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Exploiting Synergies to Leverage Operational Performance and Efficiency with Collaborative Business Strategies

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Exploiting Synergies to Leverage Operational Performance and Efficiency with

Collaborative Business Strategies

by

Victor Abayomi Oluwi

MBS, University College Dublin, 2010

M.Sc., University of Lagos, 1994

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2018

Abstract

Resource and knowledge recombination activities of manufacturers, suppliers, and service providers have evolved with the advent of globalization and increased market complexities. Such changes in resource and knowledge recombination activities have enabled and advanced the relevance of well-forged and properly implemented collaborative partnerships. Collaborative partnerships are credible alternatives in the provision of goods and services. The participants in this multiple case study design were 12 senior business managers from three oil, gas, and energy companies in a metropolitan area in a western province of Canada. Participants revealed the strategies they used to forge profitable collaborative business partnerships. The resource-based view (RBV) and the relational view (RV) constituted the conceptual framework of this study. Data were collected were using semistructured face-to-face interviews and analysis of organization documents. Member checking preceded the final data analysis process. The modified van Kaam method served to manage the emerged themes. Themes that emerged from data analysis included planning, organizing, and managing work; decision-making; leadership; people, relationship management; and managing complexities. The findings of this study may contribute to social change through the interdependencies that collaborative partnerships promote and encourage among employees of the collaborating organizations. Collaborative partnership interdependencies create the opportunities and conducive environments that might enable people from different cultures, and with different and inimitable capabilities, skills, and resources to cohabit peacefully and to work together productively.

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Dedication

Foremost, I give all thanks, glory, and honor to God for the successful completion of this doctoral study. I, however, dedicate this research work to the two most important women in my life - my wife (Dr. Nkechi Nwanolue-Abayomi) and my daughter (Erin-Ayo Oluwi-Abayomi). You have both been patient, tolerant, and supportive of my pursuits. I sincerely thank you for your understanding, encouragement, and love all through this journey. I also thank my parents who laid the foundation for this doctoral effort. Finally, I dedicate this research study to family and friends (too numerous to mention) for your encouragement and the constant question of "When are you going to be done with this doctoral thing"?

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge the immense role and contributions of my Chair, Dr. Frederick Nwosu. You are always there to support, offer advise, encourage, and handhold me (if that is what is required). You are one in a million. God bless you. I am also immensely grateful to my Second Committee Member, Dr. Susan Fan, and my University Research Reviewer, Dr. Denise Land. You have both played unique and significant roles in making my finished work better than it would ever have been. Many thanks for your prompt reviews, honest feedback(s), and helpful suggestions.

Finally, I acknowledge the numerous individuals I had the opportunity of meeting through this journey. We studied and learned together, we discussed, argued, and eventually agreed (or disagreed) in the process of knowledge acquisition. I can confidently call you my friends and co-agents of social change.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The constantly changing and dispersed pattern of industrial operations in the global, competitive, and adaptive environment has transformed the traditional composition of manufactured goods and services (Nagashima, Wehrle, Kerbache, & Lassagne, 2015). Specifically, products and services now comprise of recombined raw materials, components, intermediate inputs, and knowledge from different countries and economies of the world (Iyer, Srivastava, & Rawwas, 2014). The newly evolved manufactured goods and services are, therefore, different from the traditional products and services offered by a single country. Specifically, the evolved trend of multicountry produced products and services has created the need for competition and product complexity-driven collaborative initiatives that influence organizational performance and profitability (Iyer et al., 2014; Li, Nguyen, Yu, & Han, 2018; Srivastava, Iyer, & Rawwas, 2017). According to Soosay and Hyland (2015), interfirm partnerships have emerged as an important component of firms' strategies for generating differential performance outcomes. Accordingly, both the government and nongovernment sectors have developed a changed perception of collaboration and considered the initiative of collaborative partnership as a core strategy for addressing the many intractable business problems that confront organizations (Li et al., 2018; Soosay & Hyland, 2015). Collaborative partnerships, therefore, essentially enable organizations to leverage individual members' unique resources, skills, and competencies (Ro, Su, & Chen, 2016). Collaboration also allows the partnering members fill critical resource and competency inadequacies that impede the generation of incrementally greater outputs and mutual

performance gains (Srivastava et al., 2017).

Background of the Problem

Business practitioners, observers, and managers often inadvertently attribute improved organizational performance to advancements in technology (Chae, Koh, & Prybutok, 2014). However, developments in the transformation processes of goods and services between the years 2000 to 2017 have revealed that collaborative partnerships and strategies are credible alternatives that equally contribute to improving organizational performance and competitiveness (Nagashima et al., 2015; Soosay & Hyland, 2015; Srivastava et al., 2017). Developments in the transformation processes of goods and services and the subsequent engagements in new forms of collaborative relationships within business networks are increasingly responsible for firms' improved performance outcomes (Li et al., 2018).

Collaboration is an initiative that portends enormous advantages for organizational performance (Arora, Arora, & Sivakumar, 2016; HakemZadeh & Baba, 2016). Collaborative strategies, therefore, allowed enterprises to meet customer demands in real-time, to develop tailor-made solutions, and to offer solutions cost efficiently in close collaboration with partners in the value creation chain (Fawcett, McCarter, Fawcett, Webb, & Magnan, 2015). However, despite the laudable goals and benefits of collaboration, this study revealed that there are significant implementation challenges for business managers who have implemented the strategy of collaborative partnership. Such significant implementation challenges, coupled with the unawareness of the advantages of the initiative by the majority of business managers, have resulted in the low adoption

rates and the unimpressive outcomes of collaborative partnerships (Ro et al., 2016;

Walker, Schotanus, Bakker, & Harland, 2013).

Problem Statement

Business practitioners, observers, and managers often and inadvertently attribute

improved organizational performance only to advancements in technology (Chae et al.,

2014). However, well-forged and properly implemented buyer-supplier collaborative

partnerships in Kenyan State corporations, in addition to advancements in technology,

contributed between 51.9% and 63.2% to organizations' overall productivity and

performance (Shalle, Guyo, & Amuhaya, 2014). The general business problem was that

the majority of business managers are not aware of, and do not avail themselves, of the

benefits of collaborative partnerships to increase productivity, performance,

competitiveness, and profitability. The specific business problem was that some senior

business managers in the oil, gas, and energy sector lack strategies to forge and

implement profitable collaborative business partnerships.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study research was to explore the

implementation strategies senior business managers used to forge profitable collaborative

business partnerships. The targeted population of the study comprised senior business

managers who had implemented strategies to create profitable collaborative business

partnerships. The selected senior business managers worked in three large organizations

in the oil, gas, and energy sector of a metropolitan area in a western province of Canada.

Furthermore, the selected managers worked in organizations that had ongoing

collaborative partnership agreements within and outside of Edmonton. The implication for positive social change includes increased and improved interactions between and among individuals of different social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds. Such increased and improved interactions could result in reduced racial tension among different people who reside in Edmonton.

Nature of the Study

The quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods constitute the three available research approaches (Ranga & Panda, 2015). I chose the qualitative research method as the best option for achieving the research objectives. My choice of the qualitative research method flowed from the fact that the objective of the study was to explore and understand the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to social problems (Burr, 2015). Contrary to the positive attributes of the qualitative research method, the quantitative and mixed research methods are unsuitable for this study. The quantitative research method was unsuitable for this study because the objective was not to test a theory or hypothesis through the use of statistical tools and methods or to examine the relationships that exist between variables (Ranga & Panda, 2015; Yin, 2016). Finally, the mixed research method was also unsuitable for this study because it would combine the attributes of the quantitative and qualitative methods and requires conducting parallel quantitative and qualitative data analysis (Mertens, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2015; Yin, 2016). Such requirements, therefore, made the mixed research method an unwieldy option for the study (Palinkas et al., 2015).

