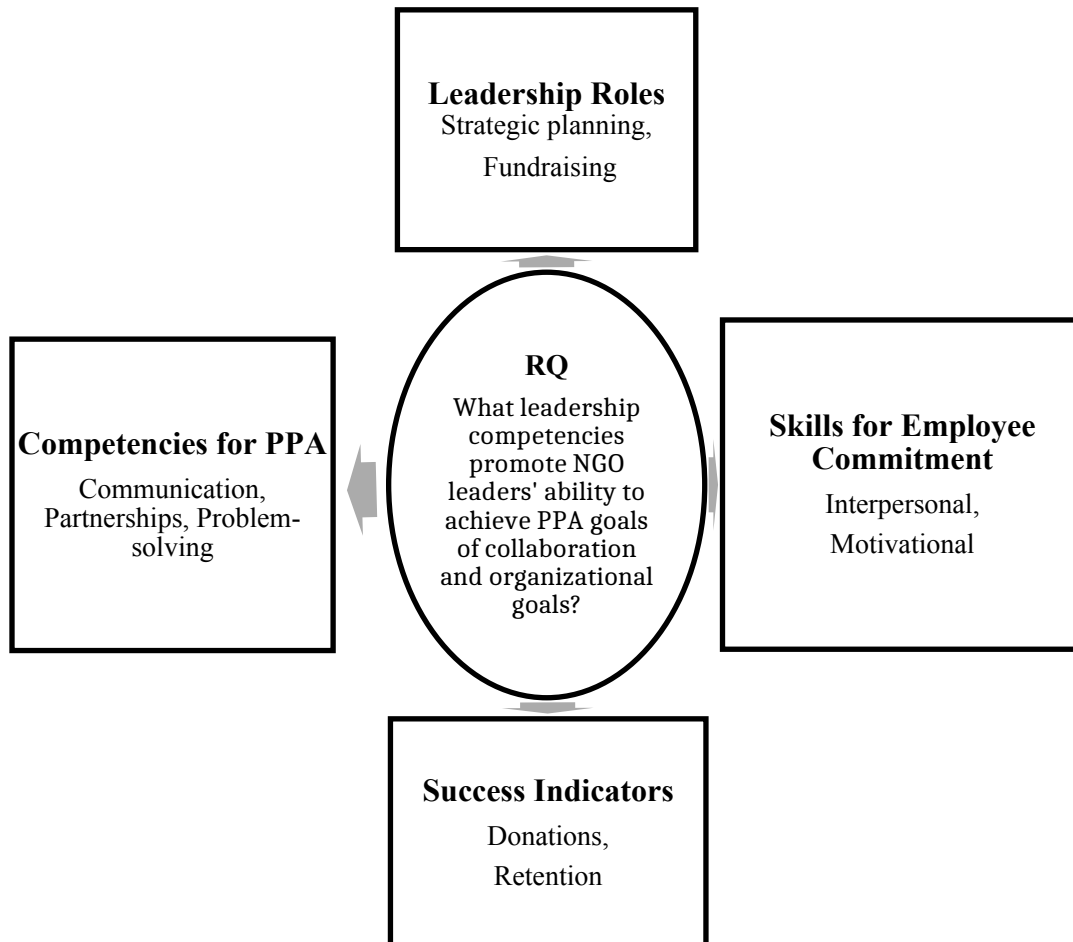
Codes, Definitions, and Frequency

Codes	Definition	Frequency
Strategic planning	Participants noted that strategic planning was a key role of NGO leaders	12
Fundraising	NGO directors are expected to crowdfund and mobilize resources in terms of financial, human, and physical	9
Communication	Effective communication skills enable NGO leaders to articulate their ideas clearly, improving communication and reducing misunderstanding.	8
Partnerships	Participants noted that building rapport and creating partnerships promote a positive work environment.	7
Problem solving	NGO leaders need to help employees find solutions to different problems that they face.	6
Interpersonal	Participants indicated that NGO leaders should have good interpersonal skills that foster a sense of	7

trust and credibility among employees.

Motivational	NGO leaders need to motivate employees through recognition, awards, or professional development to improve their job satisfaction and create a positive work environment	6
Donations	Participants stated that an increase in donations was an indicator of leaders' success in achieving PPA goals.	5
Retention	Participants indicated that employee retention is an indicator of success because participants only stay in an environment where they are appreciated and treated with dignity.	4

The third step in the analysis involved grouping the codes into themes. The emphasis was to ensure the evidence gathered from the interview was aligned with the research goals, and the broader categorization of data into themes helped to answer the main question. The codes shown in Table 2 were checked to identify those that addressed similar ideas and then categorized into broader categories before being renamed as themes. For instance, codes on interpersonal and motivational skills were noted to focus on how NGO leaders support employees (category). However, a closer review of the participants' responses led to the renaming of the category skills for employee commitment, which was taken as the final theme. Four themes were developed based on the codes generated: (a) leadership roles of NGO leaders, (b) competencies and skills of NGO leaders needed to achieve PPA goals, (c) leadership skills needed to improve employee commitment and satisfaction, and (d) success indicators for NGO leaders achieving PPA goals. A visual representation of theme development is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3*Summary of Codes and Themes*

There were a few discrepancies in the findings where participants expressed different views from the prevailing opinions expressed by other participants. However, the expressed views were mainly to inform on how to improve the skills and efforts of NGO leaders rather than to contradict the opinions provided by other participants. In particular, one participant noted that rather than merely having the role of strategic planning, NGO leaders should also be engaged in advocacy to ensure they incorporate

stakeholders in the planning process and ensure the developed plans have considered expected contributions from other stakeholders, such as donors and employees. In this respect, the discrepancies were factored into the analysis process by also considering different views on the topic to understand how NGO leaders can enhance their capacities to meet PPA goals.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Several strategies were implemented during the actual data collection process to ensure the trustworthiness of results, with few adjustments to the planned processes. Concerning credibility, I planned to engage experienced researchers to ascertain the robustness of the data gathered. The goal was to ensure high-quality evidence addresses the set research questions.

However, due to time limitations and difficulty in accessing the research experts, a different approach was employed to ensure research credibility. In particular, a data saturation technique was employed where many participants were engaged to gather a comprehensive dataset so that involving more interviewees did not increase the data quality. In particular, I engaged 20 participants in interviews, which exceeds the nine participants required to reach saturation in interviews, according to Hennink and Kaiser (2022).

The second issue of trustworthiness regarding data transferability was planned to be achieved by describing the population targeted to help reveal the different ways of applying the findings. In the implementation, the description of the population to improve transferability was made by showing that this study included NGO leaders of

organizations supporting children from deprived backgrounds and federal agency employees. The strategy ensured that the findings could be applied in NGOs from different sectors because the federal agency employees collaborate with all NGOs, including those involved in supporting children.

The third data trustworthiness issue was related to confirmability, where this study planned to conduct an audit trail, showing a detailed account of the decisions made at different stages in data collection. The strategy was used to achieve confirmability in this study to show that the raw data gathered and the findings developed were aligned with each other and there was no bias in data interpretation. Apart from using an audit trail, I also involved participants in validating findings and verifying whether the results reflected their views or whether there was a misinterpretation of their views. The strategy was achieved by emailing participants the research findings and requesting their feedback on the data interpretation.

