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Influence of Leader Communication on Employee Motivation

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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2018

Abstract

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

Ineffective communication is a chief contributor to business leaders' ineffective leadership. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the communication strategies that 4 business leaders in the retail industry used to improve employee motivation. The business leaders, including owners and senior leadership from 3 organizations in the retail industry in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area, were purposefully selected for study participation. Transformational leadership theory shaped the conceptual framework of this study. Transformational leaders use effective communication to influence employee motivation positively. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with the business leaders, public reports, organization documents, and text message correspondences. Data analysis involved identifying reoccurring phenomena and coding meaningful and common keywords, phrases, and statements to form themes. Data analysis also involved triangulating information. Through data analysis, 5 themes emerged, including the following: respectful communication, 2-way communication, and charismatic communication. Business leaders' practice of effective communication strategies could contribute to social change by enhancing the well-being of employees, which might promote the improvement of economic conditions of individuals, families, and communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to God Almighty. I am grateful for His grace and mercy to me. I also dedicate this study to my entire family.

Acknowledgments

I give thanks to my God, through my Lord Jesus Christ, for His love and faithfulness to me. Thank you to my family and friends for supporting me through this journey. I share this accomplishment with each of you.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Leadership style influences employees' outcomes (Mohiuddin, 2017; Popli & Rizvi, 2015). Leadership style has a significant relationship with employee performance (Okoji, 2015). Business leaders influence employees in the execution of their leadership responsibilities. Communication skills are among the most important leadership competencies (Smalley, Retallick, Metzger, & Greiman, 2016). Leader communication has impacts on employees (Chitrao, 2014). Through effective communication, transformational leaders can motivate their followers to be more active (Burns, 1978). Effective communication involves more than the verbal transmission of information (Belndea, 2016). A lack of motivation has a negative effect on employee morale and performance (Afful-Broni, 2012). The focus of this study was on employee motivation, specifically, the improvement of employee motivation through effective leader communication strategies.

Background of the Problem

Communication is critical to a business leader's success, and ineffective leader communication leads to problems in many organizations. Missioura (2014) noted that communication is one of the most important leadership skills, and it allows for the achievement of personal and organizational goals. In fact, internal communication is essential for employee motivation for better performance and increased customer satisfaction (Chitrao, 2014). Thus, a leader's ability to exchange messages, information, opinions, or thoughts with employees contributes to organizational success.

Some leaders lack effective communication skills, and leader communication is a factor essential to employee motivation (Gobble, 2012). Employee motivation is a problem that many organizations face (Salman, Aamir, Asif, & Khan, 2015). The way that a leader communicates with employees affects organizational performance (Ramona, Emanoil, & Lucia, 2012). Therefore, researchers should explore communication strategies that business leaders can use to improve employee motivation. Business leaders need a better understanding of the strategies necessary to communicate effectively with employees to improve the motivation of their workers.

Problem Statement

Ineffective communication is one of the leading causes of ineffective leadership (Bourne, 2015). From a global perspective, Gobble (2012) indicated that ineffective communication was the primary reason 40% of employees from diverse industries felt demotivated by business leaders; leaders demotivated some employees due to lack of effective communication by leaders, and 43% of employees desire effective communication by leaders (Beck, 2016). The general business problem is the influence of ineffective communication of business leaders on employee motivation. The specific business problem is that some business leaders in the retail industry lack the communication strategies necessary to improve employee motivation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the communication strategies that business leaders in the retail industry used to improve employee motivation. The population of this study was business leaders who worked in the retail industry in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area, MD-DC United States. The positive social change implications include prompting business leaders to improve employee motivation, thereby enhancing employee well-being and performance, and contributing to the improvement of economic conditions of communities and society.

Nature of the Study

Due to the exploratory nature of the inquiry, I selected a qualitative method for this study. The quantitative method requires measuring variables (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Measuring variables was not suitable for this study, given its purpose and exploratory nature. Further, a mixed methods approach would not work due to the limits a mixed methods approach would impose on the participants. Ordaining operational variables beforehand, as incorporated in mixed methods research, would impose limits on subjects (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

A case study was appropriate for this research given that such a design, as described by Yin (2014), uses more than one source of evidence for data collection and includes the benefit of promoting an in-depth understanding of a contemporary phenomenon. More specifically, a case study design was preferable to a narrative design because, in a narrative design, according to Marshall and Rossman (2016), a researcher focuses on telling stories of individual lives. Likewise, because ethnographers focus on culture sharing among groups of individuals (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), a case study was also preferable to an ethnographical design. Phenomenologists, on the other hand, focus on understanding the meaning of the lived experiences shared by several individuals with interviews as an instrument for data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2016); therefore, a case study was also preferable to a phenomenological design.

Research Question

The central research question for this study was the following: What communication strategies do business leaders in the retail industry use to improve employee motivation?

Interview Questions

The interview questions for this study included the following:

1. How do your communication practices affect employees' motivation?
2. How would you describe your communication practices for improving employee motivation?
3. What communication approaches have you found that least motivate employees?
4. What communication strategies did you find worked best to improve employee motivation?
5. How do employees respond to your communication strategies in terms of employees' efforts to engage in behaviors for achieving organizational goals?
6. What additional information would you like to provide regarding your communication strategies for improving employee motivation?

Conceptual Framework

The theory of transformational leadership was the conceptual framework that grounded this study. Transforming leadership is one of the two fundamentally different forms of leader-follower relations, and transforming leadership occurs when the leader and the led increase each other's motivation and morality levels (Burns, 1978). Downton first introduced the idea of transformational leadership in 1973 (Lawlor, Batchelor, & Abston, 2015). Burns in 1978 and Bass in 1985 advanced the theory (Lawlor et al., 2015).

Burns (1978) examined transforming leadership and focused on political and ideological leaders. Bass (1985), however, extended the theory for use by leaders of both public and private organizations as the transformational leadership style. The term *transformational*, as introduced by Bass, is the term that I will also use in this study. Bass, with a focus on the physiological procedures of transformational leadership, outlined four factors of transformational leadership theory: charisma, inspirational leadership, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation.

This conceptual framework was appropriate for this study because of its effective communication characteristics and effect on employee motivation. Bass (1985) described transformational leaders as leaders who motivate others to accomplish more than they initially expected to accomplish. Transformational leaders influence employees to be successful (Cavazotte, Moreno, & Bernardo, 2013). More important, transformational leaders raise followers' consciousness with the use of effective communication and exemplary behaviors (Bass, 1985). This theory is central to this study's focus on the influence leader communication has on employee motivation and thus employee well-being.

Operational Definitions

Employee motivation: Employee motivation occurs when an employee's effort in achieving a task, participating in an activity, or engaging in a behavior is a result of his or her belief of either a desired experience or outcome (Carter, 2013).

Leader communication: Leader communication occurs when the leader can transmit information to employees to influence employee outcome and performance (Johansson, Miller, & Hamrin, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

The assumptions of a study are the notions that the researcher presumes as true (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). For this study, I first assumed that the participants were honest in their responses to the interview questions. The participants likely answered honestly, given that participation was on a voluntary basis. I kept personal information confidential, and the participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time. Second, I assumed that the participants communicated effectively with their employees and that information exchange with employees flowed both ways through formal and informal modes of communication. The qualification for participation included involvement in the practice of effective communication with employees. Last, I assumed that the participants had the ability to understand the interview questions and to convey their experiences effectively. The participants were able to understand the structure of the interview questions.

Limitations

Limitations are constraints and possible flaws of a study that are out of the control of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The limitations of this study include its sample size, the source of participants, and time constraints. The sample size is small given that data for this qualitative multiple case study were from three businesses. A small sample size was appropriate given the nature of this study. The participants were successful business leaders from the retail industry, and the findings represent the targeted population. The study was completed successfully within a limited time in a way that satisfies academic requirements.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries of a study that are within the control of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The delimitations of this study included the following: the participants were effective business leaders who were at least 18 years old, employed in the retail industry, and worked in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area. Additionally, the participants had at least 1 year of leadership experience, including communication experience for employee motivation. These delimiting factors are boundaries that represented the population that I chose for this study to explore the problem and answer the research question.

Significance of the Study

This study is of value to businesses because its results may inform business leaders of how their communications influence employee motivation. This study may contribute to positive social change because of its potential for the improvement of employee conditions. Through this study, business leaders may gain knowledge of the communication strategies needed to communicate effectively with employees to improve their motivation. Business leaders can apply the strategies that resulted from this study by practicing effective communication with employees.

Contribution to Business Practice

The result of this study may contribute to effective business practice by addressing the communication strategies that business leaders can use to improve employee motivation. Companies encounter many challenges, and there is a continual need for them to seek to improve their effectiveness (Buble, Juras, & Matić, 2014). Employee motivation has a significant effect on employee performance (Elqadri, Priyono, Suci, & Chandra, 2015). The improved business practice that resulted from this study is the practice of effective communication by business leaders. Many business leaders do not view communication as important as other leadership practices (Brønn, 2014). Business leaders may use the results of this study to develop strategies to communicate effectively with employees in order to improve employee motivation. Those leaders and their businesses may achieve the additional benefits of enhanced financial and employee performance.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study may contribute to positive social change by improving employee conditions. Employee motivation plays a role in employee well-being (Rayburn, 2014). Employees' lack of motivation negatively affects their morale and inhibits their performance (Afful-Broni, 2012). Improved employee motivation will result in employee development as human beings and accomplishment of goals beyond employees' imaginations (Scheers & Botha, 2014). Leaders play key roles in employee improvement and the use of strategies, including communication, contributes to improving employee motivation (Scheers & Botha, 2014). Leader-follower relations foster employees' development and performance (Hunt, 2014). Leader practice of effective communication that improves employee motivation has the potential to enhance employee morale and performance.

Other positive social changes that might result from this study are the improvement of social conditions through the economic development of organizations and communities. Motivated employees have positive impacts on organizational performance (Skoludova & Horakova, 2016). Organizations also benefit from motivated employees through improved employee well-being, performance, and increased retention rate (Chomal & Baruah, 2014). A community with stable employment is good for society. The findings from this study may enable some leaders to understand the benefits of practicing effective communication with employees for enhanced employee motivation and employee well-being. Leaders may be better equipped to lead effectively and to be successful with the communication strategies that emerged from this study.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A review of the professional and academic literature served a variety of purposes that included locating and identifying relevant and significant literature in the field. In order to provide a justification and understanding of the conceptual framework and the procedures of the study, I will begin this literature review by introducing the purpose of the study and by conducting a comprehensive critical analysis and synthesis of the identified literature. I will present theoretical debates, different perspectives, themes, and gaps in the existing body of knowledge in the review. I organized the review by themes that revealed the theoretical foundation of the study and the basis of the research question and interview questions.

The strategy to identify the literature included searches in Walden University library databases (ProQuest Central, Business & Management including Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, and SAGE Premier). These searches included key terms such as *leadership*, *leadership theories*, *communication*, *communication strategies*, *motivation*, and *motivation theories*. Additional terms that I searched included *leader communication, leader-employee relationship, employee motivation*, and *employee performance*. The literature search also included Yahoo, Google, and Google Scholar to locate sources that may not be in the Walden Library databases. The identified literature included peer-reviewed journal articles, books written by experts in their respective fields, and professional and academic literature. Furthermore, the literature I used included books acquired from local libraries and online bookstores. In the end, I used 227 total sources for this study, of which approximately 92% are peer reviewed, and 85% are within 5 years from the study completion date.

Leadership

A review of the literature regarding leadership was necessary given that the purpose of this study was to explore the communication strategies that business leaders in the retail industry used to improve employee motivation. Transformational leadership theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Leadership is the ability of a leader to influence others through an influential process with the intent to accomplish a set of goals or objectives (Okoji, 2015). Sampayo and Maranga (2015) noted that there are many ways to define leadership based on different kinds of leadership perspectives considered. Almatrooshi, Singh, and Farouk (2016) noted that a leader's ability to motivate others contributes to effective leadership. Leaders use communication in their leadership capacity.

Communication is an essential leadership skill (Grill, Ahlborg, & Wikström, 2014; Savolainen, Lopez-Fresno, & Ikonen, 2014). However, communication skills are not the only important skills for effective leadership. Smalley et al. (2016) found that being accountable, taking responsibility, learning, and adapting to change, along with communication, are some of the essential leadership skills. Furthermore, self-awareness, conflict management, innovation, visioning, and communication are necessary skills for an effective leader (Fernandez, Noble, Jensen, & Steffen, 2015). Some leaders also stated that setting examples, enabling others to perform, inspiring a shared vision, and seeking self-improvement are also required leadership skills (Nelson, Schroeder, & Welpman, 2014). These, along with communication skills, are some of the skills that leaders use for organizational success.

Leaders can use a variety of leadership skills and styles to accomplish their missions. Leaders demonstrate their leadership skills with the use of different leadership styles, and each style's effectiveness can depend on positions, industries, and different situations (Boykins, Campbell, Moore, & Nayyar, 2013). Organizational leaders should employ the leadership styles appropriate for their desired outcomes (Novac & Bratanov, 2014). Segun-Adeniran (2015) concluded that leaders can meet organizational objectives quickly by using an appropriate leadership style or by combining leadership styles based on the situation.

Leadership styles and theories. Leadership styles can influence employee performance (Almutairi, 2016). Leadership style has a direct association with employee performance and organization success (Popli & Rizvi, 2015). Leadership style has a great influence on employee performance and attitude towards the achievement of organizational goals (Mohiuddin, 2017). Each leadership style is under a leadership theory. A discussion of leadership styles and theories was necessary given the purpose of this study.