As the research design of choice, the case study derives its benefits from its

capability to act as a tool for making data-driven comparisons between different scenarios (Yin, 2016). Besides, research designs are necessary to connect the methodology to an appropriate set of research methods (Wahyuni, 2012). To Wahyuni (2012), the adoption of an appropriate research design allows for the proper examination of the research questions and the social phenomenon under study. Furthermore, and in contrast to other research designs, investigators retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events in the case study method (Yin, 2016). Other qualitative research designs such as ethnography, grounded theory, narrative, and phenomenological designs are unsuitable for this study. Specifically, the ethnographic research design was unsuitable. It was best-suited to explore, describe, and interpret the patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group, or a group of people that have interacted over time (Gopaldas, 2016). Moreover, according to Gopaldas (2016), an ethnographic design researcher requires an extended length of time and considerable financial resources. The grounded theory design was unsuitable as the research deals with the generation and the discovery of unified theoretical explanations for the actions of select participants, groups, or population (Yin, 2016). It was, therefore, not possible to collect data for this study with grounded theory design. The narrative design was also unsuitable as the research uses spoken or written texts that give an account of a series of events or actions in a chronological sequence (Yin, 2016). It was, therefore, also not possible to collect data for this study with narrative design. Finally, a phenomenological design was unsuitable because the research focuses on understanding the perceptions and perspectives of participants about a social phenomenon (McManamny, Sheen, Boyd, & Jennings, 2014;

Schutt, 2014). Furthermore, the phenomenological researches use large sample sizes of as much as 25 participants to attain data saturation (Schutt, 2014; Yin, 2016). Therefore, it was not possible to utilize the phenomenological design for data collection.

Research Question

The central research question of this study was as follows: What implementation strategies do senior business managers use to forge profitable collaborative business partnerships?

Interview Questions

The interview questions of this doctoral study were as follows:

1. What implementation strategies did you employ in forging collaborative partnerships?

2. What implementation challenges did you encounter?

3. How did you determine the success of strategies implemented to forge collaborative business partnerships?

4. What relevant skills were necessary to implement collaborative business strategies?

5. What relevant experiences were necessary to implement collaborative business partnership strategies?

6. Is there anything you would like to add about the strategies you have to forge collaborative business partnerships?

Conceptual Framework

The RBV and the RV concepts constituted the conceptual framework for this research study. According to Lockett and Wild (2014) the earliest theorists of the RBV theory included Wernerfelt, Penrose, and Barney. On the other hand, prominent early theorists of the RV theory include Asanuma, Dyer, and Lavie (Lockett & Wild, 2014).

In the RBV, the differences in firms' performances flow from their respective strategic resources, which include core competencies, dynamic capabilities, and absorptive capacities to identify, assimilate, recombine, and effectively apply knowledge acquired externally (Shafeey & Trott, 2014). The significant tenet of the RBV is the accumulation of rare, valuable, and inimitable resources and capabilities by firms in collaborative relationships (Bromiley & Rau, 2016; Kobayashi, 2014). On the other hand, in the RV, the critical resources of firms span their boundaries, and they could earn, aside from normal profits, additional supernormal profits through the keeping and maintenance of exchange relationships. The maintenance of exchange relationships involves the pooling of skills and resources by the collaborating organizations to solve common challenges remain competitive, and profitable (Miocevic, 2016; Ro et al., 2016). According to Miocevic and Rio, supernormal profits include extra profits earned in addition to the normal profits a firm earns. The keeping and maintenance of exchange relationships would enable firms in collaborative partnerships to earn supernormal profits that are not possible if they exist and operate in isolation. Supernormal profits would, therefore, flow only through joint investments, contributions, and the exchange of idiosyncratic assets and knowledge of the collaborating partners. The significant tenets of

the RV, therefore, include the following four: (a) there are advantages in the networks of interorganizational relations, (b) competitive advantages and values result from forged strategic relationships, (c) increased fostering of specialization following organizational relationships and interdependence, and (d) the more intense the exchange relationship, the greater the benefits to the alliance partners are greater (Anatan, 2014; Kobayashi, 2014; Ro et al., 2016).

The applicability of the RBV and the RV concepts to my study flowed from the competitive advantages derived from the collaborating organizations' accumulation of resources and capabilities. Besides, the supernormal profits that accrued from the relationship between the partners created additional values and benefits over what an individual organization could have generated if operating in isolation (Ralston, Richey, & Scott, 2017). Collaborating firms were, therefore, able to leverage their combined assets, expertise, and capabilities to produce and deliver goods and services more efficiently. Moreover, interorganizational collaboration allowed partners to share responsibilities, risks, and benefits (Anatan, 2014; Kobayashi, 2014).

Operational Definitions

Business strategy: The business strategy of an organization represents its financial and organizational architecture that specifies the means and methods with which the company's leadership plans to deliver value to customers, compete in the marketplace, and turn profits from its activities (Gupta, Balmer, & Low, 2015; Philipson, 2016).

Collaborative partnership: Collaborative partnership involves the strategic cooperation between two or more business organizations that aim to solve business

problems and deliver positive differential performances (Fawcett et al., 2015)

Operational efficiency: Operational efficiency is an indicator of the recombination activities and the utilization of firms' unique assets, resources, and capabilities to deliver value-added quality outputs and services at lower costs (Gill, Singh, Mathur, & Mand, 2014; Masson, Jain, Ganesh, & George, 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of a doctoral study refer to the elements of a proposal that are essential in explaining and framing the study (Semenova & Hassel, 2015). Kahlke (2014) described them as critical scholarly research components that evolved from the epistemological, social constructivist paradigm. The consideration and articulation of such elements help to identify biases that may surface, and that could compromise the credibility of the study.

Assumptions

The assumptions in a doctoral study reflect the researcher's assumed truth. Specifically, assumptions describe beliefs that are essential to the study but cannot be demonstrated to be true (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In this study, I assumed that the participants would give honest responses to the interview questions. My second assumption was that the business managers have adequate knowledge and extensive experiences with collaborative business partnerships. Thirdly, I assumed that the business managers correctly implemented their respective and ongoing collaborative relationships.

Limitations

The limitations of a qualitative research study constitute the combination of existing boundaries, shortcomings, influences, and events that restrict and are beyond the researcher's control (Gopaldas, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Specifically, the limitation of a research study exerts a significant negative influence on the scope, the results, and the conclusion (Anney, 2014; Edereka-Great, 2015; Modilim, 2016). The limitations of this study include the following: (a) the veracity of the responses of the participants, (b) the ability to identify and eliminate biases in their responses, and (c) the burnishing of individual respondents or corporate inputs and achievements. Other limitations that had dampening effects on the quality of the research findings include the following: (d) the withholding of supposed corporate secrets and strategic information, (e) the stipulation that only experienced senior managers, who presently work in organizations with ongoing collaborative partnership arrangements, can participate, and (f) the organizational structures and management styles of the participants' places of work. Specifically, differences existed in organizational structures and management styles of the individual companies that agreed to collaborate, and that formed the partnership – even though the partnering firms operated in the oil, gas, and energy sector.

I ameliorated the extent and effect of the biases of the participants by emphasizing the need for full disclosure and by referring participants to the confidentiality clause in the Participants' Consent Form. Furthermore, I employed the dual data gathering and analysis help-techniques of reflexivity and bracketing to forestall and eliminate unintended interference and distortion of data through my bias. Specifically, reflexivity

referred to my ability to self-reflect on biases and preconceptions (Roulston & Shelton,

2015). Bracketing, however, involved the deliberate and actual process of setting

personal experiences, biases, and preconceived notions about the research topic aside

(Mörtl & Gelo, 2015; Yin, 2016).