The fourth data trustworthiness issue involved dependability, where the plan was to allow an external audit of the research to identify whether the thematic analysis was done correctly and could yield similar themes when done by a different researcher. Although the plan was to engage the supervisor in this process, due to time constraints, a different experienced researcher was accessed to help with the process, and the themes were verified from the gathered dataset. The last data trustworthiness issue involved reliability, where the plan was to involve three interviewers to determine whether the data collected using the developed questionnaire was consistent or whether inconsistencies could hinder research replication. Although the strategy was implemented before the data

collection process, only two interviewers were involved, rather than the planned number of three.

Results

The main themes from the interview conducted are presented in this section. The developed themes were aligned with the set research objectives and questions. The themes covered include leadership roles of NGO leaders, competencies and skills needed by NGO leaders to achieve PPA goals, skills required to improve employee satisfaction and commitment, and success indicators for effective NGO leadership. Under each theme, the specific codes that support arguments are presented along with participants' quotes to improve understanding of each point.

Leadership Roles of NGO Leaders

The interviews assessed the roles of NGO leaders and how they contribute to PPA goals of policy advocacy, policy outcomes, and service delivery. The first finding was that the key role of executive NGO leaders is strategy planning to ensure daily activities are aligned with NGO goals. In strategic planning, the goal is to anticipate challenges and implement mitigation measures to avoid the problems. On that note, Participant 10 indicated that her leadership role in strategic planning was aimed at ensuring efficient service delivery by the NGO. In particular, Participant 10 stated, “My role of strategic planning enables me to create clear guidelines on the responsibilities of each employee to ensure there is no redundancy to ensure efficient service delivery and positive policy outcomes.”

Similar views to those of Participant 10 were shared by Participant 8, who indicated that strategic planning enables NGO leaders to anticipate challenges and implement early intervention measures. Specifically, Participant 8 explained:

The role of strategy planning ensures the provision of a clear vision to employees on what they need to do to help achieve the NGO goal of policy advocacy or service delivery. The strategic plans help the leader to anticipate changes and challenges in the organization and implement suitable mitigation plans that ensure consistency in service delivery or policy outcomes.

However, Participant 12 also noted that NGO leaders' role is not just about strategic planning but advocacy to ensure different stakeholders are incorporated in the plans to make concrete changes in both the short and long run. In such instances, the goal is to channel the efforts of different stakeholders toward a similar objective. On this point, Participant 12 remarked:

I think that NGO leaders have a crucial role in strategic planning but without considering advocacy, the plans may not fully be implemented and lead to low impact on the targeted individuals. Therefore, advocacy to work with different stakeholders is a major role of the leaders to achieve success.

The second role of NGO leaders, based on the interview results, involved fundraising, where the leaders initiated different activities to help generate revenue for their organizations. Regarding this issue, Participant 5 posited that because nonprofit NGOs do not engage in business, their leaders have a responsibility to source funds from donors. Despite the fact that there are nonprofit NGOs, funds are required to ensure that

the activities of the organization are implemented. Leaders are required to carry out events to attract donors that support organizational operations. Specifically, Participant 5 stated:

The role of fundraising requires a director to crowdfund or pitch at different events to attract donors and ensure the NGO can sustain itself financially. In such cases, the goal is to mobilize not only financial but also human and physical resources, which can be used to support those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A similar view to that of Participant 5 was presented by Participant 4, who explained that the role of fundraising executed by NGO leaders enables them to achieve the PPA goal of resource mobilization. The strategy requires good personal and interpersonal skills to ensure more support from donors. In particular, Participant 4 stated: “The fundraising role helps me to attain the PPA goal of resource mobilization because I can engage with different people to seek donations and ensure that the NGO obtains the resources required to carry out its operations.” In summary, the findings in this section showed that NGO leader's key roles involve strategic planning to enable efficient service delivery and fundraising to ensure resource mobilization for their organizations.

Skills and Competencies Needed for NGO Leaders to Meet PPA Goals

The competencies and skills needed by NGOs to effectively implement organizational strategies and achieve PPA goals were assessed. The first result noted involved effective communication skills, which can enhance engagement with employees. On that note, Participant 1 indicated that good communication helps to instill employee confidence. Specifically, Participant 1 highlighted:

The second competency is the ability to instill confidence in staff through communication. The skill ensures the employees can handle most of the problems they encounter while supporting the children.

The result on effective communication was also supported by Participant 2, who highlighted that NGO leaders can use good communication to motivate employees and build their capacity. Communication allows employees to share their opinions with leaders, giving them an opportunity to find clarity and address the challenges they encounter. On this issue, Participant 2 stated: “The other competency needed is communication skills to motivate employees and ensure they become creative in seeking solutions to address different challenges affecting the NGO.” Although Participant 6 also shared views similar to those of Participants 1 and 2, the interviewee emphasized that good communication eventually improves collaboration between NGO leaders and other stakeholders, which makes it easy to work towards a common objective and achieve the PPA goals. The communication in such instances considers both verbal and non-verbal cues. Participant 6 explained:

One leadership skill required to attain the PPA goals is effective communication. I think NGO leaders should have good listening skills, good body language, and demonstrate the ability to negotiate and articulate their ideas clearly. The skill ensures fewer conflicts due to misunderstandings with employees and other stakeholders. Instead, it promotes collaboration with employees and federal entities to ensure better performance.

The second finding obtained was that NGO leaders should have the skills to build rapport with different stakeholders, which enables them to execute their roles better and achieve PPA goals. Collaboration with other organizations also plays an important role when it comes to supporting NGOs in achieving their goals effectively because the NGOs can access support from different sources. On this issue, Participant 7 highlighted that NGO leaders should have the skill to create partnerships that ensure they have a wide net of social and financial support. Specifically, Participant 7 posited:

I think that one skill you need to meet PPA goals is the ability to create partnerships. In this case, the partnerships can be at the local, state, and national levels. The ability to create partnerships ensures that NGOs can collaborate with various federal and charity entities.

The views of Participant 7 were also supported by those of Participant 9, who explained that building rapport can help NGO leaders create a positive work environment where employees support each other and, hence, facilitate the achievement of PPA goals. In particular, Participant 9 pinpointed:

The second competency needed is building rapport, which enables leaders to create a positive work environment. Because this NGO aims to support less fortunate children, the quality of service depends on human interactions between employees and the children. Therefore, creating a positive work environment means that employees can easily get support to enable them to execute their duties.

However, contrasting views to those of Participant 9 were presented by Participant 16, who indicated that while building relationships can help NGO leaders achieve their goals, having self-awareness competency can ensure they understand how to involve the different stakeholders to advance organizational goals. Self-awareness is also important in promoting good decision-making as the leader considers how the decision can affect different stakeholders. In particular, Participant 16 pinpointed:

For me, self-awareness competency is important. Although you are a leader in the NGO, you have to understand that you have strengths and weaknesses as well, and this knowledge enables you to recruit people with the right skills and involve the right people in a specific project. It also enables you to engage with other federal entities because you recognize the need for teamwork with other stakeholders.