The leadership styles in this section are those classified as the major leadership styles or classical leadership styles for a leader to achieve the desired outcome. Omar and FauziHussin (2013) presented laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership as the three major leadership styles. Leadership styles also include classical styles based on the use of power (Gonos & Gallo, 2013), namely autocratic (authoritative), democratic (participative), and liberal. These leadership styles are each under the basis of certain theories developed over the years. Transactional and transformational leadership are under the leader-follower relationship theories (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Behavioral leadership mainly focuses on task-oriented and relations-oriented leader behaviors (Raeisi & Amirnejad, 2017). A discussion of every leadership style would be impractical and inefficient given the purpose of this study. However, a discussion of the major and classical leadership styles (including those leadership styles that business leaders use successfully to engage employees for improved outcomes) as classified in studies based on their use was appropriate.

Leaders' reasons for the actions they take affect their ability to lead effectively and the kinds of principles that leaders exhibit as seen in their actions are as follows: the opportunist, the diplomat, the expert, the achiever, the individualist, the strategist, and the alchemist (Rooke & Torbert, 2014). Opportunists are leaders who are interested in personal wins and treat others as competitors; diplomats are leaders who are interested in conflict avoidance and seek cooperation with others (Rooke & Torbert, 2014). Experts are leaders who are interested in contributing their expertise, and they are usually not interested in collaboration or opinions that they deem beneath their level of expertise; achievers are leaders who are interested in achieving results and who support and positively influence others (Rooke & Torbert, 2014). The opportunists' principal task is attaining power; the diplomats are interested in understanding others (Pesut, 2012). The experts rule by their craft logic; the achievers implement effective strategies for delivering desired results (Pesut, 2012).

Individualists are leaders who reason on the basis that their logic, and the logic of others, is the result of individual personalities, and such leaders put personalities into perspective: they communicate effectively and contribute unique values to their organizations (Rooke & Torbert, 2014). Strategists are leaders who are interested in change and the creation of a shared vision resulting in the encouragement of transformations, and strategists are good at handling others' resistance to change;

alchemists are leaders who exhibit high moral standards and are interested in the reinvention of themselves and their organizations (Rooke & Torbert, 2014). The individualists focus on the self, the strategists demonstrate an invitational style to ideas, and the alchemists develop transformations for reflection and action (Pesut, 2012). A leader demonstrates his or her action logic with the use of transactional, transformational, or behavioral leadership styles and theories.

Behavioral leadership theories are concepts of leadership based on how leaders behave. Task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership behaviors are leader behavioral approaches practiced in most Western countries (Begum & Mujtaba, 2016). Autocratic and democratic leadership are forms of leadership under behavioral leadership styles and theories (Jackson, Alberti, & Snipes, 2014). Gonos and Gallo (2013) grouped autocratic, democratic, and liberal leadership as the classical styles of leadership regarding their behaviors with the use of power. Autocratic, democratic, and liberal (laissez-faire) leaders influence employees, although demonstrating different styles and using different behavioral approaches.

Autocratic leadership. Autocratic is a leadership style whereby a leader makes decisions alone without his or her employees' inputs (Gonos & Gallo, 2013). In addition to not encouraging followers' input, autocratic leadership characteristics include power-driven behaviors and a perceived focus on only organizational goals with no concern for employee well-being or condition (Blomme, Kodden, & Beasley-Suffolk, 2015). These are similar characteristics to those of transactional leaders, which are unlike the characteristics that transformational leaders use to motivate followers. The characteristics of autocratic leadership exemplify the styles and theories of transactional leadership (Giltinane, 2013). Transformational leaders encourage followers' input and ownership of their team's vision, and transformational leaders use charismatic communication to motivate followers to achieve goals (Giltinane, 2013).

Autocratic leadership style has a negative association with employee motivation (Fiaz, Su, Ikram, & Saqib, 2017). Autocratic leadership has a direct association with employee demotivation (Aurangzeb, 2015). Giltinane (2013) argued that followers of autocratic leaders might not perform well without the presence of the leader; however, autocratic leaders take full responsibility for outcomes, and they reduce pressure on followers regarding making decisions. Strict control by the leaders and no participation by the employee are two major characteristics of autocratic leadership (Aurangzeb, 2015). Rajbhandari, Rajbhandari, and Loock (2016) found both autocratic and democratic leadership styles to yield successful leadership outcomes based on the situational factors that the leaders experienced.

Democratic leadership. Democratic is a leadership style whereby a leader discusses and coordinates tasks with his or her employees (Gonos & Gallo, 2013). Democratic leaders' characteristics include being cooperative, considerate, and able to share responsibility with their followers (Eken, Özturgut, & Craven, 2014). Democratic leadership involves the leader encouraging others to share ideas and opinions (Phillips, 2016). These democratic leadership approaches are motivating to employees (Preston, Moon, Simon, Allen, & Kossi, 2015) and are similar to those approaches that transformational leaders use. Opoku, Ahmed, and Cruickshank (2015) concluded that transformational leaders create visions, establish cooperative attitudes, and empower their followers. Transformational leaders are inclined to use democratic leadership approach (Giltinane, 2013).

Democratic leadership positively correlated with motivation and the group members' satisfaction (Ronald, 2014). However, transformational leaders possess other characteristics that are ideal for influencing the improvement of employee outcomes (Al-Laymoun, 2017). Transformational leaders communicate effectively and inspire employee behavior improvement (Mujkic, Sehic, Rahimic, & Jusic, 2014). Democratic leadership involves encouraging employees' full participation in decision making (Aurangzeb, 2015). In practicing democratic leadership style, the leaders allow the followers to make decisions (Ameh & Odusami, 2014). Preston et al. (2015) argued that a democratic leadership approach might not lead to the prompt exchange of information and consensus by all involved for the timely execution of tasks.

Laissez-faire leadership. Laissez-faire leadership is one of the three major categories of leadership styles (Omar & FauziHussin, 2013). Laissez-faire leaders give minimal guidance to employees and allow employees to make decisions on their own (Tarsik, Kassim, & Nasharudin, 2014). Laissez-faire leadership characteristics are similar to those of liberal leadership. In a liberal leadership style, a leader seldom uses his or her power and grants his or her employees freedom in the performance of their duties (Gonos & Gallo, 2013). As one of the major categories of leadership, a distinct characteristic of a laissez-faire style of leadership is its noninvolvement approach towards employees.

The communication strategies employed under laissez-faire leadership style are not effective for communicating with employees and achieving organizational performance. Laissez-faire leaders may inhibit the flow of information deliberately or negligently (Bass & Avolio, 1994). According to Asan (2015), laissez-faire leaders do not provide feedback, and they expend minimal effort on helping followers meet their needs. In essence, laissez-faire leaders do not attempt to motivate followers (Eken et al., 2014). This lack of an attempt to motivate followers is consistent with laissez-faire leaders' lack of effective communication with employees.

Although, laissez-faire leadership style is shown to positively predict employees' motivation (Fiaz et al., 2017). Laissez-faire leadership is different from autocratic and democratic leadership (Eken et al., 2014). In a study of the relationships between laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership styles and conflict management styles among 150 managers in the private sector, Saeed, Almas, Anis-ul-Haq, and Niazi (2014) showed laissez-faire as the only leadership style with an avoidant approach with regards to employees' conflict management. The laissez-faire leadership style was the least common leadership style used by leaders across 16 countries from 93,576 employees of large companies (Zwingmann et al., 2014).

Organizational leaders use the laissez-faire leadership style less in comparison to other major styles of leadership. Jackson et al. (2014) found that leaders used laissez-faire leadership style less in comparison to transactional and transformational leadership styles. The laissez-faire leadership style results in team conflicts and the style impede employees' health (Zwingmann et al., 2014). However, the laissez-faire leadership style is suitable for employees who can be productive with minimal leader guidance (Segun-Adeniran, 2015). There is no consensus on the best leadership style because a leader can practice any style or a mix of styles to suit the employee, the situation, or a given time (Asan, 2015). However, business leaders favor the transactional and transformational leadership styles over the laissez-faire style.

Transactional leadership. Carter (2013) described the transactional and transformational leadership as the two most commonly practiced leadership styles, the former a much more traditional and common approach than the latter. Transactional leaders operate on the notion of rewarding employees for their efforts (Carter, 2013). Transactional leaders also punish employees for their lack of effort (Gangwar, Padmaja, & Bhar, 2013). Leaders exhibit transactional leadership style by using transactions between them and their followers (Tarsik et al., 2014). The leader-employee relationship from a transactional leader's perspective works on the following principle: if an employee does something for the leader, the leader will do something in return for the employee (Carter, 2013).

The transactional leadership concept of influencing employee motivation for positive outcomes does not focus on the use of effective communication. Transactional leaders' approach to influencing employee motivation to perform includes ensuring compliance with rules, rewarding compliance, and punishing noncompliance (Blomme et al., 2015). Transactional leadership strategies to influencing employees are different from those of transformational leadership, which includes the following: charismatic communication (Giltinane, 2013), effective communication of vision (Cavazotte et al., 2013; Rijal, 2016), and precise feedback (Blomme et al., 2015). Chaimongkonrojna and Steane (2015) noted that transactional leaders typically give feedback for corrective actions purposes. Transactional leaders do communicate with employees, and they incorporate their communication practices in different ways and for different reasons.

The transactional leadership style consists of the following categories: management by exception (active and passive) and contingent reward (Ghazali, Ahmad, & Zakaria, 2015). The active approach involves the leader being proactive in the communication of his or her expectations and following up with employees, and the passive approach involves mainly reactive communication by the leader when something goes wrong (Gangwar et al., 2013). Bass (1985) presented contingent reward and management by exception as two practices of the transactional leadership style. Tarsik et al. (2014) presented two characteristics that form the basis of transactional leadership as management by exception and contingent reward as follows: management by exception consists of two types (passive leadership and active leadership), and contingent reward involves the leader associating goals with rewards and providing clarifications for expectations. Under passive leadership, transactional leaders take corrective actions when they deem their involvement necessary, while under the active leadership, transactional leaders deem their initial involvement necessary, monitors employees, and take corrective actions as necessary (Arenas, Tucker, & Connelly, 2017). Transactional leaders practice of contingent reward in which the leaders set expectations for their employees and uses rewards (extrinsic rewards, e.g., bonus or promotion) to reinforce employee performance is deemed effective (Arenas et al., 2017).

Reward is not the only tool at the disposal of transactional leaders using the management by exception approach. Yao, Fan, Guo, and Li (2014) noted that transactional leaders focus on employees' mistakes and encourages employees with rewards as well as criticize them through admonishments. Both contingent reward and management by exception have positive and significant relationships with motivation, and this demonstrates that transactional leaders use reward and punishment to motivate employees to accomplish organizational goals (Arenas et al., 2017; Bambale, Girei, & Barwa, 2017; Chaudhry, Javed, & Sabir, 2012). However, leaders who often manage by exception frequently encounter employee unwillingness to share information and, thus, negatively affect the communication process (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

A leader can influence his or her employee outcomes with the leadership approach that the leader practices. In a study of transactional and transformational leadership styles with data collected from public-sector organizations through a survey questionnaire, Ahmad, Majid, and Zin (2015) found that transformational leadership was more effective than transactional leadership. Similarly, private-sector organization participants prefer transformational leadership (Giltinane, 2013). However, no leadership style fits all situations, and leaders should use leadership styles based on the circumstances that they face (Giltinane, 2013; Opoku et al., 2015). A leader may practice the leadership style that is suitable based on the situation or at a certain time (Wirba, 2015). A leader can influence his or her employees' performances through his or her leadership style.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leaders have their focus on their employees' motivation and innovation (Pantouvakis & Patsiouras, 2016). The transformational leadership is a leadership approach, in which a leader elevates his or her followers to higher levels through influential expressions and exemplary actions for attainment of objectives (Bass, 1985; Notgrass, 2014). A leader whose utmost interest is on values, purposes, and outcomes that eclipse the practical needs at hand is an intellectual leader, and such leadership is transforming leadership (Burns, 1978). Leaders, directly and indirectly, affect employee well-being (Kelloway, 2017). Zwingmann et al. (2014) found that transformational leadership had a significant correlation with employee well-being. Transformational leaders have a positive association with employee development and performance (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In a study of transformational leadership influence among Brazilian employees, Cavazotte et al. (2013) found that transformational leaders increase employees' performance and help employees with their behaviors. A leader can attain an increase in both task (formal employee duties) and contextual (nonformal functions that support the formal or organizational citizenship behaviors) performance of employees by improving employees' self-efficacy concerning their work and their identification with the leader (Cavazotte et al., 2013).

Leadership behaviors can lead to increased employee performance. Focusing on employees individually and inspiring employees to prioritize organizational goals over their individual goals can enhance employees' contextual performance (Cavazotte et al., 2013). Transformational leaders develop visions and set clear goals (Stump, Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, & Mater, 2016). Transformational leadership involves the leader motivating employees to commit to a common goal (Saravo, Netzel, & Kiesewetter, 2017). Transformational leaders focus on employee personal development and intrinsic motivation (Omar & FauziHussin, 2013; Yahaya, & Ebrahim, 2016). Furthermore, transformational leaders influence and inspire employees to perform better (Carter, 2013). Transformational leaders stimulate employees to perceive problems differently, and they attend to employees' needs on an individual basis (Tarsik et al., 2014). In their communication process of individualized consideration, transformational leaders encourage a two-way exchange of information (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformational leaders provide vision, connect emotionally, and transform their followers' beliefs, attitudes, and motivations by using the following behavioral dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulus, and individualized consideration (Cavazotte et al., 2013). Transformational leadership characteristics have a direct association with effective leadership (Ghasabeh, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015).