Delimitations

The delimitations of a qualitative research study refer to the conscious restrictions

and boundaries imposed by a researcher before starting study (Gopaldas, 2016; Marshall

& Rossman, 2016; Semenova & Hassel, 2015). The choices of the researcher could

include the objectives of the study, the problem statement, and the conceptual framework.

The first delimitation of this study was initially restricting the sample population to a total

of nine business managers who worked at the senior management levels of three

corporations in the oil, gas, and energy sector in a metropolitan area in a western

province of Canada. However, to achieve data saturation, I recruited one additional

participant from each of the three corporations. Eventually, I selected and interviewed

four senior business managers from each of the organizations who met the criteria for

participating in the study. The second delimitation was that the participants had to work

in large organizations that operated in the oil, gas, and energy sector. This restriction was

because the rollout and the implementation of the initiatives of collaborative partnerships

are expensive, and require sizeable financial, human capital, and technological resources

that only large-sized organizations can bankroll. The third delimitation was that the

participants had to work in organizations that have ongoing collaborative partnerships

with any number of firms within or outside of Edmonton. The fourth delimitation was

that the participants had to have relevant educational qualifications and corporate

experiences. These were necessary because the success of the initiative of collaborative

business partnership requires the knowledge and strategic inputs of managers with

predetermined levels of educational qualifications and corporate experiences which

mostly abound in large-sized organizations. Furthermore, large organizations have access

to degreed top management-level staff members who are either owners or employees, and

who have experienced, or have ongoing collaborative business partnerships with varied

numbers of firms. The participants could, therefore, share relevant experiences about the

phenomena and the impact of the initiative of collaborative business partnerships.

Significance of the Study

The relevance of, and the need for, collaborative partnerships among firms is the

result of the constantly evolving and dispersed pattern of industrial operations in a

competitive and adaptive environment. The study findings might, therefore, be valuable

to businesses in efforts to remain competitive and profitable. According to Iyer et al.

(2014), the composition of typical 21st-century manufactured products and services are

complex and have diverse input from numerous countries. Specifically, goods and

services within the years 2000 to 2017 comprise raw materials, components, intermediate

inputs, knowledge, and learning capabilities that have passed through different countries

and economies of the world. The complex, interwoven, and interdependent composition

of manufactured goods and services, therefore, makes it imperative for manufacturers and

service providers to collaborate (Iyer et al., 2014). Such collaborative partnerships

provide the necessary platforms on which the collaborating organizations harness,

exchange, and recombine their unique competencies to achieve competitive advantages (Anatan, 2014; Iyer et al., 2014).

Contribution to Business Practice

The growing importance and relevance of collaborative business strategies and initiatives flowed from the realization by senior business managers that competition and collaborative efforts, driven by product complexity, influence the performance of organizations (Nagashima et al., 2015; Srivastava et al., 2017). The study findings are, therefore, expected to contribute to the effective practice of business by managers and business owners. As stated earlier, both the government and nongovernment sectors have changed their perception of collaboration and considered this initiative as a core strategy for addressing the many intractable business problems that confronted organizations (Iyer et al., 2014). Collaboration, therefore, let partnering members fill critical resource and competency inadequacies that have impeded the generation of incrementally greater outputs and mutual performance gains. Essentially, the partnering organizations filled critical resource and competency inadequacies by leveraging individual members' unique resources, skills, and technical capabilities. Thus, the findings of this study revealed the degree of recognition for firms in their efforts to remain competitive, relevant, and profitable.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study also have a significant social influence on the people, ways of life, and relational interactions between and among individuals of different social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds of the target population. The results that

flowed from the research make it imperative that business managers develop deeper insights, understanding, know-how, and implementation strategies, all of which are necessary for forging collaborative partnerships between previously stand-alone and competing organizations. Specifically, the interdependencies that collaborative partnerships promoted and encouraged gave business managers the chance to work productively with different people from different cultures and to achieve mutually beneficial goals and objectives. The multicultural and multifunctional collaborative environments created productive negotiated work orders among and between the stakeholders (Cloutier & Langley, 2017). Furthermore, evolved negotiated work orders enabled improved interactions and reduced racial tensions among the different people who live in Edmonton, Canada.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

In the review of the literature of this study, I focused on outlining the relevance and applicability of the adopted conceptual framework to the concept and initiative of collaborative business strategies. I then focused on the development of collaborative partnerships, the requirements, the implementation challenges, and the accruable benefits of its outcomes. The review consisted of peer-reviewed journals, seminal scholarly books, and government sources. Of all citations in the study, 85% were within 5 years of publication from my estimated date of graduation. The searches used the ProQuest and EBSCOhost portals and the ABI/INFORM Collection, Academic Search Complete, and the Business Source Complete databases.

Organization of the Review

A critical analysis and synthesis of the adopted conceptual framework of the study (the RV and the RBV) preceded the organization of the review. Secondly, I provided background information on the traditional methods of manufacturing, retailing, and the provision of services. Thirdly, I discussed the evolution and development of collaborative business partnerships, through the lens of globalization, and as an alternative to the traditional methods of manufacturing, retailing, and the provision of services. The fourth thrust of the review gave the requirements for forging collaborative business partnerships and included an examination of the implementation strategies and challenges. In the fifth stage of the review, I discussed the benefits accruable to businesses following a properly implemented collaborative business partnership.

Strategy for Searching the Literature

According to Hinde and Spackman (2015), the foundation of any research project consists of the systematic review of existing literature on the subject matter. Hinde and Spackman further emphasized that an in-depth review of the existing literature is a means of evaluating the level of current understanding of the issue in a methodological research setting. With such understanding of the requirement of a literature review, my search strategies, therefore, constitute a mix of the traditional Boolean keyword search and the use of citation searches. My searches included the following business-related words and terms like (*a) partnerships, (b) collaboration, (c) business strategies, (d) implementation challenges, (e) management, (f) productivity, (g) globalization, (h) efficiency, (i) skills, (j) resources, and (k) competencies*. The Boolean keyword searches relied on the title, the

abstract, or the author-supplied indexing terminology to indicate the relevance of

literature to the subject matter (Hinde & Spackman, 2015). The adoption of such search

strategy followed Hinde and Spackman's definition of citation searches as the forward,

backward, and repeated sampling from existing and identified relevant papers' citations

to populate a pool of relevant literature.

From the above, through the use of the Boolean keyword and citation searches, I

concentrated on peer-reviewed journals, working papers, and books of seminal scholarly

textbooks that focused on the concepts of collaboration and business partnerships. The

adopted strategies for the literature search also included searches of the Walden

University Library online databases, ProQuest, and the EBSCOhost databases. However,

although this study contained citations that are over 5 years, I limited my searches to

studies that do not exceed the previous 5 years (2014-2018) in the majority of the

citations. Specifically, and in most cases, I specified the previous 4 years (2015-2018) in

the search bar of the Walden ABI/INFORM Complete and Business Source Complete

databases. I also used the same criteria to access the ProQuest and EBSCOhost databases.

My search range of 2014-2018 was to satisfy the university's rule that 85% of the cited

works must be peer-reviewed that are within 5 years of publication dates from my

estimated date of graduation.

Frequencies and Percentages of Peer-Reviewed Articles and Dates of Publication

I used both the Boolean keyword and citation search methods to streamline the

over 317 references I had generated over the course of time. Furthermore, the *Ulrich's*

Periodical Directory was a useful tool in efforts aimed at confirming the peer-review

status of journals cited in the study. The streamlined search activity resulted in a total of 151 collaboration and business partnership-relevant peer-reviewed studies and scholarly textbooks that I cited in this study. Besides, the majority of the authors I cited featured severally all through the study. However, Yin featured as a source of two separate seminal scholarly textbooks. Table 1 below shows that the study meets the 85% threshold of peer-reviewed sources in tandem with the stipulations of the Walden University's Chief Academic Officer.