The third finding from the interviews was that NGO leaders should exhibit problem-solving skills to achieve PPA goals. On this issue, Participant 3 indicated that the NGO often experiences many unique problems because employees and children from deprived backgrounds seek solutions from leaders. As such, leaders should exhibit problem-solving abilities to make a positive impact. Participant 3 remarked:

One skill that nonprofit NGO leaders should demonstrate, based on my experience, is problem-solving abilities. Most employees in the organization will look up to you for solutions to the problems they face, and you must be in a position to think outside the box and provide innovative solutions. This is crucial in inspiring employees and also building their capacity to manage their problems.

Participant 11 supported Participant 3's view, emphasizing that NGO leaders' problem-solving skills are closely tied to the resource management of the organizations. In such instances, problem-solving skills can help leaders make cost-effective and practical decisions that ensure the sustainability of NGO operations. Specifically, Participant 11 posited:

The NGO leader should demonstrate creativity and problem-solving abilities to provide solutions to different challenges affecting the organizations. The leader is expected to make the final decision and, hence, should be able to discern the cost-effective and most appropriate solution to problems. The competency can ensure better resource management and increased service delivery because there are fewer decision-making delays and employees get encouraged to seek innovative solutions to problems.

In summary, the results in this section indicated that the main competencies of NGO leaders include problem-solving, creating partnerships, and effective communication.

Skills Needed to Improve Employee Satisfaction and Commitment

The current research also assessed different NGO leaders' skills, which can enhance employee satisfaction and commitment. The first result was that NGO leaders should exhibit good interpersonal skills to ensure employees trust their vision and are receptive to their instruction. Good interpersonal skills foster trust between NGO leaders and employees. Concerning this issue, Participant 13 indicated:

I also think that skills to build trust and confidence among employees promote a sense of trust and credibility. The skills ensure that employees feel that they are part of decision-making, which can enhance their satisfaction.

The views of Participant 13 were supported by Participant 15, who pinpointed that good interpersonal skills help reduce communication barriers, which ensures employees can identify and report any challenges they notice immediately after they occur. Participant 15 explained:

One competency I consider the most important among NGO leaders involves interpersonal skills. NGO work is mainly about improving the welfare of disadvantaged people in the community, and hence, you need to be empathetic and better connect with different people for them to open up for help and to provide support.

Similarly, Participant 13 explained that interpersonal skills ensure NGO leaders do not always provide solutions to problems facing employees but rather instill trust and confidence in them to find the solutions. In particular, Participant 13 remarked:

Over the years, I have realized that engaging employees to improve their productivity is about listening to them and making them feel confident to solve the different problems they encounter. In fact, I have always realized that answers to the problems often came from the staff more than I gave them.

The second result was that NGO leaders should demonstrate motivation skills.

The issue was explained by Participant 14, who pointed out that NGO leaders should

recognize and reward good performance by employees to ensure sustained positive performance. On that note, Participant 14 posited:

From my perspective, the most important skill among NGO leaders is motivating workers, which can be through professional development, awards, or recognition. I think motivating workers can ensure workers find joy and satisfaction in their work. The strategy can also ensure a positive work environment where employees can speak up on problems they face and encourage collaboration on different issues.

Participant 14 also highlighted this view, as explained by Participant 17, who explained that when NGO leaders motivate employees, the latter demonstrates higher satisfaction and performance. In particular, Participant 17 highlighted: “Motivating employees enables them to post higher satisfaction as they recognize that their work is valued and hence, they need to improve the quality of their support to the children.” In summary, the findings in this section revealed that for NGO leaders to promote employee commitment, they need to exhibit motivational and good interpersonal skills.

Success Indicators for Effective NGO Leaders in Achieving PPA Goals

The current research also explored some of the measures that reveal whether the NGO leaders have been successful in their achievement of PPA goals. The first finding was that NGO success was based on the amount of donations and funds raised through crowdfunding. On this issue, Participant 18 explained that sourcing more funds through donations ensures NGOs can implement more of their plans and help most children from deprived backgrounds in the areas they operate. Specifically, Participant 18 posited:

“Donations growth on a monthly or yearly basis helps us to identify whether I am doing my fundraising role effectively or whether I need to change strategy.” The views of Participant 18 were also supported by Participant 19, who noted that fundraising return on investment (ROI) is an important indicator because it considers the cost incurred in organizing fundraising events. On this issue, Participant 19 highlighted: “The success of NGO leaders is about obtaining a positive ROI at the end of the year so that the costs incurred in organizing fundraising parties and crowdfunding events are less than the collected income and operational costs of the organization.”

The second indicator for success among nonprofit NGOs is the employee retention rate. From the interviews, I noted that NGO leaders who exhibit effective leadership competencies are associated with employees having a high level of satisfaction, leading to higher retention rates. On this point, Participant 20 highlighted that because the NGO was not profit-oriented, employee satisfaction and retention were based on how employees felt they were treated and the level of support they received from leaders. Specifically, Participant 20 remarked: “Employee retention is a crucial indicator of success because NGO employees face many challenges in their work and will only remain in an environment where they feel they are treated with dignity and their efforts are appreciated.”

Participant 20 supported Participant 13's view that NGO leaders are successful when they inspire employees and empower them to take a proactive approach to making social change in society. Participant 13 highlighted:

Leaders of nonprofit NGOs can advocate for real change and mobilize social movements where they inspire their employees. They need to first positively shape the attitude and behaviors of their employees to register improved service quality and policy outcomes.

In summary, the findings in this section showed that the two main indicators for success by NGO leaders include employee retention and increased donations to the NGOs.

Summary

The current chapter presented findings from the analysis of interview data and revealed the major themes from the gathered data. Firstly, from the demographic data, there was no sampling bias because participants recruited in this study were diverse in terms of gender, job type, and industry. The strategy ensured that leadership competencies among NGO leaders were explored from different perspectives. Four themes were noted from the interview dataset. The first theme on leadership roles of NGO leaders revealed that the leaders have two key roles, including fundraising and strategic planning. The fundraising role ensures that leaders can generate enough income to enable NGOs to support their operations, while strategic planning ensures that leaders can streamline NGO operations, reduce resource wastage, and enhance overall productivity.

The second theme obtained involved competencies and skills needed by NGO leaders, and from the results, I realized that achieving PPA goals requires effective communication skills, problem-solving skills, and the ability to build rapport.

Communication skills can help leaders motivate and build the capacity of employees through valuable feedback. Moreover, effective communication is critical in building rapport to improve teamwork and create a positive work environment, while problem-solving skills can ensure improved resource management and better decision-making.

The third theme noted was the NGO leaders' skills needed to enhance employees' commitment and satisfaction, where the findings indicated that the leaders should have good interpersonal skills and motivational skills. Good interpersonal skills can help NGO leaders to better collaborate with employees and address issues affecting them while also building trust and instilling confidence in the organizational vision. Meanwhile, motivational skills enable NGO leaders to inspire employees and recognize their efforts, which ensures employees can seek even better ways to enhance their output in the future.