Transformational leaders influence employees' motivation through their actions and use of effective communication. Wang et al. (2016) found that transformational leadership style has a positive relationship with effective communication. Transformational leaders encourage open exchange of information and provide employees encouragements (Jyoti & Dev, 2015). Leader communication skills and the ability to motivate others are among successful leadership components (Ebrahimi Mehrabani & Azmi Mohamad, 2015). Transformational leaders positively influence employees' motivation and outcomes by sharing information and promoting inclusive vision (Jyoti & Dev, 2015). These transformational leadership behaviors and communication approaches positively influence employee motivation.

Transformational leadership involves motivating employees for improved outcomes. Leaders can practice transformational leadership to attain a specific outcome (Robertson & Barling, 2017). Transformational leadership has a positive influence on personal outcomes including motivation (Salmasi & Bohlooli, 2014). Transformational leaders inspire employees to attain common goals or a shared vision (Martin, 2015). Mutahar, Rasli, and Al-Ghazali, (2015) found that transformational leadership has a strong relationship with organizational performance. Organizations may enhance its employees' outcomes by including transformational leadership training into their leadership development programs (Caillier, 2014). Transformational leaders influence employees' motivation.

Effective communication affects employee motivation and outcomes. Transformational leaders are more capable of motivating employees (Allen et al., 2016). Communication skills, including coaching and empowering communication strategies, are essential elements of transformational leadership for improving employee outcomes (Bell, Powell, & Sykes, 2015). Most leadership theories failed to deem communication essential to leadership (Johansson et al., 2014). Kasenga and Hurtig (2014) found that leadership demotivated employees through poor communication that includes lack of regular communication with employees. Transformational leaders motivate employees with the use of the four behavioral dimensions, including effective communication of organizational vision, found in the inspirational motivation dimension (Allen et al., 2016).

Effective communication, including vision and the emotional connections that transformational leaders provide, are a part of the leadership style's factors for the positive influence of followers. Transformational leadership factors include articulating a vision and providing individual support (Densten, 2016). In principle, transformational leaders will influence positive changes in those they lead (Keevy & Perumal, 2014). Bhandarker and Rai (2015) found that the dimensions of transformational leadership contribute to the organization's positive climate. Transformational leadership practices are an effective way of leading (Keevy & Perumal, 2014). However, Rauf (2014) argued that leadership style effectiveness is dependent on several factors including the industry and business. Transformational leadership involves personal charisma and vision communication (Pongpearchan, 2016).

The transformational leadership concept involves the effective communication of vision and other communication strategies to motivate employees for better outcomes. Transformational leaders use effective communication of organizational vision to inspire employees to commit to the organization (Rijal, 2016). This approach is consistent with the conceptual model regarding transformational leaders' use of effective communication identified in the conceptual framework. In addition to the effective communication strategies that transformational leaders use to influence employee outcomes, Keevy and Perumal (2014) found additional effective communication strategies that transformational leaders use includes listening, demonstrating candor, oral communication, and responding to employees.

Characteristics of effective leaders include providing employees constructive and positive feedback (Cope & Murray, 2017). Individualized consideration, one of four factors of transformational leadership theories, involves the leader providing feedback based on an individual's needs (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders use of individual consideration also emerges through active listening and providing necessary feedback to address employees personal and professional problems (Pradhan, Panda, & Jena, 2017). Vision communication as practiced by transformational leaders likely influences task-provided feedback satisfaction (Hussain, Wan Ismail, Rashid, & Nisar, 2016). Effective communication, including listening, offering feedback, and communicating consistently, influences employee motivation for improved outcomes (Bell & Roebuck, 2015).

Communication

Researchers have revealed how vital communication is to lead effectively. Communication is the sharing and transmission of information between individuals to influence each other (Tomescu-Dumitrescu, 2016). Good communication is necessary for organizational success (Miletic & Đurovic, 2015). Organizational success has a positive association with good communication between leadership and employees (Åhlin, Strandberg, Norberg, Ternestedt, & Ericson-Lidman, 2017). Communication has a significant effect on employees (Chaddha, 2016).

Communication is an indicator of the leadership style that a leader employs, and it affects organizational performance (Buble et al., 2014). Carter (2013) found that some sales employees disclosed that their managers' use of inappropriate leadership styles and ineffective communications were among the problems of ineffective leadership. Ineffective communication is a problem in many organizations (Bourne, 2015). To practice effective communication, leaders require good use of communication channels in their strategies.

Communication channels and strategies. Some communication channels available at the workplace that Snyder and Eng Lee-Partridge (2013) suggested are as follows: face-to-face, e-mail, blogs, wikis, instant messaging, shared virtual workspaces, telephone, video/web conferencing, intranets, discussion forums, and voice over IP. Leaders also communicate with employees by using memoranda (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Other forms of communication include social media, tangible written communication, and meetings (Kuofie, Stephens-Craig, & Dool, 2015; Nelson et al., 2014). The reliable forms of general information and sensitive information sharing are e-mail, telephone, and face-to-face (Snyder & Eng Lee-Partridge, 2013). Montinari, Nicolò, and Oexl (2016) found that text message communication from the employer to the worker was effective. Face-to-face communication is beneficial (Maranga & Sampayo, 2015), and it has the greatest impact on the majority of employees (Mishra, 2015). However, no one form of communication is better, and a combination of different forms together works best (Nelson et al., 2014).

Leaders' effective communication with employees requires communicating with clarity on a regular and consistent basis. Chitrao (2014) revealed that employees of some organizations in the Indian retail industry do not want communication arrangements where they are not able to ask their leaders questions or receive clarifications. Further, the employees want regular communication with all levels of leaders (Chitrao, 2014). Day, Holladay, Johnson, and Barron (2014) argued that employees' communication of their needs to their leaders is necessary for their leaders' response to those needs. Successful managers in developed countries engage in many communication activities (Ramona et al., 2012). Effective communication requires consistency (Dwumah, Akuoko, & Ofori-Dua, 2015; Mishra, 2015).

Thomas and Stephens (2014) identified a concept known as strategic communication, which is an organization leader's calculated use of communication for its mission fulfillment. Falkheimer (2014) described strategic communication as an emerging field in terms of its research and practice. McEwan (2015) noted strategic communication's importance, within the context of a communication system, as one of the systems required for successful organizational development. Misunderstandings, a lack of information, lower performance, grievances, and more employee rotations may result from ineffective communication, whereas there is an association between good communication and grievance decrease, turnover decrease, increased job satisfaction, safety, productivity, and profits (Chitrao, 2014). Falkheimer noted the need for managers to be strategic communicators and communicative leaders who effectively communicate goals, values, and visions.

Retail managers must strengthen their knowledge of transformational leadership to increase their potential for success (Keevy & Perumal, 2014). Communication is essential to any organization's success, and retail employees may not receive open communication of information by management (Scheers & Botha, 2014). Ramona et al. (2012) discovered that managerial communication is less frequent through face-to-face communication than through fax, the Internet, and mobile phone. Chitrao (2014) found that for formal notifications and message reinforcements, managers use written modes of communication (e.g., e-mail) and employees prefer oral communication; specifically, face-to-face interaction with their managers to achieve instant two-way communication and clarification of information.

Dickson-Swift, Fox, Marshall, Welch, and Willis (2014) found that frequent and two-way communication between leaders and employees are among the key factors contributing to employee well-being. Employees were receptive to the encouragement of two-way communication to allow for expression of their viewpoints (Mishra, 2015). Dimitrov (2015) found leader-follower communication to be positive and respectful. These preferred communication strategies are inclusive of those that transformational leaders practice. Trust and respect are foundations of open and honest leader-follower communication (de Zilwa, 2016). Effective communication, including communicating respectfully, is a key component of the transformational leadership style (Bell et al., 2015). Transformational leaders communicate effectively and create a sense of respect in those they lead (Liang, Chang, Ko, & Lin, 2017). A leader can practice more than one leadership style (Boykins et al., 2013; Segun-Adeniran, 2015). Equally important, a leader can learn, practice, and improve his or her communication skills (Bell et al., 2015; Mishra, 2015). Organizational performance is one of the determining success factors that illustrate the importance of leader communication and organizational communication.

Organizational communication. Organizational communication consists of internal and external communication (Pipa, & SÎrbu, 2016). Organizational communication is necessary for the exchange of information with individuals inside and outside an organization. Internal communication is communication with individuals within an organization, and external communication is communication with outsiders (Hikmah, 2015). Internal and external communications are some of the roles of managers and employees in organizations (Ciobota, 2016). Leader and employee communication are important in the organizational communication process.

The communication process is important for leader-employee identification (Ramona et al., 2012). Ciobanica and Grecu (2014) emphasized that a communication audit is an important aspect of an organization's communication process. A communication audit involves the examination of an organization's communications between the communication source and its audiences (Ciobanica & Grecu, 2014). The communication process influences its audience outcomes, and effective communication requires the use of strategies including politeness (Manik & Hutagaol, 2015). The transformational leadership approach involves care and expression of respect, which positively influences employees' self-reliance and actions (Bell et al., 2015).

Communication and the leader-employee relationship. The leader-employee relationship is important for a leader's and the organization's success. Leader-employee relationship forms through the communication process. Tripathi and Agarwal (2017) found a significant positive correlation between employee organizational commitment and communication satisfaction. There is a positive correlation between transformational leadership style and employee organizational commitment (Almutairi, 2016; Saha, 2016). Transformational leaders practice effective communication. Communication is a vital element of transformational leadership, and transformational leaders engage employees' hearts positively (Bell et al., 2015). Transformational leaders are inclined to having stronger relationships with employees (Mason, Griffin, & Parker, 2014). Transformational leadership encourages leader-employee relationship for the achievement of organizational goals.

A leader can attain relationships with employees through more than one leadership style. Boykins et al. (2013) identified relations-oriented leadership style as a style that a leader can use for improving the welfare of employees; in doing so, the leader encourages employees, seems approachable and relatable, usually acts as a mentor, and motivates employees. The servant leadership style fosters leader-employee relationships and even greater peer relationships among employees, and these practices help with the achievement of organizational goals (Carter & Baghurst, 2014). Transformational leadership model leads to communication relations development between the supervisor and employee (Drivas, Sakas, & Giannakopoulos, 2016). In a mixed-methods data analysis that included employees and managers from multiple industries and states, Boykins et al. concluded that a demonstration of good judgment by a leader is vital for the determination of when and what leadership style to employ as appropriate. The leadership style that a leader employs not only affects his or her relationship with employees, but it also extends to engaging and influencing employee motivation.

Motivation

Leader communication is essential to employee motivation (Kumar & Misra, 2012). Uzonna (2013) argued that motivating employees for the desired outcome is one of the most important roles of a leader. Service organizations managers must exhibit transformational leadership behavioral characteristics, including inspirational communication, for positive impact on employees (Jauhari, Singh, & Kumar, 2017). Employees and salespersons ranked communication as one of the top five motivating factors for them, while communication did not rank among the top five of sales managers' responses to what they believed motivated employees (Carter, 2013). Effective communication is a way of motivating employees (Uzonna, 2013). Managerial communication can contribute to employee motivation (Ramona et al., 2012).

Types and theories of motivation. Theories of motivation include need-driven motivation, which is the engagement in behavior or performance only after attaining a person's need(s), reward-driven motivation, which is the use of reward structures to attain desired actions, and expectancy theory, which is the provision of a reward for a behavior or performance (Carter, 2013). In addition, there is equity theory, which is concerned with the amount of reward a person receives and its relation to what others received based on factors such as inputs (Ramlall, 2012). Facer, Galloway, Inoue, and Zigarmi (2014) also identified the following four motivation theories, which they described as foundational for exploring leader motivational beliefs: reinforcement theory, expectancy-valence theory, achievement motivation theory, and self-determination theory. According to reinforcement theory, a leader uses positive and negative reinforcement as preconditions for an employee to act in the desired way, and it involves the use of rewards or incentives and punishments to accomplish (Facer et al., 2014). Expectancy-valence theorists emphasize the relevance of incentives to act, as perceived by an employee, and it includes the expectancy or probability of success (Facer et al., 2014). Achievement motivation theory concerns employees' socialized needs for power, affiliation, and achievement (Facer et al., 2014). Self-determination theory concerns the employee who by nature is self-determined to act on his or her own in the desired way for success, without the need for the requirements of reinforcement theory (Facer et al., 2014).

Categories of motivation theories usually fall into the following groupings: content theories and process theories (Barikani, Javadi, Mohammad, Firooze, & Shahnazi, 2013). Content theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and McClelland's needs theory focus on individual needs, while process theories (concerned with the thought process by which an individual chooses an action over another) focus on the why and how of motivation (Barikani et al., 2013). These content theories along with Vroom's valence expectancy theory (concerned with a person's strength to act in relation to the expected outcomes) are the most important theories of motivation (Kumar & Misra, 2012). Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory concerns the motivation resulting from the desire to meet certain needs (i.e., physiological, security, affiliation, esteem, and self-actualization; Ramlall, 2012). Herzberg's two-factor theory concerns intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Ahmad, Rizvi, & Bokhari, 2017). McClelland's needs theory concerns motivation resulting from a personal desire to attain success, and the theory includes the following needs: power, affiliation, and achievement (Ramlall, 2012).