Table 1

Total Peer-Reviewed Sources and Years of Publication

Titles	Recent references	Older references			
	Within last 5 years of anticipated graduation (2014 – 2018)	Older than 5 years (1979 – 2013)	Total	Percentage of source type within 5 years of anticipated graduation	Over 5 years
Books	12	3	15	80%	20%
Dissertation	5	0	5	100%	0%
Peer-reviewed Articles	115	10	125	92%	8%
Total peer-reviewed	132	13	145	91%	9%

Relational View and Resource-Based View

In the RV, the superior performance of collaborative partnerships is dependent on the unique and the jointly owned resources and capabilities of member-organizations (Arora et al., 2016; Hetesi & Vilmányi, 2016; Moon, Lee, & Lai, 2017). Furthermore, according to Li et al. (2018), interfirm linkages and partnerships represented sources of

competitive advantages to the collaborating network partners under the RV. Besides,

collaborative relationships also resulted in value creation and superior performance for

each participant and the entire network of relationship (Miguel, Brito, Fernandes, Tescari,

& Martins, 2014; Miocevic, 2016). According to Miocevic (2016), the benefits that

flowed to, and from, the collaborating network partners through the joint value creation

and superior performance under the RV, showed that a firm's critical resources span the

organization's boundaries. Specifically, additional critical resources, embedded in

interorganizational collaboration and routines, are accessible only through the networks

that the collaborative partnerships enable. Participating firms, therefore, earn supernormal

profits in addition to normal profits, as a result of ongoing business relationships.

In other studies, Moon et al. (2017) and Vesalainen and Kohtamäki (2015)

concluded that companies derive competitive advantages from their ability to manage the

interorganizational relationships that exist among network partners. To Moon et al., the

RV highlighted the fact that interorganizational relationships provided organizations with

access to critical resources from within the collaborative environment in which they

operate. For example, while the existence of a well-managed collaborative relationship in

a buyer-supplier scenario ensured agility and quick time to market, it simultaneously

minimized the incidences and risks of uncertainty and market turbulence (Moon et al.,

2017; Narayanan, Narasimhan, & Schoenherr, 2015). Therefore, under the RV,

relationship value is the additional value jointly generated in an interfirm exchange, but

impossible to create individually (Arora et al., 2016; Miguel et al., 2014). Furthermore,

Miguel et al. emphasized and identified four relational resources that would enable the

achievement of competitive advantage for the collaborating organizations. The four

relational resources include the possession of relation-specific assets, knowledge sharing,

complementary resources, and effective governance mechanisms. These resources

ensured that the collaborating firms wielded and enjoyed a competitive advantage in the

marketplace (Miguel et al., 2014). Additionally, the ability to avail of the benefits of

competitive advantage was possible, only because the collaborating organizations were

able to access additional and embedded resources that are inherent in the networks of

organizations that have forged the collaborative partnerships (Li et al., 2018).

Although elements of the RBV abounded in works that date as far back as 1959,

Birger Wernerfelt, however, first used the phrase in 1984 (Lockett & Wild, 2014). Also,

Arora et al. (2016) and Li (2014) described the RBV as the superior performance that

evolved from collaborative partnerships that function through the integration of the

resources of member organizations. According to Li, and unlike other theories like the

transaction cost, game theory, and strategic behavior models, the RBV model assigned a

significant role to partner firms' resources in theorizing about strategic alliances. The

concept of the RBV captured the benefits of superior performance that partner firms

enjoy because of the access to each other's internal capabilities and resources (Li et al.,

2018; Shafeey & Trott, 2014). According to Li et al. (2018), the benefits have a

significant impact on business performance and have evolved from the rare, valuable,

inimitable, and nonsubstitutable resources and capabilities that organizations

accumulated over the years of their existence. Furthermore, the sustainability of RBV-

enabled competitive advantage is only possible if competitors cannot easily duplicate the

resources (Arora et al., 2016; Li, 2014). Accordingly, some of the important resources of the RBV concept include physical and financial assets, employees' skills, and internal organizational processes. Besides, the strategic significance of firms' resources and capabilities gained further recognition and acceptance following recent observations that companies that can understand, nurture, and utilize core competencies outperform those preoccupied with conventional approaches to strategic business planning.

From the above, it is clear that the RV and RBV models provide relevant answers to the research question. Moreover, an understanding of the RV and RBV models would enable business owners and managers better explore and exploit the immense opportunities that exist, and that accrue to members in a well-implemented and well-managed collaborative partnership. Specifically, business owners and managers need to understand the operational meaning of collaborative business partnership and how the initiative affects firms' operating performance and competitiveness. Business owners and managers, therefore, need to be aware of the relevant requirements and skills necessary to forge and implement collaborative business partnerships.

Supporting and Contrasting Models

Based on the preceding section, both the RV and RBV have relevance and have contributed substantially to the subject of collaborative partnerships among and between organizations. Specifically, authors who include Kobayashi (2014) and Seshadri (2013) discussed aspects of RV and RBV that lends credence to their relevance to collaborative partnerships. Contrarily, Brandon-Jones, Squire, Autry, and Petersen (2014), Miguel et

al. (2014), Ralston et al. (2017), and Shafeey and Trott (2014) discussed contrasting positions on the efficacy of the RV and RBV.

RV and RBV supporting conceptual models. RV plays a significant role in firms' performance and competitiveness (Kobayashi, 2014). Specifically, according to Kobayashi (2014), the advantages (or disadvantages) that firms in collaborative partnerships enjoy (or bear) relate to the advantages (or disadvantages) embedded in the networks in which they operate. Therefore, the platform that evolves from the collaborative initiative would enable the network partners to exchange unique assets, knowledge, and complementary resources within effective governance mechanisms. Kobayashi used the relationship that existed between the Toyota industry and its suppliers to emphasize the significance and impact of the RV on the competitiveness of the partnership. Specifically, Kobayashi maintained that the immense advantages of the RV evolve from the close physical distance between the collaborating organizations, the knowledge sharing capabilities, and the investments in special assets. A unique requirement of the workability and success of the RV, as it applies to collaborative partnerships, however, demands that the exchange of special assets, knowledge, and complementary resources are long-term, rather than short-term. Specifically, the short-term transactional exchanges between the partners are not effective in delivering the benefits of the RV (Kobayashi, 2014; Ro et al., 2016).

In tandem with the RV, the RBV also enhances firms' efficiencies and competitiveness (Bromiley & Rau, 2016; Seshadri, 2013). Accordingly, Bromiley and Rau (2016) and Seshadri (2013) concluded that the competencies and performance

improvements of business organizations flow from their respective resources and organizational processes. Furthermore, Seshadri identified the existence of a significant relationship between the human, the intangible resources, and the processes of firms and their overall performance. Specifically, such human, intangible resources and processes are more effective in boosting firms' performances compared to the tangible assets and resources that organizations possess.

Bromiley and Rau (2016) touted the relevance and impact of the resource-based view of firms' operations and performance. Bromiley and Rau emphasized that the success of organizations and their ability to create and preserve competitive capabilities are dependent on unique and individual core resources and competencies. Therefore, the recombination activities of firms' unique and individual core resources and competencies, with management initiatives and strategies, are responsible for the delivery of better performance results. Furthermore, in tandem with the findings of Hetesi and Vilmányi (2016), the inimitable resources and capabilities of individual organizations in a collaborative network contribute immensely to integrating the respective internal mechanisms of operations to increase efficiency and to reduce waste. However, the success of a well-forged collaborative network is dependent on the existence of external coordination mechanisms that would ensure seamless links between organizations in the network and their up and downstream collaborating partners (Bromiley & Rau, 2016; Hetesi & Vilmányi, 2016).