The last theme noted involved the success indicators for effective NGO leaders in achieving PPA goals, where the findings indicated that raising funds and employee retention were the two critical pointers for NGO leaders' success. Raising funds was a crucial success factor because it showed that NGO leaders could collaborate with other stakeholders to sustain different organizational operations. Meanwhile, the employee retention rate was realized to be a critical success factor because it is a pointer that NGO leaders inspire their employees and treat them with dignity, thereby influencing the employees to want to stay in the organization in the long term.

Some contrasting views were noted in the findings, which improved insight into NGO leaders' competencies. Firstly, the strategic planning role alone by NGO leaders was not enough, and advocacy is required to ensure that the developed plans can be

implemented and achieved by engaging different stakeholders. The second contrasting view involved findings showing that building rapport is crucial in improving collaboration, but demonstrating self-awareness is also critical to ensure that leaders understand how to engage stakeholders in their projects while building social relationships. In the next chapter, a discussion of the findings is presented, where they are interpreted to understand their meanings, and the findings are compared and contrasted with the available literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to explore competencies that NGO leaders should exhibit to ensure the achievement of PPA goals. I conducted this study to help improve the impact of nonprofit NGOs in society by revealing how leaders can facilitate better resource management, improve collaboration with federal entities, enhance the capacity of employees, and ensure efficient service delivery. In this chapter, a discussion of key findings from the interviews is presented. The previous chapter showed that the key themes from interview data included success indicators for effective NGO leadership, skills needed to improve employee satisfaction and commitment, competencies and skills needed by NGO leaders to achieve PPA goals, as well as leadership roles of NGO leaders. In this chapter, I interpret the results, compare and contrast them with literature, and present their implications.

The rationale for conducting this study was a gap in the literature regarding the competencies of NGO leaders to ensure the success of their organizations. Concerning this point, Aboyassin and Abood (2013) concluded that ineffective leadership at different levels of an organization affects both individual employees and overall performance. However, the lack of clarity on measuring ineffective leadership has meant that the effects cannot be easily assessed and mitigated. In this respect, Aboyassin and Abood emphasized the need for future study on effective leadership competencies to foster creativity, increased productivity, and excellence that ensures elevated individual and organizational performance.

While Aboyassin and Abood (2013) focused on ineffective leadership and how it affects performance, my study considered the potential solutions to ineffective leadership to improve organizational outcomes. From Aboyassin and Abood, a crucial recommendation was to explore competencies that make leaders effective and ensure improved individual and organizational performance. Therefore, I provide details to fill the gap in the literature and show how leaders can ensure PPA goals in NGOs are achieved. The findings from this study are from a small sample of U.S. NGO leaders, regulators, and federal agency coordinators with at least 5 years' experience. In brief, the key findings from this study indicated that the competencies and skills needed by NGO leaders to achieve PPA goals are diverse and include effective communication, interpersonal skills, problem solving, and building rapport. Moreover, the results revealed that to achieve PPA goals, NGO leaders need to diligently implement their roles, which include fundraising and strategic planning.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results of this study extend knowledge regarding effective leadership and improving organizational performance, as noted in Chapter 2. In this section, I use available literature to explain the various results noted from research interviews. The interpretation of findings also includes the TLT, explained in Chapter 2, which emphasizes that certain leadership competencies are universal for advancing the goals of any organization (see Chan et al., 2019; Hosna et al., 2021). In this case, the four competencies emphasized under TLT include inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. It is widely

documented that effective leaders can positively influence organizational performance through different strategies such as good allocation of resources, clear communication, and mentoring (Madanchian et al., 2017; Rodríguez-Carvajal et al., 2018). However, research is limited to the specific competencies needed by NGO leaders to effectively execute their duties and achieve the set organizational goals. Therefore, I sought to expand the existing literature by explaining the unique competencies that leaders of NGOs require to ensure better resource management and service delivery in line with PPA goals. A few studies, such as Charleston et al. (2018) and Demir and Budur (2019), have explored NGO leaders' competencies and concluded that they need to have a wide range of skills, including cross-cultural and ethical competencies. Therefore, I also sought to confirm the competencies of NGO leaders revealed by previous researchers. The key results are discussed under the next subtopics.

Transformational Leadership Theory and NGO Leaders' Competencies

The findings showed competencies and skills required by NGO leaders to realize PPA goals, such as problem-solving abilities, effective communication, and developing partnerships. The elements of skills and competencies fit within the paradigm of transformational leadership theory. Specifically, one of the essential components of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation, which suggests that the leader must be able to prompt change within the organization through innovation, creativity, setting goals, and addressing challenges (Hosna et al., 2021). In that regard, competency qualifies NGO leaders to serve as effective leaders in achieving the set PPA goals. From the data, the first competency revealed was effective communication skills. Generally, the

findings showed that communication is necessary for internal and external coordination for smooth organizational operations. The finding is similar to Rodríguez-Carvajal et al. (2018) and Tunison (2020), who pointed out that NGO leaders with effective communication skills displayed higher service quality due to the ability to relay information and obtain feedback. At the same time, the finding coincides with the intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership theory because communication is an interpersonal quality necessary for facilitating the flow of ideas within the workplace. In other words, communication features across all the subelements of intellectual stimulation, namely, innovation, creativity, goals, and challenge (Arif & Akram, 2018). Based on the interview results, communication enhances collaboration, staff confidence, and creative solutions. Concerning demographic data, the finding on communication competency does not show a considerable difference because the majority of the participants interviewed were NGO leaders. The implication is that the observation about the significance of effective communication skills is anchored on their experience leading NGO operations at various capacities and stages. As such, the research was expected and was not surprising. Nevertheless, more clarity on the findings would require the inclusion of subordinate staff opinions to examine the presence of effective communication skills among NGO leaders and its potential impact on the organizations.

The second finding showed that NGO leaders require problem-solving competency to settle issues that may hinder the realization of PPA goals. The competency of problem solving meant that the leader minimizes distractive elements and refocuses

the organization on service delivery, improving overall public relations and reputation. In that respect, the finding implies that possessing effective problem-solving skills as an NGO leader is an added advantage for spearheading the success of the organization in meeting targets. The finding is consistent with the submission of EPA (2023) and USAID (2022) that problem-solving skills attract additional grants for NGOs. At the same time, the finding relates to the observations of Proctor (2018) and Malaza (2020) that problem-solving skills among NGO leadership are equated to reduced inefficiencies and resource wastage. On that note, problem solving mediates responsible operations and organizational goals. Notably, problem-solving competency aligns with the scope of TLT through the tenet of intellectual stimulation of addressing challenges. Specifically, the theorist suggests that a transformational leader should exhibit critical thinking in addressing challenges, which is evident through the fundamental skill of problem-solving (Asbari, 2020). With the help of effective communication, the leader is expected to transmit problem-solving skills to followers to promote change in the organization. Based on gender distribution, the finding on problem-solving skills defies the odds of male dominance because there were an equal number of male and female NGO leaders for the interview. In that regard, the surprising point in the results is that female leaders have improved their capabilities to address organizational challenges, leading to better performance parameters.