There are two types of motivation: (a) intrinsic or engaging in a behavior or perform an activity because the activity is interesting to the individual and (b) extrinsic or engaging in a behavior or performing an activity because of the potential outcomes (Chris Zhao & Zhu, 2014). Hussain, Lei, Abideen, and Hussain (2015) suggested providing employees who lack self-determination (intrinsic motivation) with assistance programs as empowerment (extrinsic motivation) to better deal with stress and improve job satisfaction. Okinyi (2015) found that reward practices (including salary, bonus, and benefits) have a strong relationship with employee commitment. Vlacseková and Mura (2017) found that intrinsic factors motivated employees more. Riley (2015) noted that people are most likely born with intrinsic motivation; however, the maintenance and improvement of intrinsic motivation depends on social and environmental conditions.

Rodriguez (2012) noted that the means that leaders use to reward employees can affect employee motivation level (both positively and negatively) and described motivation as being critical in management. Employee motivation is important to employee outcomes and well-being. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play a role in the overall employee performance. Similarly, autonomous motivation (activity performed by an individual out of the individual’s free will) and controlled motivations (activity performed by an individual due to the exertion of external force or demand) became prominent within self-determination research (Riley, 2015). Regardless of the type of motivation and their similarities or differences, leadership styles affect employee motivation.

Motivation and leadership. The leadership style that a leader practices influence his or her employees' motivation levels (Kour & Andotra, 2016; Rodriguez, 2012). There is a positive correlation between transformational leadership style and employee motivation (Sahin, Gürbüz, & Sesen, 2017). Rodriguez (2012) concluded that leaders who practice transformational leadership are more effective at motivating employees than leaders who practice transactional leadership. On the other hand, Chaudhry et al. (2012) found that the transactional leadership style was more effective, although their results showed a positive and significant relationship between both transactional and transformational leadership and motivation. Arenas et al. (2017) noted that transactional leadership practice of contingent reward as a powerful approach to motivating employees and that transactional leadership style is critical to achieving the military mission. Ivashchenko, Yarmak, Galan, Nakonechnyi, and Zoriy (2017) concluded that effective leadership consists of a leader's understanding of motivation. The association between leadership and employee motivation results from leadership practices.

Leaders can influence their employees' motivation (Ebrahimi, Mousa, Roohbakhsh, & Shaygan, 2017). However, Gangwar et al. (2013) found that the leadership style that a leader practiced, by itself, does not affect employee motivation; rather, it does so in conjunction with orientation factors (i.e., self-orientation and employee/task orientation factors). Private-sector employees are motivated more by leaders who use autocratic leadership style along with higher task orientation factors, while public-sector employees are motivated more by leaders who use paternalistic leadership styles along with people orientation factors (Gangwar et al., 2013). The paternalistic leadership style is a leadership practice that involves a leader who presents him or herself towards employees as a parent figure (Karassvidou & Glaveli, 2015). Regardless of the leadership style or factor that a leader employs, the employee motivation that results operate under a variety of motivation theories.

Leader communication can influence employee motivation, and employee motivation can affect employee performance. Transformational leaders influence employees positively with effective communication of vision (DuBois, Hanlon, Koch, Nyatuga, & Kerr, 2015; Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014). Benson (2015) found that transformational leaders' use of effective communication of vision changed employees for successful outcomes. Transformational leaders treat employees as individuals and use effective communication, including vision, to inspire and motivate employees. Transformational leaders exhibit characteristics categorized into the following components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulus, and individualized consideration (Ghazali et al., 2015). The leadership practice of effective communication, including open communication, vision communication, and to pay attention to employees' feedback, contributes to employees acting in the desired way for a successful outcome (Stanciu & Tinca, 2013). Transformational leaders use these effective communication approaches to influence employee motivation and performance.

Motivation and employee performance. Motivation affects employee performance (Caillier, 2014). Janus and Browning (2014) noted the practice of leaders using monetary incentives to influence motivation. The consequences of the motivation process can either be positive (incentive motivation) or negative (fear motivation; Kumar & Misra, 2012). A person's motivation is dependent on the strength of his or her motives towards the achievement of goals (Kumar & Misra, 2012). Motivation affects employee performance, and one of the factors that influence employees' motivation is reward (Obeidat, Mitchell, & Bray, 2016).

Paychecks motivate employees (Mazzei, 2014). In addition, performance-related pay, which is a reward system that some organizations consider a motivational tool to influence employee performance, is motivating (Sarwar, Aftab, Arif, & Naeem, 2014). Though Ankomah, Kumah, and Karikari (2016) found that employees morale was low despite financial incentive and found that nonfinancial incentives (e.g., working environment) play an important role in motivating employees. Mazzei (2014) stressed that communication is critical to employee motivation. Communication is 50% of motivation in addition to other factors that motivate employees, such as paychecks (Mazzei, 2014). Kumari (2014) found that employees have achievement motive. Another factor that normally affects employee performance is the work environment (Barikani et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the assumption has been that employees' levels of performance depend on their ability and motivation, and all things being equal concerning ability, employee level of performance directly reflects the degree of employee motivation (Vroom, 1964). Some managerial skills include knowing why to motivate employees and how to do so (Barikani et al., 2013); these are important to enhance employee motivation and performance.

Conclusion of the Literature Review

In the literature review, I revealed some factors associated with leadership that affects employee motivation. These factors include leadership styles practiced by leaders. Leadership styles affect employee motivation (Rodriguez, 2012). Employee motivation affects employee performance (Huang, Ahlstrom, Lee, Chen, & Hsieh, 2016). A leader can practice different leadership styles, and each style can be ideal, based on the circumstances (Asan, 2015; Boykins et al., 2013). The most frequently practiced leadership styles are transactional and transformational leadership styles (Carter, 2013). However, the transformational leadership style emerged as the most effective leadership style (Ahmad et al., 2015). Transformational leaders focus on the motivation and development of employees (Omar & FauziHussin, 2013). Furthermore, transformational leaders influence employees for better performance (Carter, 2013) and behavior improvement (Cavazotte et al., 2013). In addition to leadership style, leader communication is another leadership factor that influences employee motivation.

In the review, I showed the importance of leader communication to employee motivation and outcomes. A leader can learn the practice of effective communication skills (Bell et al., 2015). Effective communication requires the leader use of positive communication strategies (Keevy & Perumal, 2014). Transformational leaders' use of effective communication to positively influence employees include the following: two-way communication (Bass & Avolio, 1994), respectful communication (Bell et al., 2015), charismatic communication, vision communication (Giltinane, 2013), listening, providing responses (Keevy & Perumal, 2014), and providing feedback (Blomme et al., 2015). Transformational leadership is advantageous for organizations (Eckhaus, 2017). Leader communication is critical to employee motivation (Kumar & Misra, 2012), and it contributes to employee well-being (Dickson-Swift et al., 2014).

Transition

In Section 1, I discussed the foundation of the study and the problem and purpose statements. Within these initial areas of discussion, I identified business leaders' lack of effective communication for improving employee motivation. In addition, I discussed the research question and the conceptual framework, the theory of transformational leadership. The objective of this study was to explore the communication strategies that business leaders in the retail industry used to improve employee motivation. Finally, I presented a literature review that included views, theories, and findings from reliable sources relative to the concept of leadership practices, leader communication, and employee motivation. The literature review showed that transformational leadership communication approaches positively influences employee motivation.

In the next section, I restated the purpose of the study and discussed the following: my role as the researcher, the participants, the research method and design, population and sampling, and the ethical requirements of the research. In addition, I discussed the data collection instruments and technique and the data organization technique and analysis. Finally, I addressed the reliability and validity of the study. In Section 3, I presented the findings from the study, my recommendations for action, and the conclusion of the study.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 contains a restatement of the purpose of this study, a description of my role along with a description of participant recruitment, further discussion of the research method and design, and a description and justification of the target population and sampling method. In addition, this section contains a discussion of research ethics, the data collection instrument, the data collection technique, data organization techniques, and the identification of the data analysis process. Finally, the section ends with the identification and discussion of the criteria for addressing reliability and validity, and a summary of key points and preview of Section 3.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the communication strategies that business leaders in the retail industry used to improve employee motivation. The population of this study was business leaders who worked in the retail industry in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area, MD-DC United States. The positive social change implications include prompting business leaders to improve employee motivation, thereby enhancing employee well-being and performance, and contributing to the improvement of economic conditions of communities and society.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in the data collection process was to interview successful business leaders in the retail industry to explore the communication strategies that the leaders used to improve employee motivation. This role also included collecting organizational documentation for verification, corroboration, or triangulation of information that emerged from the interviews. Interviews and documentation are two of the multiple sources of data for qualitative case studies that put a researcher into the participants' lives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The use of multiple sources of evidence improves the study's construct validity and reliability (Yin, 2014).

During data collection for this study, avoiding the introduction of any bias in the process was important. The researcher must avoid bias in the process of researching the field and interacting with the participants (Yin, 2014). I was once in a leadership position as a supervisor in the public sector. Given my relationship with the study's topic, I mitigated bias throughout the research process.

The researcher's role as it relates to ethics includes ensuring the establishment of informed consent of the participants and maintaining confidentiality, assessing the risks and benefits of the research, and ensuring that the process of selecting the participants is fair (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I conducted the study in accordance with the basic ethical principles and guidelines that the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research has identified and developed, namely respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Further discussion of these basic ethical requirements and guidelines is in this section under Ethical Research.

I mitigated bias by forming no opinion of any data analysis outcome based on my prior experience, having no expectation of what the data from the study produced, and relying on the information that I collected from the participants for my findings. I did not introduce any other information during analysis. Bell (2014) outlined potential bias and described the effect of the researcher's prior professional position and experience relevant to the study. Bell stated that in terms of the credibility of the study, the researcher's experience is an added positive factor in the study's credibility. Additionally, the use of a semistructured interview process with open-ended questions allowed for the participants to express their views in response to the questions.

Finally, I used an interview protocol (Appendix C) during the interview with each participant to serve as a guide in the data collection process. An interview protocol enables the interviewer to ask the interviewees the questions that address the overall research topic, it helps reduce interviewer anxiety, it provides confidence to the interviewer, and it provides overall order and direction for the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Use of interview protocol served as a guide and helped to ensure consistency and use of the same procedures during interviews, especially with asking the main questions to address the research question. Six open-ended questions served as the main questions for inclusion in the interview protocol, providing an overall guide for the interviews.

Participants

The participants were business leaders in the retail industry in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area who used communication strategies for improving employee motivation. Participants appropriate for a study should be relevant to the issues of the study and should meet the criteria necessary to attain credibility and trustworthiness in the study's findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In a qualitative study of individuals returning to work, Andersen, Nielsen, and Brinkmann (2014) used three criteria to select participants suited for the study. To gain an understanding of a phenomenon, Blasco-Hernández, Miguel, Navaza, Navarro, and Benito (2016) selected participants with the knowledge and experience needed for the study. Therefore, it was important that participants possessed the knowledge and characteristics that helped to answer the research question. The criteria for participation in this study were as follows: participants needed to (a) be an effective business leader with communication strategies to motivate employees, (b) be at least 18 years old, (c) have been in a leadership position for a minimum of 1 year, and (d) be working in the retail industry in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area.

My plan to gain access to participants consisted of identifying, visiting, and inviting them. The process for recruiting participants for this study included the use of consumer and professional sources, including, but not limited to, Indeed.com. This type of source provided organizational reviews, including reviews of leadership practices such as communication. Similarly, Jahangiry, Shojaeezadeh, Montazeri, Najafi, and Mohammad (2016) used a website to recruit participants, and Schulte, Tuttle, and Gearhardt (2016) gained access to and recruited participants through the Internet by using Amazon's Mechanical Turk research tool. Lyssens-Danneboom and Mortelmans (2014) also used the Internet to recruit participants. Therefore, I included the Internet as a source in my recruitment process to identify participants for this study.

Upon identifying participants, I presented and discussed the proposed study with the leaders verbally and through a letter of invitation for research participation (Appendix A). Carr and Bradley-Levine (2016) described how their initial contact with participants occurred through discussion with a leader. Additionally, reaching out to an organization's leadership for participation in a study usually requires the use of a letter, e-mail, or phone call to an individual with authority (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Shnayder, Rijnsoever, and Hekkert (2015) used letters to request an interview with participants and made follow-up phone calls. Their process involved discussing the selection criteria for participants with an appropriate individual at the organization. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested that researchers' request for participants include describing the criteria regarding whom the researcher needs for the study and what the researcher is requesting of them. I asked each organization's leadership to provide a letter of cooperation, similar to the draft in Appendix B, to demonstrate their understanding and willingness to participate in the study as described under the Community Research Stakeholders and Partners policy of Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

To build trust, which is important for ensuring participants' willingness to share during interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), I developed a rapport with the participants by being clear, honest, and concise in our communications and by sharing any commonalities, such as my previous role in a leadership position. This trust building manifested in my communication with the participants and how I related to and accommodated them through the process of scheduling the interviews and selecting the interview locations. Carr and Bradley-Levine's (2016) strategy to build trust with participants included engaging them by having lunch with staff during site visits and being accessible to participants. Qualitative studies, including case studies, operate on a voluntary basis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Participation in this study was not on a mandatory basis for any participant.

The participants, based on the criteria of participation, were ideal for obtaining information to answer the communication strategies that retail industry business leaders used to improve employee motivation. Participant criteria are instrumental in recruiting study participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Pogrund, Darst, & Munro, 2015). Rodesiler and Pace (2015) established participant criteria based on the research question and certain qualities about practices relative to the participants. Participants for this study were successful business leaders in the retail industry with employees' motivation improvement knowledge through effective communication. These business leaders were well suited for exploring the problem and answering the research question.