RV and RBV contrasting conceptual models. Collaborative partnerships result in the gaining of competitive advantage, which represents the creation of superior

economic value and the attainment of superior performance for firms within a network

(Miguel et al., 2014). Miguel et al. (2014), however, emphasized that the measurements

of the accruable benefits of the RV are firm and context-specific, rather than generalized.

Specifically, the benefits accruable from the RV in collaborative partnerships should

result in the creation of superior economic value for the entire network of organizations

rather than the superior performance of individual firms. Besides, it is difficult to

appropriate the value correctly, and to determine the level of benefits that accrue to

individual firms within the network following the exchange of idiosyncratic assets

(Miguel et al., 2014).

According to Miguel et al. (2014) and Ralston et al. (2017), collaborative

partnerships enable joint resource contributions, which in turn lead to the achievement of

relational supernormal profits that are not achievable by any individual firm. Miguel et al.

and Ralston et al. further reiterated that the RV has four relational components made up

of asset specificity, knowledge sharing, complementary resources, and relational

governance mechanisms. However, research findings by Miguel et al. concluded that

only relational governance mechanism and resource complementarity have significant

effects on relational value creation. The result of the study showed that different levels of

benefits accrue to individual firms within the partnership. For example, and by

comparison, the appropriation of benefits favors the buyers than the suppliers, as the

buyers tend to receive a greater majority of the appropriated value. This scenario was also

similar to the findings of Ralston et al. (2017).

Also pertinent was the need to realize that while the possession of valuable and rare resources was necessary, it was, however, not a sufficient condition for achieving competitive advantages (Brandon-Jones et al., 2014; Shafeey & Trott, 2014). The contrasting arguments of the resource-based view, according to Shafeey and Trott (2014), was that the derivable competitive advantages are context-specific and contingent on both internal and external factors in the network environment of the collaborating firms. Specifically, the competitive advantages organizations in collaborative partnerships can achieve by creating bundles of strategic resources and capabilities, and through the recombination of resources and capabilities are not conferred automatically. The strategic resources and capabilities of organizations are not static, nor do they simultaneously yield equal amounts of benefits to the network partners (Ralston et al., 2017). Furthermore, according to the findings of Hetesi and Vilmányi (2016) and Shafeey and Trott, the bundling of resources to create unique capabilities and value for the network of organizations requires relevance to their respective operations. However, while the relevance of resources to the network operations is important, so also are the attributes of the resources that the individual network partners contribute (Shafeey & Trott, 2014). Accordingly, the positive attributes of resources would have a significant impact on efforts aimed at achieving and sustaining competitive advantage. Additionally, it is difficult to identify the conditions under which resources and capabilities are most valuable for the individual organizations within the network. Besides, the internal and external environment within which the collaborating organizations operate plays a

significant role in the utility, and the value, derivable from the available resources and capabilities (Brandon-Jones et al., 2014; Shafeey & Trott, 2014).

Again, Brandon-Jones et al. (2014) differentiated between the resources and capabilities of the collaborating organizations. Brandon-Jones et al. categorized resources into physical, human, organizational, financial, technological, and reputational capital. Furthermore, these classes of capital are either tangible (infrastructures) or intangible (information or knowledge sharing). Finally, although resources may not provide value on their own, it is, however, possible to process or utilize them in bundles to drive performance. Contrarily, an organization's capabilities represent higher-order constructs that evolve from the bundling and fusion of the organization's resources to create unique capabilities. The unique capabilities that an organization creates are responsible for its sustained competitive advantage. It is, however, pertinent to note that the competitive advantages a firm's capabilities create are more embedded within its management and processes and, therefore, more sustainable than competitive advantages that flow from the firm's resources. According to Rangriz and Soltanieh (2015), the embedded capabilities of firms flow from and are derivable from the knowledge and skills of its employees. Specifically, Rangriz and Soltanieh summed up the knowledge and skills displayed by employees as the core competencies and capabilities required for competitiveness and profitability. In essence, it is preferable that organizations develop the capabilities necessary for exploiting its existing resources (Brandon-Jones et al., 2014; Rangriz & Soltanieh, 2015).

Factors Responsible for the Evolving Trends in Collaborative Partnerships

The increasing globalization of industrial operations and the subsequent fallout of increased competition between organizations are among the principal factors responsible for the growing adoption of collaborative strategies and partnerships (HakemZadeh & Baba, 2016; Li et al., 2018). HakemZadeh and Baba (2016) and Nagashima et al. (2015) emphasized that the challenges that organizations encounter and that continue to negatively affect their productivity and profitability include shorter product life cycles and the incorporation of multiple technologies into the design of new products. Other challenges include the creation of goods and services in conjunction with customers and partners and the leveraging of the growth of scientific and technical knowledge of numerous individuals who worked for different organizations and in various sectors (HakemZadeh & Baba, 2016).

Following the increasingly complex nature of global industrial operations, interorganizational collaboration has continued to witness dramatic recognition and growth since the turn of the 21st century. Specifically, knowledge, which is the locus of innovation, now extends beyond any individual firm's capability (Saunila, 2014). Therefore, to leverage and avail of such nonproprietary knowledge, many businesses have had to open their value creation processes using various types of multi-party collaborative strategies and partnerships. Furthermore, HakemZadeh and Baba (2016) and Saunila (2014) showed that collaborative strategies would reduce the burden of risk that each partner bears. Collaborative partnerships would, through initiatives that include the early involvements of suppliers, reduce the time of product development while

increasing the speed of products to the markets (Nagashima et al., 2015). The adoption, application, and the proper implementation of collaborative strategies will significantly decrease the cost of product development, process improvement, and considerably increase and provide access to new markets and technologies (HakemZadeh & Baba, 2016; Saunila, 2014).

Authors and practitioners that include Li et al. (2018) and Srivastava et al. (2017) posited that the adoption and proper implementation of collaborative strategies portend immense advantages for organizational performance and profitability. The studies also showed that collaborative strategies and partnerships allow enterprises to meet customer demands in real-time. Furthermore, collaborative strategies and partnerships help organizations develop tailor-made solutions offered cost efficiently in close collaboration with partners in the value creation chain (Arora et al., 2016; HakemZadeh & Baba, 2016). On another note, the need to collaborate has become more urgent and challenging given the increasing complexities of the global workplace (Miller & Katz, 2014).

Demonstrated impact of collaborative partnership. Fjeldstad, Snow, Miles, and Lettl (2012) cited two examples of collaborative partnership relationships existing within The Blade organization and Accenture. Fjeldstad et al. described the positive outcomes of collaborative partnerships that flowed through the fusion of core competencies of different organizations and that accrued to the network partners in each of these examples. First, The Blade organization is a collaborative community of more than 200 firms and 70 complimentary firms that possess different capabilities required to develop solutions for the blade server market and its customer base of 180 companies.

With differing unique capabilities, the network partners of The Blade organization

leveraged on each others' core competencies to develop, manufacture, market, and

distribute over 60 information technology solutions and products that use the blade server

technology of IBM. Such lofty results, achieved in its first 2 years, showed that a well-

implemented and managed collaborative partnership would have a positive and

significant impact on productivity and profitability. In this case, rather than exploiting the

Blade IP through its business units, IBM and the other complementor firms chose to form

a collaborative community of companies focused on accelerating the development and

adoption of the Blade server solutions. The founding companies, therefore, created an

organizational design that enabled relevant firms to collaborate, develop, and deliver

bespoke information technology solutions to customers (Fjeldstad et al., 2012).