The third finding indicated that NGO leaders should demonstrate competency in building rapport with employees and stakeholders. The implication is that organizational performance is anchored partly on the relationship between leaders and stakeholders. In

that respect, leaders are to ensure that they establish rapport to make it possible for employees to seek clarification and present ideas. In other words, NGO leaders need to express professionalism and accommodate work relationships to facilitate a safe working environment for improved productivity and collaboration. This finding resembles that of Hitt and Player (2019) and Kumari et al. (2022), who pointed out that good rapport increases information exchange between leaders and employees, leading to better decision making and teamwork. On that note, the element of rapport solidifies the connection between the leadership team and subordinate staff for easier coordination toward achieving PPA goals. Notably, the competency of rapport building fits within the spectrum of transformational leadership theory as presented by Buil et al. (2019), where the main focus is to influence the characteristics of employees to match the desired organizational aspirations. Essentially, the transformation of employees demands rapport between them and the leaders. In that regard, NGO leaders under transformational leadership theory are mandated to possess and express charismatic skills for positive and constructive interactions. Specifically, rapport depicts the traits of inspirational motivation and individualized consideration, which are components of transformational leadership theory. Specifically, the ability to build rapport signifies individual considerations of strengths and skills, as well as inclusion, which describes inspirational motivation (Hilton et al., 2021). Therefore, possessing rapport competency as a leader in the NGO sector is crucial for enhancing transformational leadership outcomes. Regarding demographic information, the main difference in the findings is the rapport between the NGO leaders and the participants in the other job positions. Participants from the federal

agencies agreed with the aspect of rapport building for successful NGO leadership when the main discussion pointed at NGO employees. The observation means that the ideas of other leaders should be separated from those of NGO leaders to minimize invalid generalizations in the future.

Transformational Leadership Theory and Roles of NGO Leaders

The findings revealed the roles of NGO leaders in achieving PPA goals. According to TLT, a leader serves as a role model to subordinates by taking up responsibilities that benefit the organization (Arif & Akram, 2018). In other words, transformational leaders lead by example in that they undertake roles to influence their followers. In that regard, the role of NGO leaders is an important tool for accomplishing the requirements of transformational leadership for better organizational and employee productivity. The first role indicated in the findings is strategic planning. Specifically, the participants acknowledged that NGO leaders developed guidelines for all activities performed by the employees or other stakeholders. The implication is that NGO leaders assume ultimate responsibility for all organization's processes by giving directions. The finding is consistent with that of Zakowski (2015) and Ward and Forker (2017), who noted that strategic planning ensured alignment of operations and mitigation of conflicting roles. In that respect, the implication is that NGO leaders can improve the efficiency of the organizations by exercising strategic planning. At the same time, the finding reflects Hirt (2016), who showed that strategic planning enables NGO leaders to coordinate the different departments, improving the efficiency of policy implementation. Therefore, NGOs are dependent on the competency of leaders to organize various

organization elements for seamless operations and achievement of PPA goals. Within the spectrum of transformational leadership theory, an effective leader is committed to the vision of the organization by providing definite structure and order in all activities. The action motivates members, whose resolution is to follow the guidance of the top management. Based on demographic data, the finding of strategic planning aligns with the research expectation about the roles of NGO leaders. Moreover, support from federal agency coordinators and regulators shows that leaders practice strategic planning across different fields and organizations.

The second finding was that NGO leaders perform fundraising roles to obtain resources for the organizations. The implication is that NGO leaders must have favorable communication and negotiation skills to interact with funders. Additionally, the leaders uphold the positive image of the organization through financial accountability and CSR to attract funds for various projects. The finding agrees with that of Webb et al. (2017) and Poterba (2017), who noted that NGO leaders act as budget controllers, ensuring that available resources are used responsibly and productively. In other words, good financial reports grant a high chance of obtaining additional funding from donors. Essentially, NGO leaders must forward their financial reports alongside proposals for funding considerations. Therefore, adequate financial analysis and accounting skills are necessary prerequisites for an effective NGO leader. Further, the finding echoes the views of EPA (2023) and the U.S. Department of Justice (2023), who asserted that NGO leaders who demonstrate competency in running their organizations and positively impact society can have access to federal grants through the Federal Grants and Cooperative Act of 1977. At

the same time, the finding depicts the element of intellectual stimulation within transformational leadership theory. In other words, through financial management and fundraising skills, NGO leaders can encourage responsible resource utilization among the employees, leading to better individual and organizational performance. The ability to source funds means that the leader possesses creativity, openness, creativity, and risk taking, which are important attributes for all employees and volunteers of NGOs.

Transformational Leadership Theory and NGO Leaders' Success Indicators

The findings also revealed success indicators for NGO leaders, including increased service quality, efficiency, employee satisfaction, and retention rate. On that note, TLT directs that a leader's competency evaluation is based on the level of change depicted by the employees regarding productivity and attitudes. In other words, the state of workers and efficiency in achieving set goals defines the degree of transformation imparted by the leadership on members. Therefore, the evaluation of NGO leaders' success indicators aligns with the vision of transformational leadership theory. The first finding of the interview featured increased quality and efficiency of service provided. In that respect, the implication is that the performance of NGO leaders can be measured using organizational performance, always based on client reviews. Essentially, positive reviews of high quality and efficiency signify competent NGO leadership based on the participants' illustrations. As already stated, the performance of a transformational leader is evident in the overall organization's output because workers are expected to emulate the traits of their leader. The finding resembles that of Van Droffelaar and Jacobs (2017) and Yukl et al. (2019), who indicated that an indicator of effective leadership is the

ability to improve the quality of services, increase organizational performance, and contribute to organizational goals. On the other hand, the finding contradicts Boak and Crabbe (2019) who stated that certain competencies, such as fundraising, do not guarantee increased organizational performance. In that respect, the implication is that NGO leaders are more successful in their roles when they possess multiple skills and competencies. Based on the demographics, the observation is not different from the expectation because all the participants had at least 5 years of serving experience, sufficient to notice the impact of increased quality and efficiency success indicators on organizational performance.

The second set of success indicators was high employee satisfaction and retention rates. The implication is that employee attitude about the organization and the rate of hiring for replacement show how well the leader is performing. In that regard, NGO leaders should have the ability and skills to maintain high employee satisfaction to promote productivity and retention. The finding is consistent with that of Indal and Arriola (2022) and Zhurham et al. (2023), who noted that transformational leaders address the welfare of their subordinates, making the employees satisfied and willing to serve the organizations for a longer duration. According to TLT, the concept of leaders attending to the needs of followers is embedded within the component of individual consideration (Turnnidge & Côté, 2018). Specifically, transformational leaders understand that each person's attributes affect the overall organizational goals. In that regard, the leadership strives to maintain a healthy workforce by improving personal and workplace comfort. According to Dah et al. (2022), employee motivation must be

accompanied by organizational support to perform the roles for considerable satisfaction and retention rates. Based on the demographics, the different observation is that NGO leaders spoke on behalf of workers, leading to bias in understanding the impact of transformational leadership on satisfaction and retention. As such, views should be collected from employees when evaluating job satisfaction scores related to transformational leadership.