Research Method and Design

I selected a qualitative research method for this study. Among the three research methods (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods), the qualitative method provides the process and strategies of inquiry for obtaining information from participants based on their subjective perspectives and viewpoints (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research is not rigid by design in its research settings, and it allows for the collection of essential information about experiences (Kruth, 2015). With the use of the qualitative method, researchers can explore how to solve problems (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The use of the qualitative method was appropriate for this study, given the nature and purpose of the study.

Research Method

The qualitative method was well suited for this study, which does not require predefined variables, but participants' subjective experiences and viewpoints. Punitha, Aziz, and Rahman (2016) used the qualitative method to explore in-depth participants' perspectives regarding green marketing concepts. A quantitative method is not suitable for obtaining rich descriptions and interpretations of participants' experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This study required gathering information from the participants about their experiences and their diverse perspectives to explore the problem. Furthermore, the use of mixed methods and the resulting introduction of variables would undermine any goal of not influencing or imposing on participants' viewpoints in a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Mixed methods would not have worked due to the exploratory nature of this study.

The use of the qualitative method afforded me the opportunity to obtain the rich descriptions and meanings of events from the participants necessary to answer the research question. Cohanier (2014) used qualitative research method to expand the understanding of the performance management system of one of the largest retail organization in North America. Likewise, Rao (2013) found the use of qualitative research method necessary to obtain rich information for the understanding of human resource management best practices of three organizations in India. Buick, Blackman, O'Donnell, O'Flynn, and West (2015) used a qualitative multiple case study design to explore performance management potential role in enabling the adaptability of employees to change. Therefore, I used the qualitative method to answer the research question of the communication strategies that business leaders in the retail industry used to improve employee motivation. With the use of the qualitative method for this study, I employed multiple approaches to collect data from participants without restricting their responses to the interview questions.

Research Design

I used a case study design with multiple sources of data collection for this qualitative research study. The case study design offers multiple complementary sources of data collection, including documentation and semistructured interviews as two of the six major sources (Yin, 2014). The use of a qualitative case study was ideal for gaining a greater understanding of human actions (Oliver, Geniets, Winters, Rega, & Mbae, 2015). Yin (2014) described case study research as preferred for use when the researcher focuses on contemporary events and the study does not require control or manipulation of behavioral events.

The goal of this qualitative research study was to analyze information regarding the communication strategies of successful business leaders. A case study partly depends on research questions that appropriately direct the research of the case (Stakes, 1995). Niehaves, Poeppelbuss, Plattfaut, and Becker (2014) used a case study with questions necessary to address the research goals successfully. Qualitative research questions usually describe *how* and *what* questions (Doody & Bailey, 2016). This study had interview questions that mainly focused on the *how* and *what* questions for exploratory purposes. The plan involved the use of interviews and documentation to obtain information on participants' behavioral events with no control or manipulation requirements. Therefore, a case study was a relevant and preferred design for this study.

A case study design was appropriate for this study rather than a phenomenological design because of case study's selection of data collection options and the need to triangulate the information. The use of a case study and multiple source data collection for triangulation enhances its ability to solve problems (Yin, 2014). The criteria for participants in case studies do not require the exploration of experiences shared by a group of individuals primarily based on their culture, as in an ethnography design (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The goal of this research was not to study individuals based on their culture, but rather to get the viewpoints of participants, with selection criteria primarily based on their skills, knowledge, and professional experience. The use of grounded theory requires the creation of a new theory or the study of individuals' stories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). My focus in this study was not to create any new theory, as in grounded theory, or to study stories that individuals have to tell, as in narrative study; rather, it was to interview participants and to use documents as sources of data to address the research question.

Given the sample size of the targeted population and the case study design approach, I ensured data saturation upon realizing reoccurring themes that arose from interviews and documentation that resulted in no new themes or codes. Data saturation occurs when new data confirm existing data; at this point, data are saturated (Gibbs, 2008). The attainment of data saturation varies based on the study design (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Given a population's sample size, a researcher can reach data saturation with a few interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). I corroborated information and reoccurring themes from the interviews with the evidence from the documentation that I collected. Documents are useful for corroborating and strengthening the evidence collected from other sources (Yin, 2014). The emergence of reoccurring themes or information that added no additional value to this study confirmed the state of data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of business leaders in the retail industry in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area. I used purposeful sampling for this study. The rationale and strength of purposeful sampling lie in the in-depth study of cases capable of providing a wealth of information (Suri, 2011). With purposeful sampling in a case study research design, key individuals can provide rich information vital to the purpose of the study (Charnley et al., 2015; Morrison, Clement, Nestel, & Brown, 2015). I used purposeful sampling to obtain rich information from four retail business leaders in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area to explore their communication strategies for improving employee motivation.

The sample size of four business leaders was appropriate for this qualitative case study. Researchers have shown that there is no calculative formula for a sample size in a study. Rather, the sample size mainly depends on the rationale, focus of a study, and data saturation. In a case study with documents and semistructured interviews as sources of data collection, Ghobadian and O'Regan (2014) conducted an in-depth interview with one leader to explore approaches that the leader used for success within an organization. Similarly, Shuck, Rocco, and Albornoz (2011) in a case study of employee engagement conducted three semistructured interviews to obtain rich information. A small sample size is necessary for in-depth interviews (Lucas, 2014). This case study consisted of participants from multiple organizations, and I focused on leader communication strategies for improving employee motivation. The reasons for the use of a multiple case study usually involves an understanding of the similarities or differences of the cases' results (Yin, 2014). Other researchers have focused on the general approaches for improving employee motivation. The researchers either usually identified or briefly discussed leader communication skills in their studies. For this study that involved multiple organizations, my goal was to explore the influence of retail business leaders' communication strategies for improving employee motivation in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area.

As described above under the Research Design, I ensured data saturation by identifying any repetition of ideas or themes from the interviewees' responses to the interviews questions. Data saturation occurs when additional data collection would not yield much value in terms of more information in a research synthesis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Suri, 2011). In a study with multiple sources of data collection and triangulation of sources, Stuber, Langweiler, Mior, and McCarthy (2016) determined to stop the process for semistructured interviews upon achieving saturation. I reached data saturation with the four interviews and documents collaboration.

The use of purposeful sampling enabled the selection of participants based on their knowledge, experience, and other eligibility criteria to help answer the research question. I interviewed participants from relevant organizations to answer the question of what communication strategies that retail industry business leaders used to improve employee motivation. In addition, I interviewed each participant at an appropriate place that helped to ensure privacy and confidentiality and to raise their level of comfort in sharing more information. Protection of participants' privacy and confidentiality is a part of a researcher's responsibility in conducting a case study (Yin, 2014). Sharma, Ramani, Mavalankar, Kanguru, and Hussein (2015) interviewed participants in a quiet place at their work location. Trust and ethics are important factors in research settings for data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Ethical Research

To ensure research proposal compliance with U.S. federal regulations and Walden University ethical standards, I submitted unsigned informed consent forms along with other required information during Walden's IRB approval submission. Participants' voluntary informed consent is necessary for a researcher to meet ethical guidelines (Walden University, 2015). Following Walden IRB approval (Walden University's approval number 01-06-17-0348425) and before data collection, I obtained participants' signatures on the consent forms on a voluntary basis. This voluntary basis involved the strategies for gaining access to participants discussed earlier in this section under Participants. The consent form contains (a) a statement that the participation is voluntary, (b) information about the expected duration of the subject's participation, and (c) a statement that to refuse or discontinue participation incurs no penalty.

The participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and I informed them of the option of stopping participation at any time and how they could contact me. Participants should have the right to withdraw from studies at any time without penalty (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Under the rules for the protection of human subjects, Hodges and Massey (2015) stated that any participant's withdrawal from the study would occur with no penalty, and some participants did withdraw. Participants right to withdraw from the study at any time also meant that withdrawal could occur after the initial collection of data.

As the researcher, I was responsible for taking proper measures to ensure ethical selection, respect, and protection of the participants. Researchers should abide by the basic ethic principles to ensure ethical research when human subjects are involved (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The informed consent agreement for study participation consists of my responsibilities regarding ethical research, and I completed the National Institutes of Health's Protecting Human Research Participants training course. The measures I took to ensure ethical research included targeting a population for participants based on those who met the criteria that helped to answer the research question, rather than to seek participants based on their ability to bear burdens. In a study regarding individuals with a medical condition, Sosnoff et al. (2015) targeted a population based on investigation criteria and reported that three individuals withdrew from the study for several reasons and that the researchers did not use data from those individuals for analyses. I ensured that participants participated or withdrew from the study freely, without any interference, and always acknowledged their viewpoints and decisions. During and after the study, I did not disclose any potentially harmful information.

I will maintain the data in a safe place for a minimum of 5 years, meeting the minimum requirement outlined under the Data Integrity and Confidentiality discussion of Walden's IRB requirements. I did not identify participants or their organizations by name. Rather, I assigned each participant a number in the order of the interviews, and I assigned their organization an alphabetic code. For ethical and approval purposes, Cust (2016) did not identify data with participants' names, but rather used identification numbers and kept the data locked in a filing cabinet. The geographical identification of the population did not indicate who participants were in order to protect the participants and their organizations' confidentiality.

Data Collection Instruments

My role as the researcher of this study qualified me as a primary data collection instrument. The researcher of a study is a data collection instrument who uses a variety of methods, including in-depth interviews and document analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In addition, I used other data collection instruments for this study, namely semistructured interviews with six open-ended questions and organizational documentation (i.e., public reports, organization documents, and text message correspondences) relative to the study. Interviews and documentation are among the six major sources of evidence that researchers use for case studies (Yin, 2014). The use of these two sources of evidence requires the application of a successful data collection process. Data collection can pose challenges to researchers in their role under the process; however, data collection increases a study's quality when carried out properly (Rimando et al., 2015).

The use of the identified data collection instruments, in addition to the researcher, involved looking for reoccurring themes in the information that participants provided upon completing the interviews. I also corroborated information from the interviews upon collecting documentation. I used evidence from both sources of data collection for triangulation during data analysis. Triangulation involves checking the consistency of data from multiple sources of data or collection techniques of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Regarding collection techniques of data, the semistructured interviews consisted of six open-ended questions (Appendix D) and follow-up questions. The interviews required the protocol (Appendix C) to be successful. The interview protocol can act as an aid to effective data collection (Eskandari & Soleimani, 2016; McKinney, Mukherjee, Wade, Shefman, & Breed, 2015). The protocol included a discussion of member checking with participants to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the data collection process, I reviewed the transcripts of the recorded interviews and conducted member checking. Member checks ensure that the interpretations of data are credible based on the participants' views (Flick, 2014). Member checking is one of the strategies I used to enhance the credibility of this study upon the completion of the analysis and the interpretation of the data. Member checking involves sharing with participants the drafts or summaries of transcribed information for the participants to correct or confirm the researcher interpretation of data, or to provide additional information for credibility purposes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Before meeting and sharing the summaries of the transcribed information with the participants to conduct member checking, I reviewed and interpreted the interview transcripts, then provided each participant a copy of the summary of the transcribed information under each interview question. The credibility process required that I ask the participants whether my summaries were an accurate representation of the information they provided.

Data Collection Technique

Ensuring the use of a suitable data collection technique for this study was important to answer the research question. The use of an appropriate data collection technique that conforms to the research approach is necessary (Zulu, Kinsman, Michelo, & Hurtig, 2014). I used interviews and documentation for this case study to collect data due to their complementary benefits. The use of multiple sources of evidence has a variety of benefits including a more credible finding due to the sources' complementary advantages (Yin, 2014). For the data collection process, I employed six prepared open-ended questions, and I interviewed the participants using a semistructured approach. The use of initial structured questions allows for subsequent questions based on the participants' responses (Flick, 2014). Then, I collected organizational documentation in the form of public reports, organization documents, and text message correspondences.

For each interview, I employed appropriate techniques for successful data collection. Li et al. (2016) emphasized the use of suited data collection techniques during data collection, which included conducting semistructured interviews that lasted up to 60 minutes at a convenient time and location that the participants chose, for rich data collection and analysis. Likewise, Stuber et al. (2016) conducted semistructured interviews at the location of convenience to the participants, which took at least 60 minutes each. Zoellner, Hines, Keenan, and Samson (2015) interviewed participants at private locations and of comfort for each participant. In a study that consisted of multiple industries including the retail industry, Simon, Fischbach, and Schoder (2014) first briefly introduced their study with each business leader before conducting semistructured interviews with them that lasted at least 1 hour with each participant. Similarly, Rao (2013), in a case study of best human resource management practices, first shared the interview questions with the participants and conducted semistructured interviews with a few leaders that lasted between 60 to 90 minutes each. Shuck et al. (2011), in their single case study, conducted three semistructured interviews that averaged 77 minutes each. Therefore, to collect data successfully with rich information, I coordinated with each participant to set up an appointment at a convenient time and place for the participant. The plan consisted of interviewing the participants for about 60 to 75 minutes each. Prior to each interview, I provided the participant a copy of his or her completed consent form, thanked the participant for his or her time and for agreeing to participate, reminded the participant the purpose of the study, and briefly discussed member checking with the participant.

For documentation, my focus included areas such as leader communication strategies and any of its resulting influences and outcomes. Percy, Kostere, and Kostere (2015) emphasized that not all data collected from participants, including documents, are relevant to the research question. The approach Naoui (2014) took to obtain documents for a case study data consisted primarily of newsletters and website information.

Similarly, Niehaves et al.'s (2014) source of evidence included documentation such as reports, organizational process, organizational charts, press articles, and Internet sources. I obtained documentation in the form of public reports, organization documents, and text message correspondences.