As in The Blade case, similar positive outcomes also resulted in the collaborative

partnership existing within Accenture (Fjeldstad et al., 2012). Specifically, Accenture

leveraged on its vast and diverse network of co-located and virtual team consultants to

solve complex and multiple numbers of organizational problems within relatively short

time frames. Besides its well-trained and knowledgeable consultants, Accenture also

relied on its embedded organizational protocols, infrastructures, and software

applications to deploy human assets and resources and to coordinate all its ongoing

activities and projects throughout the world (Fjeldstad et al., 2012).

The positive outcomes of the above-cited collaborative cases by the Blade

organization and Accenture confirm its relevance to the operational and profitability

performance of organizations. Specifically, the adoption and the proper implementation

of collaborative strategies contributed significantly to early product development and faster time to market. Moreover, the sharing of knowledge and information among and between the collaborating organizations confirmed that resources and capabilities now transcend the boundaries of individual participating organizations (Keast & Mandell, 2014; Moon et al., 2017; Nagashima et al., 2015).

Comparing and Contrasting Study to Previous Research Findings

Economic and business analysts have often attributed improved organizational performance to advancements in technology (Gadman & Cooper, 2014). However, collaborative business partnerships, initiatives, tools, and strategies are now credible alternatives to technological advancements (Arthur, 2017; Dey, 2016). Collaborative partnerships, therefore, equally contribute to improved organizational performance (Arora et al., 2016; Srivastava et al., 2017). Specifically, firms now meet increasing performance requirements in competitive markets through their active engagement in new forms of business partnerships (Arthur, 2017; Dey, 2016).

Recent practices in various sectors of the world economy showed that organization leaders have started to incorporate external resources from other companies for the growth and success of their businesses (Gadman & Cooper, 2014; Saunila, 2014). Research findings by Gadman and Cooper (2014), and Saunila (2014) showed that an increasing number of multinational firms now pursue innovation activities in partnership with other organizations because of the abundance of external ideas in the global markets. The diffusion and ubiquitousness of knowledge, skills, and expertise, therefore, requires that organizations collaborate to leverage their operations and to cope with rapid market

changes. Besides, the collaboration between and among organizations enables increased

innovation, access to new markets, and the development of new growth engines.

Furthermore, Gadman and Cooper and Saunila established that collaborative strategies by

R&D firms have led to the concept of open innovation. Specifically, open innovation

embraces the strategic intent behind the use of both internal and external resources for

increased performance and profitability (Gadman & Cooper, 2014; Saunila, 2014).

Finally, the increasing complexities of the global workplace have accelerated the

adoption of collaborative partnerships in efforts aimed at solving the myriad of

manufacturing and service delivery problems of the 21st century (Miller & Katz, 2014).

Despite the laudable benefits accruable from a collaborative partnership

arrangement, the differences in the partners' internal task routines could, however,

undermine relational mechanisms, which could, in turn, adversely affect the alliance

performance (Lavie, Haunschild, & Khana, 2012). In their study, Lavie et al. (2012)

focused on the integration of two different perspectives that examined the resultant

alliance performance after the establishment of a collaborative partnership arrangement.

With a sample size of 420 nonequity firms in the information technology industry, Lavie

et al. integrated the alignment of partners' characteristics with the relational mechanisms

of mutual trust, relational embedding, and relational commitment. Furthermore, Lavie et

al. examined how the congruence of partners' cultures and organizational routines

facilitate the emergence of relational mechanisms in nonequity alliances. However, while

the similarities in partners' organizational routines are important, they do not guarantee

the success of the alliance. Therefore, collaborative partnerships might fail, not because

of misaligned business objectives or cultural legacies of the partners, but as a result of

operational differences in respective organizational routines (Anastassiu, Santoro,

Recker, & Rosemann, 2016; Klein, 2017; Lavie et al., 2012). While the differences in

internal domains and management styles constitute significant factors that may impair

mutual trust and encourage opportunistic behaviors in the partnership, González-Benito,

Muñoz-Gallego, and García-Zamora (2016) emphasized the crucial role of collaboration

in the 21st-century competitive marketplace. According to González-Benito et al., the

success or failure of collaborative partnerships has a direct correlation to the existence of

the ongoing relationships between and among the network partners. In another study,

Salam (2017) posited that the development and evolvement of trust among the network

partners is a competitive advantage that might be difficult for competitors to replicate.

The preference and usage of hierarchical mechanisms by traditional

organizational forms as the primary means of control and coordination can constrain

extensive collaboration both within and across firms (Fjeldstad et al., 2012). In contrast,

however, and according to Chakkol, Selviaridis, and Finne (2018), as well as Fjeldstad et

al. (2012), complex and dynamic environments should explore alternative ways of

organizing that are much less reliant on hierarchy. The exploration of such alternatives,

therefore, provides a departure from traditional models in areas that include incentives,

governance, coordination, and leadership. Besides, the goals of a collaborative initiative

should primarily flow from the respective organizational objectives and aspirations of the

collaborating partners (Chakkol et al., 2018). To Chakkol et al. (2018), organizations

frequently collaborate with other firms to better address existing strategic and tactical

competitiveness, operational inefficiencies, and profitability goals. Organizational goals that relate to a particular collaborative arrangement are, therefore, subsets of individual organization's overall strategic intent and align closely with their respective functions, responsibilities, and spheres of activities.

Competition and product complexity-driven collaborative efforts are likely to influence firms' performance (Iyer et al., 2014; Li et al., 2018). The significant impact of competition and product complexity-driven collaborative efforts on firms' performance has allowed interfirm partnerships to emerge as an important component of an organization's strategy for generating differential performance outcomes (Srivastava et al., 2017). Collaborative partnerships, therefore, fill critical resource and competency inadequacies in individual partners' operations and produce a greater share of an incrementally larger pie that contributes to the mutual performance gains of the partners (Fawcett et al., 2015; Li et al., 2018). Such mutual performance gains were the critical success factors in a Unilever-led collaborative strategic distribution initiative that coordinated interfirm value-generating processes and business flows. The Unilever-led collaborative strategic distribution initiative built on the unique partnership capabilities that maximized customer value and enhanced the collaborating firms' performance (Iyer et al., 2014). Iyer et al. (2014) also established that, in addition to the enormous transportation savings, the accrued benefits of the collaborative relationship included shortened delivery cycle time, reduced retail store inventories (30%), out-of-stock incidents (30%), and decreased material handling costs (16%). Again, Iyer et al. highlighted that other notable firms such as Hewlett–Packard, IBM, Dell, Procter &

Gamble had forged long-term, collaborative relationships with their suppliers to reduce transaction costs. The forging of such collaborative partnerships has enabled the achievement of stronger competitive positions. Collaborative partnerships are also known to help firms over time through the sharing of risks, accessing complementary resources, reducing transaction costs, enhancing productivity, improving profit performance and competitive advantage (Fawcett et al., 2015).

Despite the laudable economic benefits, a collaborative partnership that does not have a strategic fit among partners could have catastrophic implications for the collective and individual businesses of the partners. According to Fawcett et al. (2015), some of the issues that impede collaborations include interfunctional and interfirm conflicts (75%), and nonaligned goals (68%). Other issues are the opportunistic behaviors of individual companies, diminishing (or diminished) trust (53%), and an inability or unwillingness to share information (53%). Fawcett et al. (2015) emphasized that these factors impede the integration of firms' resources required to avail of the competitive advantages inherent in collaboration. Fawcett et al. supported their research findings with Lewin's Force Field (FF) Analysis. The FF Analysis argued that environmental forces drive organizations to build new capabilities. Specifically, the evolved environmental forces of globalization established entirely new modes of the production of manufactured products and the delivery of services (Aldakhil & Nataraja, 2014; Jakada, 2014). According to Jakada (2014), other environmental forces that propelled the need for organizations to build new capabilities include the dispersal of knowledge and the evolvement of virtual teams. Based on the above, organizations, therefore, need to identify and employ the right and

enabling mechanisms if they want to keep pace with the constantly changing

environmental forces shaping the marketplace (Aldakhil & Nataraja, 2014). According to

Aldakhil and Nataraja, there exists a positive correlation between managements' ability

to identify and employ the right and enabling mechanisms and the success of

collaborative partnerships.