Transformational Leadership Theory and NGO Leaders' Training Program

The findings revealed that NGO leaders require training to improve their competence to achieve PPA goals. In TLT, a leader is the role model emulated by the followers. As such, the leader must stand out in all areas of competencies. In other words, a well-trained and experienced leader would transmit positive elements to followers, leading to high organizational performance. The first finding from the interviews was that NGO leaders require training on soft skills to enhance trust and build confidence. The implication is that leadership depends on the interpersonal attributes of the leader, such as communication, listening, patience, and tolerance. In other words, successful leadership begins with the individual before influencing the followers. The findings are consistent with the submission by Englefield et al. (2019) and Hirschi et al. (2022), who noted that soft skills such as empathy are essential for leaders and employees to develop constructive relationships for achieving organizational goals. In that regard, the finding implies that employees mimic the soft skills displayed and taught by leaders under transformational leadership. Meanwhile, the finding also agrees with the assertion of Iovinelli (2020) that enthusiastic leaders inspire employees to greater heights of

productivity and performance. Therefore, leaders should seek training in soft skills to have a positive influence on workers. From TLT, the ability to engage individuals, share visions, and work towards a common objective as a leader requires emotional intelligence and enthusiasm, which are obtained from soft skills training programs (Hilton et al., 2021). The finding aligns with the demographic data because it depicts the minds of NGO leaders regarding ways of promoting transformational leadership performance. However, the difference is that it was expected that these leaders had undergone the necessary training on soft skills before commencing managerial duties.

The second finding was professional training for imparting leadership and managerial skills to NGO leaders to improve service effectiveness. Besides soft skills, NGO leaders and federal agency employees require professional competency for the rightful and efficient running of the organizations. Without professionalism, it is impossible to manage employees and the affairs of the organization. From a transformational perspective, employees risk becoming unprofessional if the leader lacks relevant professional know-how. The finding is consistent with that of Harrison (2020), who noted that professional training improves problem-solving skills, enabling leaders and employees to effectively navigate complex situations. Further, the finding resonates with that of Boamah et al. (2018) and Leithwood et al. (2020), who asserted that providing professional training can motivate the staff, improve performance, and lead to the achievement of organizational goals. On that note, the implication is that professional training is essential for both leaders and employees of NGOs. Based on the terms of transformational leadership, the leader undertakes the responsibility of organizing staff

training programs for necessary professional competencies suitable for achieving the organizational goals. Essentially, a transformational leader always improves the employee's skills and knowledge to boost overall organizational performance. The difference based on demographics is that the leaders interviewed are professionals. As such, the suggested professional training may account for enhancing transformational leadership skills.

Reflection

One assumption before data collection was that NGO leaders only focus on the internal operations of their organizations but not external issues that affect the company. Therefore, one surprise from the findings was that NGO leaders should not only engage in strategic planning but also advocate to influence policy development at the local and national levels. The result helped to understand that while NGO leaders have a role to play in the internal operations of the organization, they should equally be alert to opportunities that may arise from working closely with external stakeholders such as donors and politicians. The importance of the finding was understood in the context of the FGCAA, which is a policy developed to enable the allocation of federal grants to NGOs. Therefore, through further lobbying and advocacy efforts, NGO leaders can improve access to funding from local and national governments.

Another assumption in this study was that NGO leaders' competencies mainly involve improving the abilities of those around them because the nonprofit nature of their organizations limits the financial rewards provided to stakeholders. Therefore, it was a surprise from the findings that a few of the respondents pointed to skills in agility and

adaptability as crucial to the success of NGO leaders. The idea of adaptability was prevalent in the literature review, where studies such as Pascual (2022) highlighted that in modern society, NGO leaders need to adapt to emerging problems that may be caused by issues such as the pandemic to ensure sustained operations. However, some participants pointed out that NGO leaders need strategic planning where they can anticipate problems and implement mitigation strategies. Nonetheless, it was realized that the ability of NGO leaders to exhibit flexibility is critical in handling the volatile nature of problems in the present world.

Meanwhile, one area for future research is to conduct a financial analysis of the NGOs to understand the extent to which they succeeded in raising the required financial resources and implementing plans to achieve organizational goals. In this study, only subjective data was gathered, which involved the view of NGO leaders and relevant stakeholders. However, gathering and analyzing objective data from the financial documents of the NGOs can help provide a more accurate assessment of NGO leaders' success in achieving organizational and PPA goals. Similarly, collecting objective data through surveys and conducting statistical analysis can help to show the extent of success when applying various competencies to achieve PPA goals.

Limitations

Several limitations were noticed while implementing this research. The first limitation was researcher bias during data gathering and interpretation. Researcher bias during data gathering can occur when probing participants to seek clarification, which can influence them to focus only on certain issues (Shan, 2022). Moreover, researcher

bias can occur during data interpretation where some crucial views of participants are omitted in findings, or the data is misinterpreted to imply a different meaning. The researcher bias limitation can hinder the replication of this study by readers. To minimize my personal bias, a crucial strategy used was the involvement of experts to review interview questions and check their relevance and clarity to this study. Moreover, after data interpretation, participants were presented with findings and asked to check whether their views were accurately interpreted.

The second limitation of this study was that only one approach to data collection was used, which restricted the quality of evidence to support the conclusion made. Specifically, this research primarily relied on a qualitative method of data gathering and analysis but not a quantitative method, which meant that significant NGO leaders' competencies that influence performance could not be distinguished from the insignificant ones. Although triangulation of data was achieved by interviewing different demographics such as NGO leaders and federal government employees, the incorporation of quantitative data could have improved understanding of patterns regarding competencies needed by NGO leaders to enhance performance. Nonetheless, according to Kyngäs et al. (2020), research reliability and credibility can be improved by using data triangulation, which enables the comparison and contrast of data from different groups of participants. However, one strategy that was used to minimize the impact of the limitation was to engage participants with at least five years of experience to ensure that high-quality data that aligns with best practices in the industry is gathered. The third limitation of this study was that the NGO leaders selected were from organizations that

support children from deprived backgrounds, which means that the recommendations of this research may not apply to other nonprofit NGOs engaged in addressing other social issues. In this regard, the findings obtained may not be transferrable to other contexts, which reduces the benefits for most NGO leaders. Nonetheless, the limitation was overcome by including federal agency employees who work with NGOs from different sectors and hence understand the competencies that the leaders need to demonstrate to enable the achievement of PPA goals.

The other limitation noted when engaging in online interviews is that only the headshot and facial features of the participants were visible, which denied me an opportunity to assess the full body language of participants when responding to the different questions asked. Nonetheless, the participants were all cooperative and asked for clarification on the questions they did not understand. Despite the different challenges experienced while conducting interviews, I gathered data within the set timeframe of one month. Besides, future researchers can overcome the limitation by conducting in-person interviews instead of online interviews.

Recommendations

Several recommendations were developed based on the obtained research findings. In this section, the topics covered include recommendations for practice and theory. The practice recommendations indicate practical measures that can be taken to improve organizational performance and achievement of PPA goals. Meanwhile, in the recommendations for theory, the issues covered include key findings from this research

which warrant further investigations, and different ways of addressing the research limitations.