These techniques have both advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages of interviews are that they are targetable and insightful; their disadvantages include possible interviewer bias, response bias, inaccuracies, and reflexivity (Yin, 2014). Interviews also produce data rapidly and allow for instant follow-up and clarification (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The disadvantages of interviews also include the potential of a researcher failing to ask ideal questions and participants not being willing or comfortable sharing information that would aid the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In general, researchers can face difficulties in obtaining information from participants for various reasons (Rimando et al., 2015). Some of the advantages of documents are that they are stable, specific, and unobtrusive, and their disadvantages include access, retrievability, and biased selectivity (Yin, 2014). In addition, not all information in documentation is relevant to the research question; thus, a researcher has to review documents multiple times to determine the data related to the research question and to eliminate unrelated data (Percy et al., 2015).

In my use of member checking, I first ensured that the participants were aware of the process while they were completing the consent form. Furthermore, I discussed member checking with the participants before the start of the interviews, as outlined in the interview protocol (Appendix C). Second, I transcribed the information from the recorded interviews. Third, I provided participants with a copy of my interpretation of their responses for them to validate my interpretation. The use of member checking is important for the validity and credibility of a qualitative study (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Flick, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this reason, I ensured to use member checking and followed the process as planned.

Data Organization Technique

It was critical that I employed a proper technique to organize data in order to analyze and interpret the data successfully. It is important to organize data for interpretations when using multiple sources of data collection, including interviews and documentation (Rao, 2013). In a case study that consists of semistructured interviews, Naoui (2014) took notes and tape-recorded the interviews to allow for transcription within 48 hours. Likewise, O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozović, and Sinha (2016), in their case study with semistructured interviews, found it necessary to take notes and tape record the interviews. Therefore, to help with clarity and efficient transcription of data, I recorded each interview with a tape recorder and took notes with a notepad during the interviews.

Taking notes of other information besides the responses to each interview question was important. Researchers can log information with an emphasis on dates, time, locations, and participants of interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Geraci, Brunt, and Marihart (2014) noted pertinent information before starting and after conducting each interview. Mazer et al. (2015) also logged and noted similar data collection information including participant code. For this study, the process of interviewing participants consisted of noting the date, time, location, and participant code on a reflective journal for each participant before starting and after finishing each interview. Similarly, documentation from an organization involved logging the document's type on a notepad to indicate information such as date and time of collection, means/location of collection, and participant code.

Beyond the proper organization of data, I will ensure that I maintain all raw data in a locked cabinet at my home for 5 years. I will destroy the data after 5 years. This step is necessary and meets the required number of years for securing and destroying data as discussed in Walden IRB rules. The researcher should maintain data in accordance with institutional guidelines (O'Keeffe et al., 2016). Poulin (2014) properly maintained raw data meeting the institute's requirements for data maintenance. I will maintain raw data in a secured manner within the required time.

Data Analysis

Proper data analysis is important. Appropriate data analysis is necessary to answer the research questions (Sibbald, MacGregor, Surmacz, & Wathen, 2015). I analyzed the data that emerged from the documentation and semistructured interviews that I collected using methodological triangulation. The use of methodological triangulation helps the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Triangulation involves finding multiple ways for understanding the phenomenon in question (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The use of methodological triangulation to analyze data for this case study was vital to comparing the results from interviews and documentation sources of evidence and making conclusions about the research question. I ensured the proper validation of data that emerged from interviews and documentation.

To analyze documentation, I reviewed and interpreted the organizational documentation (i.e., public reports, organization documents, and text message correspondences) and compared the interpreted information from organizational documentation with appropriate sources of data collection (i.e., interviews responses). To give meaning to or make possible connections with information from parts of documents that are relevant and important to a research aids in the data analysis (Stakes, 1995). Different strategies for data analysis depend on theoretical propositions or concepts from the collected data that are of use (Yin, 2014). During data analysis, Bell (2015) triangulated multiple sources of data to enhance the research validity. To collaborate the themes or main ideas between the documentation and semistructured interviews, the two sources of data collection for this study, I used methodological triangulation to analyze the data.

To analyze interviews, I used an adequate process. After collecting, organizing, and safeguarding the data, I reviewed my interview notes and interview recordings before transcribing the data. Given the amount of data that I collected, and the time needed to complete the study, I employed the help of a transcriber to type the recorded data into a Microsoft Word document for data analysis. I ensured to obtain a signed nondisclosure/confidentiality agreement prior to the transcription. Transcription requires time and effort (Gibbs, 2008). Dixon (2015) and Drayton and Weston (2015) contracted transcribers to transcribe tape-recorded interview information. For effective data analysis, I looked for reoccurring phenomena or key themes from each participant's experience regarding their communication strategies and employee motivation based on the interviews. I made connections where possible regarding the emerged themes from the interviews with the documentation, literature themes, theories, conceptual framework, and results from studies in the field that emerged after I wrote the proposal for this study.

I generated codes for themes that resulted from significant statements I identified from the participants' responses during the interviews. A part of data analysis includes making connections to how transcribed codes represent interviewees' statements and other sources from which codes emerge (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Each code's meaning in this study was on a category basis (e.g., communication strategies), and I made connections to how the codes linked to themes representing the participants' statements. As described by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), such an approach enables a person to link different segments of data to a concept. Additionally, the development of codes and the codes that a researcher focuses on depends on the study's aim (Gibbs, 2008).

I used NVivo computer-assisted software to assist in the coding and categorizing of text from the interviews questions responses and documentation. During the data analysis of a case study, Blum (2017) used NVivo to sort information for coding purposes. The use of computer-assisted software for coding and categorizing requires the use of analytic reasoning to address how the codes represent the retrieved information (Yin, 2014). NVivo and similar programs have several versions (Gibbs, 2008). I used the latest version of NVivo to support data analysis.

In my review and analysis of the transcribed data from interviews and documentation, I looked for reoccurring terms that have meaning at the core of the study for the development of key themes. I ensured that the categories of codes, which will be themes from the data, reflect current literature that other researchers published after writing the proposal of this study. I also ensured that the categories reflected the conceptual framework by making connections to the main ideas of the literature and the core of the conceptual framework. To help achieve this, I ensured that the interview questions were consistent with the literature and the conceptual framework. I also ensured that the documents are relevant to the research. The success of data analysis primarily rests on the researcher and not on the assisting software (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Yin, 2014).

Reliability and Validity

A person can determine the quality of a case study design based on the study's reliability and validity (Yin, 2014). To enhance the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument and process for this study, I recorded the interviews and transcribed the information contained in the recordings. Furthermore, the plan was to ensure a reliable process throughout the data collection phase and validation of the transcribed information following data transcription.

To ensure data saturation, as discussed under Research Method and Design and Population and Sampling above, I identified reoccurring themes from the interviews, and I used information from documentation to corroborate those themes. Data saturation occurs when collecting additional data yields few new themes or no new information in comparison to the effort used in the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Suri, 2011). Ultimately, I ensured data saturation when reoccurring themes provided few to no new themes or information.

Reliability

The reliability or dependability of a study depends on the reliability of the data collection instruments and processes (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). I ensured that the interviews and documentation, interviews recording, documentation logging, information logging, note taking, labeling systems, and data organization procedures were all consistent. In a case study, reliability is a matter of conducting the research in a consistent and repeatable manner (Yin, 2014). One of my objectives was to be transparent with the raw data collection procedure and process involved. Transparency enables verification. Transparency in data collection promotes confirmability of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Auditing is one way of ensuring dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transparency in describing my assumptions, my previous experience as it relates to the topic, details of the methodology and design, raw data collection (descriptions of data collection instruments, data collection technique, and data organization technique), and data analysis all promoted the confirmability or objectivity of this study.

Validity

The internal validity or credibility of a study depends on how credible the study's outcome is as it pertains to the participants' evaluation (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). I used member checking of the data interpretation to achieve credibility by providing my interpretations to the participants to evaluate whether my interpretations were consistent with their responses to the interview questions. Researcher use of member checking ensures the credibility of a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I triangulated information from interviews and documentation with the aim of corroborating information from both sources of evidence. Triangulation can be a validation method or an alternative way of establishing validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I used information from both sources of data for triangulation during data analysis. Discussions and descriptions, including the identified assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, helped to address the external validity or transferability of the findings from this study so that future scholars can transfer the findings to other industries, populations, or geographical locations. The extent to which research findings are transferable depends on providing rich descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transition and Summary

In this section, I restated the purpose statement of this qualitative case study and discussed my role as the researcher, which included ensuring bias mitigation. This section also included discussion of the population, which involved successful business leaders in the retail industry in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area. I described the eligibility criteria for study participation and the purposeful sampling method for the selection of participants. This section also included further justification of my use of the qualitative method and case study design for this study. In addition, I discussed the informed consent process I followed to comply with the appropriate regulation and requirement for ethical research. Discussions also included the data collection instruments, techniques, organization techniques, and analysis. Finally, I discussed the reliability and validity of this study, which depended on its dependability, confirmability, creditability, and transferability.

In Section 3, I presented the findings from this study based on the data and my analysis. In addition, I discussed the application of the findings to professional practice and the study's implications for social change. Finally, I presented recommendations for action and further research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the communication strategies that business leaders in the retail industry used to improve employee motivation. Use of a case study was ideal for understanding leader communication practices to influence employees without using predetermined variables. I used a multiple case study to enable an understanding of similarities or differences of leader communication strategies for employee motivation across three organizations. To answer the central research question, I interviewed four business leaders who were managers and senior officials in their organizations.

I conducted semistructured interviews with participants to explore the communication strategies that retail industry business leaders used to improve employee motivation. During data analysis, I reviewed and compared interviews notes, interviews transcripts, and organizational documentation (such as leader-employee text message correspondences, written organizational strategies including leadership communication, and written leadership assessments including leadership communication). Leaders used effective communication approaches that transformational leaders use to influence employee motivation, as seen in Allen et al. (2016). I found that retail industry business leaders used effective communication to improve employee motivation. The findings confirmed and extended the knowledge of the communication strategies that leaders use to improve employee motivation.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question addressed in this study was the following: What communication strategies do business leaders in the retail industry use to improve employee motivation? Effective communication strategies are important tools that a leader can use to influence employee motivation. I developed six semistructured interview questions to gain an understanding of the communication strategies that positively influence employee motivation. I collected data from multiple sources, such as interviews and documentation. I interviewed four participants from three organizations in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area. I collected documentation in the form of public reports, organization documents, and text message correspondences for triangulation to help enhance the validity of the study.

Both interviews and documentation enriched the data I collected to answer the research question. The participants consisted of one male leader and one female leader from the first organization, one male leader from the second organization, and one male leader from the third organization. To protect the participants and their organizations, I assigned them numeric and alphabetical codes. The assigned codes are as follows: P1A (the first participant I interviewed from the first organization), P2A (the second participant I interviewed from the first organization), P3B (from the second organization and the third overall participant I interviewed), and P4C (from the third organization and the fourth overall participant I interviewed). Based on data analysis and five themes that emerged from this study, retail industry business leaders used effective communication strategies to improve their employees' motivation.

Identification of Themes

During data analysis, the following five themes emerged: (a) respectful communication, (b) two-way communication, (c) charismatic communication, (d) listening, and (e) feedback. Transformational leaders use these communication strategies to influence employee motivation. The participants' experiences and responses to the interview questions as well as the relevant organizational documentation, consisting of public reports, organization documents, and text message correspondences I collected, provided communication strategies that can help leaders communicate effectively with employees for improved motivation.

Theme 1: Respectful communication. Leadership style and leader communication strategies including respectful communication, or lack of it, influence employees' levels of motivation. Transformational leaders' strategies consist of communicating respectfully, which results in positively influencing employees (Bell et al., 2015). As shown in the literature review and the results of this study, respectful leader communication with employees is effective. This effective communication approach consists of respectful leader treatment of employees in the act of communicating with them. Leaders' respectful communication positively influenced employees. On the other hand, employees react negatively to disrespectful communication approaches. The participants emphasized the importance of this communication strategy and its influence on their responses to the interview questions and documentation that they provided.

Respectful communication emerged from the participants' responses to Interview Questions 1 through 6 and text message correspondences. Disrespectfully communicating to or directing employees influences their motivation negatively (P2A; P3B). P1A shared that speaking to employees respectfully and not talking down to them helps influence their motivation. Effective communication strategies consist of respectfulness (Manik & Hutagaol, 2015). When asked Question 3, regarding what communication approaches they have found that least motivate employees, three participants indicated that disrespectfully communicating to employees is one of the least motivating communication approaches. In response to Question 3, P2A provided the example of "Treating them nasty and acting like they are not important. Like, in a statement, I'm your boss. You do what I say." In response to my follow-up question regarding employees' reaction to the stated communication approach, P2A response included the following:

> You can tell by their reaction. Their body reaction and the way they talk to you, basically, justifies the reaction to what you said. You can tell from the reaction if it's a negative reaction or a positive reaction. When you have people frowning . . . messing up their work, then you know that it's due to their response.

When answering Interview Question 2, how do you describe your communication practices for improving employee motivation, P1A stated, "Talk to them like, you know like a person . . . not down to them, and if you do it like that, that'll give them the motivation to try to do better." As part of her responses to the effect of the participant communication practices on employees' motivation as asked in Question 1, P2A emphasized how respectful communication incredibly affects employees and their willingness to work toward the success of the organization. P3B shared the following text message correspondence in which he communicated with one of his employees at 7:30 PM, within the organization's nonworking hours, in a polite and considerate way:

> If it's cool with you, may I leave at 2 or 3 o'clock tomorrow? Yes, that's fine . . . It might be because he wants to mow his lawn or whatever, but you know what, if you got your stuff done for the week. It's Friday, that is fine.