The Evolution of Business Management – From Traditional to Modern

Before the evolvement of new business concepts like collaborative business

partnerships, the commercial activities of manufacturing, retailing, and service provision

occurred using traditional methods of doing business (Anastassiu et al., 2016; Kitana,

2016). Specifically, the earliest method of doing business followed the classical theory of

business management developed between the 19th and 20th centuries. Again, Anastassiu

et al. (2016) established that the characteristics of the traditional business management

method included short-term performance horizon, extrinsic rewards and sanctions, and

explicit coordination and control. Other defining characteristics of traditional business

management included short problem-solving attention sphere, explicit (push) managerial

qualities, and the classification of tangible and intangible assets as organizations' core

resources. According to Kitana (2016), the traditional business management approach

focused more on the external environment in which an organization operates. Such a

focus better positioned the organization to the external factors existing in that

environment. The traditional approach, therefore, adopted the Michael Porters' five

forces model that described the factors that shape, and that are responsible for

organizational structures, the rules of competition, and the causes of profitability (Dobbs,

2014). The factors listed in Porters' five forces model include the threats of competitive rivalry, bargaining power of buyers, bargaining power of suppliers, potential new entrants, and the existence of substitute products.

Contrarily, the evolution of modern business management followed the increasing sophistication of commerce, the advent of the technological age, and the increasing need for flexibility by organizations in response to their environment (Anastassiu et al., 2016; Dent & Bozeman, 2014). Although Anastassiu et al. (2016) and Dent and Bozeman (2014) acknowledged a paucity of research materials on the evolution of modern business management, early triggers were, however, attributed to issues that include Darwinism, science, the industrial revolution, Marxism, immigration, and unionism. On another hand, according to Kalowski (2015), modern business management constitutes seven variables that include structure, strategy, skills, staff, management style, systems and procedures, and shared values. Furthermore, and in contrast to the traditional approach to business management, the guiding characteristics of the modern business management focused on perspectives that flowed from the positive core of organizations. Specifically, in tandem with the RBV, the competitive streak of the modern business approach flowed from the internal valuable firm resources, values, and competencies that are inimitable (Kobayashi, 2014; Seshadri, 2013).

From the above, the defining characteristics of modern business management, therefore, include long-term performance horizon, intrinsic rewards, implicit coordination and control, and opportunity recognition attention sphere. Other features are inherent (pull) managerial qualities and the recognition that social and psychological capitals are

the core resources of organizations. Accordingly, the modern business management approach is distinctively different from the traditional approach in seven specific areas. The differences between the two approaches to management are (a) management perspective, (b) performance horizon, and (c) rewards and sanctions. Other differences are (d) coordination and control, (e) attention sphere, (f) managerial qualities, and (g) views on core resources (Kalowski, 2015).

Although the traditional management approach remains relevant, however, and unlike the modern management approach, it faces increasing challenges from the 21st century fast-paced global marketplace. The respective perspectives of both approaches showed distinct differences that established that practitioners of the traditional approach would struggle in the present business climate if they fail to augment their approach with relevant aspects of the modern approach. A comparison of these perspectives revealed that, while the traditional approach emphasized markets over resources, the modern approach, however, emphasizes resources over markets (Anastassiu et al., 2016). Other perspectives of the traditional approach include opportunity-driven, advantageous positioning, dependence on bargaining power, and the erection of mobility barriers. Contrarily, other perspectives of the modern approach include strength-driven, distinctive resource positioning, dependence on superior resources, and the erection of imitation barriers (Kalowski, 2015). Therefore, compared to the traditional approach, globalization has benefited more from the modern approach to management. The superior benefits of the modern over the traditional approach flowed from the leverage and platform that

technological advancements, increasing spate of innovation, shorter times to market, the ubiquitousness of knowledge and expertise, and increased competitiveness provide.

Globalization and the Evolvement of Business Collaboration

As the traditional methods and practices of business management gradually evolved due to changes in the strategic focus of business managers, similarly, the improved methods in resource recombination that globalization fuelled, encouraged collaborative partnerships (Kenyon, Meixell, & Westfall, 2016). The advent of globalization is, therefore, attributable to the evolution, developments, and advancements in business practices and management that triggered the shift from the traditional to the modern approach to business management (Aldakhil & Nataraja, 2014; Jakada, 2014). Essentially, the increased rate of adoption of globalization strategies by business organizations gave rise to a new era of international competition. Such new era of international competition reshaped global production and trade, thereby altering the organization of industries and societies alike (Aldakhil & Nataraja, 2014; Jakada, 2014; Kenyon et al., 2016). Accordingly, Aldakhil and Nataraja (2014), Jakada (2014), and Kenyon et al. (2016) described globalization as a process in which a business rapidly expands the provision of its products and services to include global clients, economies, societies, and cultures. Similarly, and in another study, Chatterjee (2016) described globalization as a phenomenon that observers and practitioners filter through its form, activities, and consequences, which include the intense mobility of capital, labor, and information.

Globalization has had its share of ardent supporters and opponents due to its overwhelming positive and negative effects and outcomes between 1990 and 2018. Specifically, globalization, on the one hand, created opportunities for most developed countries (DCs) and affected their economic growth in positive ways (Kilic, 2015). On the contrary, even though globalization portended some advantages to less developed countries (LDCs), it, however, also resulted in poverty, injustice, income dispersal, and negative economic growths (Kilic, 2015). Although there is no a one-size-fits-all definition for globalization, Kilic (2015) described globalization as a multi-dimensional concept that interfaces with, and affects the economic, political, social, and environmental areas of the world. Kilic's definition of globalization is also similar to that of the World Trade Organization (WTO) that described globalization as the integration of capital, investment, and labor markets or its integration with world markets.

The measurement of the impacts and effects of globalization on countries followed the Axel Dreher indices between 2006 and 2008 (Kilic, 2015). Specifically, Kilic (2015) identified three measurement indices that include the Economic Globalization Index (EGI); the Social Globalization Index (SGI); and the Political Globalization Index (PGI). The EGI takes cognizance of the percentages of the gross domestic product to trade, foreign trade investments and stocks, portfolio investments, and income payments to foreign nationals. The SGI measurement index, on the other hand, focuses on personal contact, information flows, and cultural proximity. Finally, the PGI measurement index concentrates on the status and extent of international relationship a country maintains. The adoption of the globalization measurement indices allowed for a

more scientific and reliable assessment of the effects of globalization on the economic growth of countries. The measurement indices, therefore, revealed growth trends in four specific areas of international trade, financial integration, international labor flows, and technical change (Kilic, 2015).

Based on the above measurement indices, and although beneficial, the consequences of globalization are, however, among the most diverse (Chatterjee, 2016). According to Chatterjee (2016), the first consequence of globalization is the extraordinary opportunities that allowed for better capitalization and technological progress by some countries, but not others. The second is the inauguration of severe income inequality, primarily through a deterioration of income distribution. The third consequence of globalization involves the intense competition that countries, international governmental organizations, and multinational corporations, contend with in the race to the top. Therefore, the increasing adoption of collaborative partnerships reflected a strategic decision by organizations to manage the consequences of globalization better. Furthermore, the adoption of collaborative partnerships also enabled the fusion of financial, material, human, and knowledge-based resources by organizations in efforts aimed at remaining competitive. Organizations in the 21st century's fast-paced technological environment of innovation, information, and communication are increasingly seeking and relying on partners with complementary competencies found in collaboration (Iyer et al., 2014).