Recommendations for Practice

The first recommendation for practice is that NGO leaders need to be trained on certain soft skills to improve their ability to collaborate with federal entities and build their capacity to achieve PPA goals. The recommendation is based on the findings showing that NGO leaders who depict certain soft skills are more likely to be successful in achieving PPA goals. Additionally, the recommendation is based on results, in which I noted that more NGO employees are likely to be retained where they feel valued and inspired by leaders. As such, NGO leaders should be trained on how to develop good interpersonal skills to ensure that they can take a proactive approach to address challenges affecting the NGO and better engage employees and federal agency employees to seek suitable solutions to the problems. In training the NGO leaders on good interpersonal skills, special emphasis should be on how they can communicate their vision and organizational goals to employees in a manner that is accepted and embraced so that employees become confident in how their efforts help in the achievement of broader organizational goals.

The second recommendation for practice is to provide professional training to NGO leaders to improve their problem-solving skills and decision-making abilities. The recommendation was based on the obtained results, where I noted that charisma and good interpersonal skills are not enough to ensure the achievement of PPA goals. Leaders need to have critical thinking abilities, which ensure they make decisions based on extensive

knowledge regarding an issue. In this regard, professional training of NGO leaders can improve their roles in strategic planning and fundraising because it can help them understand the changing dynamics in the NGO landscape and ensure they make adjustments to improve their effectiveness. The training can be crucial in the NGO leaders' understanding of relevant laws such as FGCAA, which can ensure they seek federal grants to bolster their revenues and that they have diverse sources of funds to sustain their operations. Additionally, the professional training can help the NGO leaders understand that being able to raise funds for the NGOs does not automatically translate to a better quality of service unless certain steps are taken, such as creating regular workshops and training programs to improve employees' skills.

The third recommendation for practice is that NGO leaders need to promote collaboration and teamwork with employees and other stakeholders by building rapport, effective communication, and good interpersonal skills. The recommendation is based on the findings showing that to achieve PPA goals, NGO leaders need to not only make strategic plans for employee activities and mitigate potential risks but also incorporate various stakeholders in the NGO's operations. Additionally, the recommendation is based on findings, where I noted that the fundraising role of NGO leaders requires them to engage different stakeholders and create awareness of the organizational mission to attract donors. In this regard, demonstrating skills that enable teamwork and collaboration can ensure that NGO leaders are more effective in achieving the set PPA goals, which ensures that children from deprived backgrounds obtain more support and high-quality service from NGO employees.

Recommendation for Future Research

One recommendation for future study is to further explore NGO leaders' competencies, which have a significant impact on organizational performance in terms of achieving PPA goals. The recommendation is based on the findings of the current study, which show that the leadership skills that can help NGO leaders achieve PPA goals include problem-solving, the ability to build rapport, and communication skills. However, each skill has a different impact, and hence, exploring the competency with the significant impact on performance can help to prioritize support programs to improve the competencies of the NGO leaders. To achieve this goal, future researchers should conduct quantitative research and carry out statistical analyses, such as regression and t-tests, to help distinguish the impact of the various competencies. In this regard, the findings of this study findings can act as a foundation for further research on the impact of different NGO leaders' competencies on organizational performance.

The second recommendation for theory is that future researchers should explore the topic of leadership competencies by considering NGOs other than those involved in supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds, which was employed in this study to sample participants. The strategy can help to verify the findings of this research and show that the leadership competencies, such as problem-solving skills, effective communication, and ability to build rapport, are not restricted to the context of the selected nonprofit NGO but apply to other NGOs as well. The strategy can also improve insight into leadership competencies needed by NGO leaders in different sectors.

The third recommendation for future research is that researchers need to explore further how NGO leaders can achieve the role of fundraising in a constantly evolving landscape. The recommendation is based on the findings showing that one of the crucial roles of NGO leaders is to raise income to support different organizational operations, and one success indicator for effective NGO leaders is those who increase the amount of funds they raise for the organizations over time. Future studies should focus on how NGO leaders can employ technology such as crowdfunding platforms and social media to create awareness of their organizational mission and reach out to well-wishers for donations and volunteering. Conducting such a study can help to reveal the specific details regarding not only the competencies and skills that NGO leaders require but also the specific activities that they need to implement to achieve PPA goals.

Implications

The obtained findings in this research have several implications at the societal, organizational, and individual levels. Firstly, a crucial finding obtained in this study was that one role of NGO leaders is fundraising to obtain adequate revenue that can support different organizational activities. The result provided a unique insight into the topic and implied that for the NGO context, leaders need to go beyond the conventional roles of guiding employees and strategic planning to initiate activities that enable income generation. In this regard, NGO leaders need to collaborate with different stakeholders, such as corporate brands, individual donors, and well-wishers from social media platforms, to obtain the funds needed by the NGOs. To do this, the NGO leaders need to have good communication and interpersonal skills to ensure that they can create

awareness of the organizational mission and also persuade the individuals to contribute financially to the NGO. Additionally, the leaders need to continuously learn about fundraising, including using technology to reach a larger target group of donors. In this regard, the obtained results implied that at the organizational level, NGO leaders have a critical role in sourcing funds, on the one hand, and managing resources, on the other hand, to ensure the sustainability of the organization. Meanwhile, at a societal level, the result implied that NGO leaders need to be individuals who take part in different social activities such as religious events, social gatherings, and school events to improve the visibility of their NGO and increase awareness of their mission and how other people can support the organization financially or through volunteer work. Lastly, at a personal level, the result implied that NGO leaders need to be individuals of high integrity who are trusted in society and can prompt donations because people believe they will use the funds for supporting those who are disadvantaged rather than misusing them for personal benefit.

Another critical result obtained from this research was that NGO leaders need to exhibit problem-solving skills to achieve the PPA goals of resource management. The result implied that although employees are often resourceful and can generate solutions to different challenges affecting the organization, NGO leaders' depiction of problem-solving skills helps to promote an innovative culture. In this case, NGO leaders can promote the idea that solutions that employees develop should not only be simple and practical to implement but also affordable to ensure better resource management and higher impact of the organization on more service receivers. On an organizational level,

the finding implied that NGO leaders need to be given professional training in financial analysis and critical thinking to ensure that they can understand how proposed solutions to a specific problem can impact the NGO's resources in the short and long run.

Meanwhile, on a societal level, the result implied that leaders can optimize the use of resources to ensure that a maximum number of children from deprived backgrounds who need assistance are helped. Additionally, the result implied that problem-solving skills could enable NGO leaders to demonstrate effectiveness in addressing a widespread social issue, which makes them eligible to access federal grants and improve the quality of services they provide. Lastly, at a personal level, the finding implied that NGO leaders should be individuals who are proactive in their approach, anticipate challenges before they happen, and think of possible solutions.

The other key finding obtained from this research was that NGO leaders need good interpersonal skills to improve employee commitment and satisfaction. The result implied that the leaders' performance is closely linked to the capacity of employees to carry out their various allocated tasks and achieve the set organizational goals. In this case, the interpersonal skills involved communication to understand the challenges affecting employees, empathizing with employees and service receivers, creating plans to support them, and motivating employees to improve their confidence and productivity. On a societal level, the finding implied that NGO leaders should work closely with partners who provide support services such as team building services where employees can be engaged to improve their satisfaction and collaboration. Meanwhile, on an organizational level, the result implied that leaders should be role models in the manner

they engage employees to create a sense of togetherness and belonging, which improves teamwork. In such instances, the leaders should develop a positive work environment where employees easily access peer support and forge lasting relationships beyond the work environment. At a personal level, the result implied that NGO leaders should develop strong personal relationships with their staff members to ensure they can quickly identify problems the employees experience and promptly provide the support required.