Similarly, P4C communicated with one of his employees at night via text message in a respectful, polite, and considerate way as follows:

> The key is waiting for you at the security desk right down the hall from the store. Thanks again . . . I'm staying up a little late tonight. Therefore I'm gonna be sleeping in a little bit tomorrow morning. Here is the person [whom] to contact if you have any questions for me . . . Thank you.

P1A and P2A also shared some of their respectful communication with employees via text messages, including respectful communication approach in discussing work-related matters. The participants' responses and respectful communication practices were consistent with transformational leadership communication approaches for successful employee outcomes. Transformational leaders communicate in a respectful way for improved employee outcomes (Bell et al., 2015). P1A's statements in response to Question 1 included that speaking to employees in a demeaning manner decreases employees' motivation. P3B also shared similar experiences and noted the positive influence of respectful communication on employees.

Respectful communication is present in the participants' responses to all the interview questions and text message correspondences documentation. Based on analysis of the participants' responses to the questions and documentation, respectful communication emerged as one of the most important communication strategies for improving employee motivation. The participants agreed that respectful communication influences employee motivation in a positive way. The participants also agreed that lack of respectful communication or presence of disrespectful communication is one of the communication approaches that least motivates and even demotivates employees. According to Steyn (2017), respectful communication is important for interpersonal relationships and organizational success. Respectful communication is an effective communication strategy for influencing employee motivation.

Theme 2: Two-way communication. The practice of communicating with employees and exchanging information is important in the communication process for influencing employee motivation. Two-way communication between leaders and employees is one of the important factors that contribute to positive employee outcomes (Dickson-Swift et al., 2014). This approach to communication with employees, rather than primarily using one-way communication, results in positive influence and outcomes. Given the individualized consideration factor, the practice of transformational leadership involves the use of two-way communication as an effective communication approach (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This study showed that leader and employee two-way communication enables sharing of ideas and performance improvement. The participants discussed the communication strategy of a two-way exchange of information in their responses to the interview questions and documentation I obtained.

Two-way communication emerged from the participants' responses to Interview Questions 1, 2, and 4, organization documents, and text message correspondences. In their responses to Questions 1 and 2, P2A and P3B encouraged and demonstrated the use of two-way communication with employees for improved outcomes. P1A also indicated the effectiveness of two-way communication in his response to Question 4 regarding some of his best communication approaches for improving employee motivation. Two-way communication enabled the participants to communicate with and exchange information with employees. This finding confirms what Mishra (2015) revealed, which is that employees responded positively to the use of two-way communication to enable the expression of their opinions. P2A's statements while sharing her communication strategies for influencing employee motivation included the following:

> You ask them for their opinion. How do they feel about it? Do they think it's a better way that they can handle any one situation that will help improve the business aspect? So, it is not only just dictating to them what needs to be done. Also, giving them the opportunity of looking at things and saying, hey, I saw this, and I think that this could be handled this way.

In their responses to the best communication strategies for improving employee motivation, Question 4, P1A and P4C noted the use of two-way communication. Two-way communication between leader and employee is beneficial (P1A). Two-way communication enables employees to convey important information (P4C). P4C's organization documents showed strategies of leadership's two-way communication with employees. An example of the strategies is the effective exchanges of information between leadership and the workforce. P2A also emphasized the use of two-way communication in her response to Questions 1 and 2. P2A's description of her communication practices to improve employee motivation includes using two-way communication to obtain ideas, viewpoints, and to exchange information with employees. Participants-employees text message correspondences also yielded the practice of two-way communication. According to Netshitangani (2016), transformational leadership involves activating relations exchange of information. The findings from this study have shown that this communication approach improves employee motivation. One of the resulting enhancements from using a two-way communication approach as described by P2A is employees working on the notion of shared interest, and that leadership values them as members of the organization. P3B shared similar experiences in his use and encouragement of two-way communication as a communication strategy to influence employees.

Two-way communication developed from responses to three of the interview questions, including Question 4 (what communication strategies did you find worked best to improve employee motivation) and documentation consisting of organization documents and text message correspondences. Therefore, this theme is shown to be one of the best communication strategies for improving employee motivation. The participants' use of two-way communication for improved employee outcomes is also consistent with the findings in at least one of the new studies since writing the proposal for this study: Leaders can use two-way communication to gain employee cooperation and improve their outcomes (Perna, 2016). The participants engaged in conversations and exchange of information with employees. The transformational leadership style that the participants practiced encouraged two-way communication with their employees for improved outcomes. The practice of a two-way communication approach limits one-way communication and positively influences employee motivation.

Theme 3: Charismatic communication. Leaders use charismatic communication to influence employees' motivation. Transformational leaders use charismatic communication to motivate employees (Giltinane, 2013). Business leaders who practice transformational leadership style use charismatic communication to influence their employees' motivation. This study's results showed that charismatic communication is a communication approach that involves energizing employees, not making them feel less, and making them feel good about themselves. The participants shared their charismatic communication strategy for improving employee motivation in their responses to the interview questions, and I enhanced the theme's validity with member checking. Triangulation, which can serve as a validation method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), of this theme that emerged from interviews with documentation was not ideal given the essence of charismatic communication practice.

Charismatic communication emerged from the participants' responses to Interview Questions 2 and 4. Three participants discussed the importance of charismatic communication and demonstrated its use in their communication practices for improving employee motivation. The participants also shared resulting influences and outcomes due to their use of charismatic communication. When answering Question 4, regarding communication strategies that the participants find worked best to improve employee motivation, P1A discussed the use of a charismatic communication approach to arouse and motivate employees. P1A's effective communication agrees with the literature review and transformational leadership style characteristics. Charisma is one of the four factors found in the transformational leadership style (Bass, 1985). Participants shared that this communication strategy resulted in employees' motive of going beyond what leadership expected of them in performing their jobs for organizational success. P1A expressed the outcome intent of making the employees "feel like they're part of the experience and making something greater into the company." In response to Question 2, P3B shared his communication approach to influence employees' motivation and bring out the best in employees for positive outcomes. P3B stated:

> However, the people to do it with a smile on their face and not begrudgingly, that's the big difference. If I say, look guys, hey sorry next month it's going to be rough, but it's going to be rough for all of us. I will be right there . . . It's going to be rough, and if need be, I will be out there . . . That gets them to the point where they do it . . . and they do it with their best face for their customer [s].

P2A, while answering Question 2, also shared and demonstrated a similar approach to the other participants. In describing her communication approach to improve employee motivation, P2A's statement included, "We're all in this together. We're all in here, a family, to make things together. I value your opinion and hope you value mine." During data analysis, triangulating this theme that emerged from responses to interviews questions with documentation I obtained was challenging, in part, because the study showed that charisma, as it relates to communication, is typically practiced in-person such as during verbal interactions with employees. Charismatic communication as a theme was confirmed, and I enhanced its validity through the member checking process. Transformational leaders use charisma in their effective communication to influence employees for desired outcomes (Malik, Javed, & Hassan, 2017).

Charismatic communication is present in the participants' responses to two interview questions, including Question 4, and its validity strengthened with member checking. The presence of this theme in Question 4 indicated that charismatic communication is one of the best communication strategies for improving employee motivation. Leader charisma, including having an idealized influence to lead others to follow, is a behavior of transformational leaders (Copeland, 2016). Charismatic communication is an effective communication strategy that involves influencing employee motivation and bringing out the best in employees. Participants used charismatic communication to improve employees' outcomes.

Theme 4: Listening. Listening allows a leader to obtain and understand message or information conveyed by employees and this practice influences employee motivation. Netshitangani (2016) found that employees dislike leaders selectively listening. Listening is an effective communication that transformational leaders use for positively influencing employees (Keevy & Perumal, 2014). Transformational leaders practice active listening (Pradhan et al., 2017). By listening effectively, leaders can obtain complete information from employees. Three participants, one from each organization, shared information on this communication strategy in their responses to the interview questions in addition to the strengthened validity of the theme with the use of member checking.

Listening developed from participants' responses to Interview Questions 1, 2, and 4. P2A, P3B, and P4C in their descriptions demonstrated and some encouraged listening to employees as a strategy for attaining improved employee motivation. During data analysis, listening as a theme was confirmed and I enhanced its validity with member checking. Listening is an effective communication that influences employee motivation for improved outcomes (Bell & Roebuck, 2015). P2A elaborated on the effect her communication practices had on employees as she stated in her response to Question 1, how do your communication practices affect employees' motivation. P2A, while expounding, commented on the importance of leaders to be open-minded and listen to what their employees have to say, and furthermore, to "take what they're saying, implement it if it says all right." In describing her communication practices for improving employee motivation, Question 2, P2A also reiterated to consider what employees have to say upon listening to them. In their responses to Interview Question 4, P3B and P4C stressed their communication strategy of listening effectively to obtain and exchange information with employees.

Listening emerged in the participants' responses to three interview questions, including Question 4, and its validity strengthened through the member checking process. This theme's emergence in Question 4 showed it is among the communication strategies that worked best to improve employee motivation. Leader active interest in listening effectively to employees and demonstrating that information is completely received and understood do positively influence employees' motivation. Leader effective communication, including listening, contributes to employees acting desirably for a successful outcome (Stanciu & Tinca, 2013). Participants practiced listening as a communication strategy to influence employee motivation.

Theme 5: Feedback. Leader feedback to employees impacts employee motivation. The practice of effective communication, including offering feedback influenced employee motivation (Bell & Roebuck, 2015). The findings from this study showed that providing feedback in a positive way, which is identifiable with transformational leadership style, is preferred for positive influence on employee motivation. This effective communication strategy consists of providing employees with feedback in a precise manner. Leaders can use feedback effectively to influence employee outcomes. The participants discussed their communication practices of providing feedback to employees in their responses to the interview questions and the theme was also present in the organizational documentation.

Feedback developed from the participants' responses to Interview Questions 1, 2, 4, and 5, as well as from public reports. In answering Question 1, P1A discouraged responding negatively to employees while addressing any poor actions that employees might have taken. Rather, P1A encouraged providing employees precise feedback in a positive way. Transformational leaders provide feedback in a precise manner (Blomme et al., 2015). P1A in sharing his communication practices for affecting employees' motivation commented not to communicate in a "negative way, but encourage them . . . you had [done] this wrong, but there was a better way to do it. You know, explain to them that . . ." P2A, P3B, and P4C in their responses to Question 2 regarding their communication practices for improving employee motivation emphasized the use of feedback and being precise, and described its use in their communication with employees. In response to my probing questions, P4C responses included the following in which the leadership communication similarly showed in reports available to the public:

> I'll give very direct feedback and let them know what areas they can improve upon and what missed opportunities there are and how to go about fixing them. And if it's done perfectly up to expectation, then I show positive feedback in reward.

P3B in his statements shared his approach of being precise when providing feedback to employees. P2A described how she first provided positive feedback to employees before presenting them with recommendations on how to improve in specific areas. P4C's statements in response to Question 5, how do employees respond to your communication strategies in terms of employees' efforts to engage in behaviors for achieving organizational goals, included "I give them feedback whenever I notice an opportunity to give them feedback." P4C's response also included that employees responded positively based on their actions of doing their best to achieve the goals that he set forth and improving their performance. Transformational leaders give frequent and positive feedback (Hussain et al., 2016). Giving feedback is an effective communication for successful employee outcomes (Netshitangani, 2016). The results of this study showed that employees prefer feedback in a precise, constant, and positive manner. Participants' use of specific feedback that was communicated positively influenced employees.

Feedback is present in the participants' responses to four interview questions, including Question 4 (what communication strategies did you find worked best to improve employee motivation), and in public reports documentation. Feedback emerged as one of the best communication strategies for improving employee motivation. The participants' use of feedback is consistent with Keevy and Perumal's (2014) findings of transformational leaders providing employees a response as an additional effective communication strategy. Leaders who practice transformational leadership style provide feedback to employees with an approach that involves being specific and positive. The participants showed that providing feedback in a precise and positive way is important for improving employee motivation.

Findings Tied to Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership was the conceptual framework for this study. Charisma, inspirational leadership, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation are four factors of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders' use of effective communication approaches influences employees for improved outcomes. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees. Transformational leaders increase the motivation level of those they lead (Burns, 1978). The results of this study showed that business leaders in the retail industry that practiced transformational leadership used effective communication strategies to improve their employees' motivation.

The findings from this multiple case study have shown that the communication strategies used by transformational leaders for improving employee motivation are respectful communication, two-way communication, charismatic communication, listening, and feedback. Responses from the participants and organizational documentation showed characteristics of transformational leadership theory, the practice of effective communication strategies, and results consisting of positively influencing employee motivation. The multiple cases yielded similarities in the leader communication strategies that the participants used for improving employee motivation. The similarities showed the emergence of five themes, which are consistent with transformational leadership theory and communication strategies present in the existing literature, across three organizations

Findings Tied to the Existing Literature

Retail industry business leaders used communication strategies that are present in the existing literature to influence employees' motivation. Leader communication is important for the influence of employee motivation (Kumar & Misra, 2012). Employee degree of motivation reflects in employee performance level (Vroom, 1964). By improving employees' motivation through effective communication, the business leaders also influenced employees' performance (e.g., as shown in theme 1, respectful communication). A leader can motivate employees by using an effective communication process (Uzonna, 2013). Leadership communication of information influenced employee outcome and performance (Johansson et al., 2014). Business leaders in the retail industry used the following communication strategies to improve employees' motivation: respectful communication, two-way communication, charismatic communication, listening, and feedback.