The current research also revealed that one impact of competent NGO leaders is increased efficiency and quality of services provided. In this way, more disadvantaged children could benefit from the NGO. The result implied that competent NGO leaders should not only learn how to fundraise and increase revenue for the organization but also identify ways of managing and deploying the resources to increase employees' output and the quality of services provided. In this case, the competency of NGO leaders is demonstrated when they use the funds to acquire needed resources for the operation of the organization, as well as create training programs to ensure employees are trained on how to improve the quality of their output. At the societal level, the finding implied that NGO leaders should continuously learn about the latest industry standards on service quality to ensure they provide training to their employees to update them on the latest practices. Meanwhile, at the organizational level, the result implied that NGO leaders can have a more profound effect through resource management and coordination of different activities to ensure that the core organizational objectives are prioritized when planning and executing activities. Lastly, at a personal level, the result implied that NGO leaders should demonstrate not only soft skills, such as interpersonal skills but also be competent

in organizational and planning to ensure that employees are allocated tasks that align with their talents to improve service delivery and quality.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore NGO leaders' experiences regarding competencies that can lead to enhanced performance in terms of solving PPA issues. Additionally, this study sought to address two key research questions. The first question involved examining leadership competencies that promote the ability of NGO leaders to address PPA goals of building capacity to achieve organizational goals and improving collaboration with federal entities. The second research question involved exploring training programs that should be developed to improve the effectiveness of NGO and federal agency employees in supporting children from deprived backgrounds. To address the research purpose and questions, a primary qualitative method was employed where semi-structured interviews were conducted among 20 participants who consisted of ten NGO leaders who were sampled from nonprofit Organization A in Missouri, and ten federal agency employees. The NGO selected was involved in supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds by meeting their basic needs, such as education, and offering free meals and shelter.

After conducting a thematic analysis, several key findings were obtained that helped address the research purpose and research questions. The research purpose related to the NGO leaders' experiences with skills and competencies that can lead to effective performance was addressed. From the results, I noted that for NGO leaders to achieve their roles of strategic planning and fundraising, they need to exhibit teamwork, good

interpersonal skills, and effective communication. The competencies were realized to be crucial in ensuring they collaborate with federal agencies and also make employees understand how their roles interlink with broader organizational goals.

Meanwhile, concerning the first question on leadership competencies needed to improve the achievement of PPA goals, I noted that NGO leaders require a set of skills and competencies, which include problem-solving skills, the ability to build rapport, effective communication skills, and self-awareness competencies. I also realized that effective communication is critical in enabling leaders to achieve the PPA goal of collaboration because it ensures they can not only listen to other stakeholders, which improves decision-making making, but also motivate, provide valuable feedback, and instill confidence in the NGO staff, leading to improved quality of service provided. Besides, problem-solving skills were realized to help NGO leaders achieve the PPA goal of resource management because they became more creative in seeking affordable and effective solutions to different challenges facing the NGOs. Therefore, problem-solving skills ensure more sustainable measures are developed and implemented to minimize resource misuse and reduce inefficiencies when providing support to children from deprived backgrounds. The third competency, the ability to build rapport, was noted to help in achieving PPA goals of building the capacity of leaders and improving collaboration because it ensured that the leaders created a positive work environment where employees easily shared information and supported each other, leading to better teamwork and decision making.

Meanwhile, the second research question regarding the training programs needed to enhance the performance of federal agency and NGO employees was also attained. From the findings, I realized that training employees on soft and hard skills is crucial to improving their competencies. Specifically, soft skills, in this case, involve training the NGO leaders on how to develop good interpersonal skills, which enable them to collaborate with other stakeholders and improve confidence and trust that ensure better sharing of information, expression of empathy, and improved service and delivery. The underlying idea of soft skills training is to enhance the human touch in the NGOs so that leaders are approachable and employees or children who have problems can easily seek support from the leaders, knowing that there are minimal communication barriers. The second training on hard skills involves providing professional training to the leaders where their capacity to handle complex problems is improved, leading to better decision-making and impact on their organization. In particular, professional training ensures that NGO and federal agency employees find joy in their work because they can identify ways to improve effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery.

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Appendix A: Invitation Form to Organizations

To

HR Manager,

[NGO/ Federal Agency Name]

Subject line: Permission to conduct research at [name of NGO or federal agency]

Email message:

My name is [applicant's name] and I am PhD student at Walden University. I am seeking permission to do research at [insert organization name]. I am conducting research on the competencies of leaders in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to better understand how to improve their effectiveness and performance. The research will entail gathering data from NGO leaders and federal agency staff who engage with the NGOs. Therefore, I request your permission to get access to [NGO staff in leadership positions or federal agency employees who work closely with the NGOs]. I will invite individuals from your organization to participate in this study. If they agree, they will be interviewed via online platforms.

The interviews will take place during the month of February 2024 and will take about one hour for each session. Participants will be asked to give their written or verbal consent before the research begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially, and identities will be anonymous. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

I therefore request permission in writing to conduct my research at your organization.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

[name]

[contact number]

[email address]

Appendix B: Invitation Form for Participants

Subject line:

Interviewing leaders from NGOs and federal agencies

Email message:

There is a new study about the competencies of leaders in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to better understand how to improve their effectiveness and performance. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences on leadership competencies needed by NGO leaders to build their capacity and enhance their collaboration with federal entities.

About the study:

- One 60 minute online interview via Zoom that will be audio recorded (no video recording)
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- 18 years old or older
- Employees with leadership positions in *Organization A*, an NGO in Missouri
- Leaders in U.S. federal agencies

This interview is part of the doctoral study for (Name), a Ph.D. student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during the month of February 2024.

Please email [insert Walden email] to let the researcher know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested.

If you are interested to be a participant, you can also contact me through the email [my email address] to enable me send you the consent form.

Appendix C: Interview Questionnaire

Demographic Data

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. How many years have you worked in your organization?

Research Interview Questions

4. What leadership role do you play in your organization? Explain.
5. How does the role of the executive leader of *Organization A* contribute to better policy outcomes, service delivery, and policy advocacy? Explain
6. How does your role help executive leader achieve PPA goal of resource mobilization and management? Explain.
7. What leadership skills and competencies are needed by nonprofit NGO executives to meet PPA goals of improving collaboration with federal entities and building employees' capacity? Explain.
8. If you had to pick one skill or competency for enhancing PPA outcomes, what is the most vital and why?
9. What skills are needed for NGOs leaders to improve employee satisfaction and commitment considering that nonprofit organizations do not have large financial incentives? Explain.
10. How do these skills and competencies help achieve the mission of supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds?

11. How do you know whether the executive leader of *Organization A* is effective in executing their tasks and achieving PPA goals?