The findings from this study have confirmed and extended the knowledge of the influence of leader effective communication on employee motivation as follows:

Employees react positively and cooperatively with their leaders when their leaders communicate respectfully. Respectful expressions by transformational leaders positively influence employee actions (Bell et al., 2015). Employees develop a sense of being valued and togetherness for achieving a common objective of the organization when their leaders practice two-way communication, including obtaining employees input. Employees were responsive to the idea of two-way communication to permit communicating their viewpoints (Mishra, 2015). Employees are inspired to meet their obligations and go beyond expectations when their leaders communicate in a charismatic way that brings the best out of them. Transformational leaders use charismatic communication to influence employees’ motivation for the attainment of goals (Giltinane, 2013). When leaders listen to employees and address transmitted information, employees act desirably knowing that the information conveyed is completely received by their leaders. Leadership practice of listening to employees results in employees acting in desired ways (Stanciu & Tinca, 2013). Employees also respond positively when their leaders provide them feedback, especially in a precise and positive manner. Transformational leaders positively influence employees by providing them precise feedback (Blomme et al., 2015). These communication strategies increase employees’ motivation to perform.

The leader’s use of effective communication strategies that are consistent with transformational leadership style improves employee motivation. Transformational leaders communication strategies to influence employees positively include the following: respectful communication (Bell et al., 2015), two-way communication (Bass

& Avolio, 1994; Netshitangani, 2016), charismatic communication, (Giltinane, 2013; Malik et al., 2017), listening (Keevy & Perumal, 2014; Pradhan et al., 2017), and feedback (Blomme et al., 2015; Hussain et al., 2016).

Application to Professional Practice

Transformational leaders use effective communication strategies to influence employees positively (Jauhari et al., 2017). Leadership is very intentional, and leaders make organizational decisions in part based on a leadership philosophy (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017). The results of this study showed that effective communication strategies are important for retail business leaders to be successful with improving employee motivation. Leader effective communication, such as communicating respectfully with employees, impacts the achievement of an organization's mission (P2A). Two-way communication, which emerged as a theme from this study, showed that effective leader communication includes the communication strategies that leaders use to convey information to employees, as well as to obtain information from employees. The practice of effective leader communication also includes communicating in a charismatic manner, which emerged as a theme from this study, to influence employees for improved outcomes. The leaders from multiple retail organizations who participated in this study used effective communication to influence their employees for improved motivation.

The themes that emerged from interviews and documentation and the findings associated with each theme may assist business leaders in using effective communication to improve employee motivation. The findings from this study include the following: Employees treat their organizations' goals and missions as their priority when their leaders communicate with them respectfully. Exchange of information would likely include information that a leader who practices one-way communication may find challenging to receive from his or her employees. Employees enthusiastically meet organizational goals and excel because of leaders' charismatic communication. Leaders can use the communication strategies found in this study to improve their employees' motivation.

Some of the participants' responses were consistent with transformational leadership communication strategies as shown in the literature review, but the responses did not result in themes in this study. Nevertheless, the participants and other business leaders can further benefit from the shared communication strategies. Examples: P1A emphasized the importance of encouraging employees even when they do something wrong. Transformational leaders encourage employees (Jyoti & Dev, 2015). Employee encouragement positively influences employees. P3B commented on how he shared his plans with his employees and what he envisioned for the future of the organization's 401K plan. Transformational leaders use effective communication of vision to influence employees (DuBois et al., 2015; Rijal, 2016). Employees demonstrate a sense of being part of the organization when leaders communicate their vision. These transformational leadership communication strategies are as helpful as the emerged themes.

Leaders' use of the communication strategies in the emerged themes of this study would improve their employees' motivation. The development of effective communication strategies is essential in the process of a leader's use of communication to improve employee motivation. Leaders, through formal or informal training, mentoring, and change in behavior could learn or adapt the communication practices that transformational leaders use to motivate employees. A leader can incorporate a transformational leadership style and communication strategies in his or her professional practice. Leaders can practice the themes that emerged from this study daily. For example, communicating with employees in a charismatic way to energize them, listening to employees to obtain complete information from them when employees are conveying information, and providing employees precise feedback in a positive manner. The findings from this study might help business leaders in the retail industry to understand that communication is an important tool for improving employee motivation. This study might also help retail business leaders practice effective communication and improve employee motivation for better outcomes.

Implications for Social Change

The objective of this research was to explore the communication strategies used by retail industry business leaders to improve employee motivation. Leaders should have knowledge and understanding of the use of communication strategies for employee motivation improvement. Employee motivation has a relationship with employee welfare, well-being, and outcomes (Paolillo, Silva, & Pasini, 2016). Employee morale and performance are negatively affected by lack of employee motivation (Afful-Broni, 2012). Improved employee motivation enhances employee morale and performance. Leaders' use of effective communication influences employees for improved motivation.

Implications for social change from this study include the potential to enhance social conditions through economic developments in society as a result of improved employee motivation. Motivated employees positively influence organizational success (Fiaz et al., 2017). There is a relationship between prosperity and full employment on a continual basis (Davis, de Santana, Bandeira dos Santos, Quintal, & Tesch Santos, 2016). Successful organizations contribute to economic improvements in society. Improved conditions of employees, in turn, lead to the success of organizations and promote prosperity in society for individuals, families, and communities.

Recommendations for Action

Many leaders still face communication challenges (Malik et al., 2017). Leaders may implement effective communication strategies that emerged from this study to improve employee motivation. The leaders who participated in this study shared their knowledge and experience regarding their communication strategies for improving employee motivation. The communication strategies are respectful communication, two-way communication, charismatic communication, listening, and feedback. The key approach I recommend for action from this study is that business leaders in the retail industry should incorporate the identified communication strategies into their overall strategies for improving employee motivation.

Business leaders should communicate effectively with their employees to be successful. Leader communication is important for employee motivation (Kumar & Misra, 2012). The results of this study have shown that leaders in the retail industry used effective communication strategies to improve their employees' motivation for better outcomes. To use the effective communication strategies shown in this study, I recommend that business leaders take the following steps: (a) evaluate their communication strategies, (b) incorporate the communication strategies that emerged from this study into their employee motivation tools, (c) practice the communication strategies daily as they develop each of them, and (d) evaluate the implemented communication strategies to determine usefulness.

To promote dissemination of the findings from this study, I will convey the findings to leaders in the retail industry through two methods. The methods consist of disseminating the findings from this study through paper copies and online publications. I will share the summary of the findings with the participants. This study will also be available through the ProQuest Central database, which contains a selection of publications including business information. I will create a series of videos and written materials for dissemination through the Internet. I will also seek to publish this study in a business journal and to share the findings from this study through organizational training.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the communication strategies that business leaders in the retail industry used to improve employee motivation. The practice of motivating employees will likely remain a challenge to many business leaders. Some leaders will find the recommendations from this study helpful in meeting this challenge. However, a future study could focus on how leadership actions, rather than communication strategies, influence employee motivation in the retail industry.

For this study, I collected data from business leaders in the retail industry in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area. I recommend that future studies focus on other target populations. Future qualitative researchers should consider exploring the communication strategies that leaders in other specific industries use to improve employee motivation. Understanding findings based on industry uniqueness will be significant.

The data I collected provided the leaders' views and experiences. I based the data collection process on the communication strategies of the leaders, and the resulting outcomes are primarily leaders experiences. I would recommend a focus on data collection from both the leaders and employees in further research of the communication strategies that business leaders use to improve employee motivation. The concept of collecting data from both the leaders and employees regarding the leader communication strategies for improving employee motivation would further explore the phenomenon by understanding the employee viewpoints.

Reflections

The doctoral study has been a great journey from a personal, academic, and professional perspective. I have been in a leadership position on different occasions throughout my professional experience. I have always been interested in leadership styles and communication strategies. Through this study, I have realized that beyond the communication skills that a leader possesses, a leader's communication practices relates to the leader's leadership style. I also now understand that a leader can practice or implement more than one leadership style and be successful.

In this multiple case study, I wanted to explore the communication strategies that business leaders in the retail industry used to improve employee motivation. To help minimize my personal bias or preconceived ideas and values that I had, I ensured to recruit participants who met the participant criteria. I had challenges finding and recruiting participants and arranging for interviews with participants. I maintained a good relationship with the participants throughout the process. During the interviews, I allowed the participants to answer each interview question and follow-up questions based on their own experiences. In addition to minimizing my personal bias, these approaches also helped minimize any effects that I may have on the participants. I kept an open mind and maintained protocol throughout the data collection and analysis processes. The data I collected through interviews and documentation also validated the choice of study method to explore the problem and answer the research question. The use of variables would have limited participants to specific answers that they could provide. The data collection process afforded me the opportunity to challenge my preconceived ideas and thoughts in this field of research.

The doctoral study has helped heighten my awareness in the areas of effective leader communication and employee motivation. I have always thought that effective communication is necessary to accomplish an organization's mission. I have also thought that motivating employees is one of the means for achieving organizational success. However, through this study, I have been able to understand the impact of using effective leader communication strategies to influence employee motivation. The literature review, data collection, and data analysis have provided me insight into the aspect of improving employee outcomes and achieving organizational success through effective leader communication practices. Finally, the entire study has been quite an impactful experience in my life, and I look forward to empowering others through the knowledge and experience I have gained.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to explore the communication strategies that business leaders in the retail industry within the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area used to improve employee motivation. I used a qualitative multiple case study, including the use of semistructured interviews and organizational documentation as sources of data collection to gain insight and understand the phenomenon. Effective communication strategies are important to business leaders for successful outcomes. The leadership style practiced by a leader is key to the leader’s communication strategies.

The findings from this study showed that business leaders in the retail industry used effective communication strategies, namely, (a) respectful communication, (b) two-way communication, (c) charismatic communication, (d) listening, and (e) feedback to positively influence their employees for improved motivation. This case study of four purposefully selected business leaders from three organizations demonstrated that the leaders used similar communication strategies to improve their employees’ motivation.

The five themes that emerged from the data I collected are consistent with the effective communication strategies present in the existing literature, which transformational leaders use to influence employees’ motivation positively. The emerged themes provided insight into the communication strategies that business leaders can use to improve employee motivation. Leader effective communication strategies positively influence employee motivation. Effective communication strategies are tools that leaders can utilize to improve their employees' motivation for better outcomes.

The communication strategies that the retail industry business leaders who participated in this study used are shown to be effective for improving employee motivation. Accordingly, the participants provided the answer to the central research question. Leadership effective communication strategies influence employees for improved motivation. Business leaders can improve their employees' motivation by practicing the positive influential communication strategies revealed in this study.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter for Research Participation

December 4, 2016

Invitation Letter for Research Participation

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am a student at Walden University, and I am conducting a study with a focus on effective leaders. You are invited to participate in a study titled “Influence of Leader Communication on Employee Motivation.” Participation criteria consist of leaders who are at least 18 years old, have at least 1 year of leadership experience, and have communication practice knowledge for employee motivation. Participation in this study is voluntary and will be in accordance with U.S. federal regulations and Walden’s Institutional Review Board requirements.

Given my study of the literature over the past 4 years, I have identified some of the most successful communication strategies to improve employee motivation. Upon completing the study, I will share my findings, best practices, and recommendations that may provide additional strategies that you may use to improve your leadership communication strategies, employee motivation, and organizational performance.

I will greatly appreciate your cooperation and look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me by phone at phone number or by email at email address.

Sincerely,

Oke Obi

Enclosure:
Participant Research Consent Form

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation

Community Retail Corporation

Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area

December 4, 2016

Letter of Cooperation

Dear Oke Obi,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Influence of Leader Communication on Employee Motivation within the Community Retail Corporation. As part of this study, I authorize you to interview effective leaders employed at our organization who are at least 18 years old and have at least one year of leadership experience, including experience on effective communication for employee motivation and to collect our organization's documentation as sources of data collection. In addition, I authorize you to work with the participants later after your analysis to provide them summaries of transcribed information from data you will collect and results of your study. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include allowing for the semistructured interview of qualified leaders that may take up to 75 minutes each with you at appropriate location, and providing you with documentation (i.e., letters, memoranda, e-mail correspondence, administrative documents, written reports of events, and articles available to the public) that may be useful to confirm themes from the interviews. In addition, allowing for further communication with the participants necessary to exchange feedback after you analyze the data and complete your study. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data from this study will be kept confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Business Leader
Business.Leader@communityretail.com

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol:

1. Greet and introduce the interview to the participant.
2. Remind the participant the purpose of the study.
3. Encourage questions from the participant and answer any questions.
4. Inform the participant that the interview is about to begin.
5. Note the date, time, location, and participant-coded name, and turn on the tape recorder.
6. Proceed with interview questions (Appendix D) and follow-up probing questions.
7. Give the participant the required time to answer each question.
8. Thank the participant for his or her time and turn off the tape recorder.

Follow-up Member Checking Interview:

1. Follow steps 1 to 5 above.
2. Provide a copy of Appendix D to the participant with a synthesis that represents the participant's responses to each question.
3. Go through each question and my interpretation.
4. Ask the participant if I miss anything in my interpretations.
5. Ask the participant if he or she would like to add any information regarding the questions and my interpretations.
6. Give the participant the required time to answer each question.
7. Thank the participant for his or her time.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

The open-ended interview questions for this study titled "Influence of Leader Communication on Employee Motivation" are as follows:

1. How do your communication practices affect employees' motivation?
2. How would you describe your communication practices for improving employee motivation?
3. What communication approaches have you found that least motivate employees?
4. What communication strategies did you find worked best to improve employee motivation?
5. How do employees respond to your communication strategies in terms of employees' efforts to engage in behaviors for achieving organizational goals?
6. What additional information would you like to provide regarding your communication strategies for improving employee motivation?