Overview of Business Collaboration

Interorganizational collaboration had witnessed dramatic recognition and growth since the turn of the 21st century and is a result of globalization and increasing competitiveness among organizations (Miller & Katz, 2014; Roja & Nastase, 2013). Specifically, the evolvement, development, and adoption of the initiative of collaborative partnerships connoted the urgent need for a change from the control and command work environment of traditional modes of manufacturing and service provision. Furthermore, overwhelming changes, demands, requirements, and complexities of the global market environment are responsible for the increasing spate of collaboration. Following globalization, the modern global marketplace has had to contend with and manage events that include technological advancements, faster rates of innovation and times to market, and increased customer responsiveness (Saunila, 2014; Soosay & Hyland, 2015). Other critical occurrences that organizations encountered include the increased need for operational efficiency, faster decision-making, and increased competitiveness. Accordingly, the adoption of collaboration enabled the coming together of relevant participants with relevant skills, knowledge, and competencies. Such coming together was in efforts aimed at solving common business challenges and reaping improved outcomes and benefits (Miller & Katz, 2014; Sahs, Nicasio, Storey, Guarnaccia, & Lewis-Fernández, 2017; Soosay & Hyland, 2015). Besides, collaboration among firms enabled the individual network partners to focus on respective core competencies and in turn collaborate to access the skills and capabilities of other network partners (Roja & Nastase, 2013). Collaboration, therefore, enabled the generation of synergies among and

between organizations who possess complementary competencies. According to Kalowski (2015) and Sahs et al. (2017), the urgency to adopt a management initiative such as collaboration followed increasing 21st-century management problems, challenges, and threats. Specifically, changes in the external environment have had impacts on the behavior of managers, management styles, and the performance measurement techniques. The initiative of collaborative business partnership, therefore, availed managers the opportunities to partner with organizations that possess complementary capabilities and resources for the mutual benefits of the network partners. The forging of collaborative partnerships essentially imbued the network of collaborating organizations with distinct resource and capability advantages necessary to successfully compete in the marketplace.

In their contribution to the understanding of collaborative business partnerships, Roja and Nastase (2013) listed similar entities that include alliances, networks, coalitions, joint ventures, cooperatives, clusters, and forums. While these entities are synonymous with the initiative of collaboration, Roja and Nastase explicitly defined collaborative partnerships as an initiative in which two or more organizations exchange information, share resources, and conduct joint activities with the objective of reaping mutual benefits. The process of collaborative strategies also involves the sharing of risks and responsibilities. Kalowski (2015) and Roja and Nastase further compared the increasing adoption of collaborative partnerships to the phenomenon of globalization. Kalowski established that the forging of collaborative partnerships has culminated in reduced barriers at both the inter and intra-organizational levels. Such reduced barriers have,

therefore, resulted in the creation of platforms and opportunities for companies to synergize their capabilities and resources for improved performance outcomes. Again, González-Benito et al. (2016) further reiterated the crucial role of collaboration in the 21st-century competitive marketplace. González-Benito et al. emphasized that the success or failure of organizations relate directly to the existence of the ongoing relationships they keep with other upstream or downstream entities.

Fawcett et al. (2015) described the initiative of a collaborative business partnership as one that portends enormous advantages for organizational performance. Accordingly, the initiative of collaborative business partnerships allowed enterprises to meet customers' demands in real-time. Besides, collaborative business partnerships allowed firms to develop capabilities that enabled the evolvement of unique solutions offered cost efficiently in close collaboration with partners in the value chain (Arora et al., 2016). Again, Fawcett et al. attributed the growing relevance and acceptance of collaborative partnerships to competitive pressures (79%) and demands for higher service levels (75%) from manufacturers and consumers respectively. Other factors include the need for strategic positioning (37%) and the need for improved financial performance of firms (28%).

Roth (2014) defined collaboration as a process through which parties who see different aspects of the problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their limited and individual vision of what is possible. Roth (2014) further described collaboration as a process in which autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiations. Such interactions jointly create rules and

structures that govern their relationships and the ways to act and decide on the issues that

enabled the forging of the partnership. Collaboration, therefore, connoted a process that

involved shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions. Collaborative partnerships

flow from the notion that an independent entity cannot successfully address and

overcome complex challenges and problems existing in the dynamic and competitive

business environment of the years 2000 to 2018. The initiative behind a collaborative

business partnership is, therefore, a way out of the increased pressure for improved

performance, accountability, and the reduction in costs for organizations, investors, and

stakeholders (Audet & Roy, 2016).

The collaborative activities among firms are vital and dynamic initiatives capable

of delivering positive differential performance outcomes (Fawcett et al., 2015). Few

managers, according to Fawcett et al. (2015) are capable of comprehending the nuanced

complexities involved in assessing the heterogeneously dispersed resources of

organizations. Moreover, additional challenges flow from the inability to bring

complementary competencies together in efforts aimed at delivering the benefits of a

collaborative partnership. The implementation challenges that stem from the complexities

of forging a collaborative partnership and that senior business managers encounter,

therefore, makes the gains accruable from a collaborative partnership suboptimal and

often, disappointing (Sahs et al., 2017). Therefore, according to Fawcett et al., only the

ability to identify and link complementary capabilities between and among firms, via

collaboration, would lead to superior performance. According to Fjeldstad et al. (2012),

Keast and Mandell (2014), and Saunila (2014), collaborative partnerships among

organizations enabled (a) faster new product development, (b) enhanced product and service quality, and (c) reduced products, services, and supply chain costs. Other superior performance indicators emanating from collaborative partnerships include (a) shorter fulfillment times, (b) process improvements, and (c) improved customer service (Fawcett et al., 2015; Fjeldstad et al., 2012; Saunila, 2014).

From the above findings, business collaborative initiatives and tools, therefore, remain unique requirements for firms for present and future business challenges (Audet & Roy, 2016). Besides, collaboration extends to more than the mere development of strategies aimed at solving the common problems of members of the partnership. Collaboration is, ultimately instrumental in the provision of the strategic platform required to achieve organizational synergies that drive the identification of innovative solutions (Keast & Mandell, 2014). Accordingly, while collaboration transcends the collective accomplishment of tasks by the network partners, it further supports the development of new systems, processes, and institutional arrangements.

The growing importance of collaborative partnerships required that firms significantly increase their degree of collaboration, as well as their networking capability (Li et al., 2018). Accordingly, the integration and the networkability that evolved from collaborative partnerships allowed firms to concentrate on respective core competencies. Finally, the coordination mechanisms of a well-forged collaborative partnership made it easier for the network partners to overcome complex business challenges in the prevailing dynamic marketplace. Specifically, network partners coped better with the challenges of diverse technical knowledge and expertise; a faster rate of innovation and

new product development; and the growing demand for enhanced product and service

quality (Fawcett et al., 2015; Fjeldstad et al., 2012; Sahs et al., 2017). Other relevant

challenges scaled by firms include the ever-increasing products, services, and supply

chain costs and overheads; shorter fulfillment times; and the demand for improved

customer service.

Although imbued with immense benefits, and gaining wider acceptance, a variety

of obstacles, however, impede collaborative partnerships and have prevented firms'

optimization of collaborative capacities (Miller & Katz, 2014). The impediments to the

full actualization of the benefits of collaborative partnerships include relationship

challenges exhibited through the inability to collaborate effectively across geographies

and cultures, and across inter and intraorganizational divisions and departments (Klein,

2017). Other obstacles to a successful collaborative arrangement include turf protection

and the opportunistic tendencies of the partners; the lack of trust; nonaligned corporate

vision, culture, structure, strategies, and operating philosophies. Still, other obstacles

include technological challenges and nonaligned performance measures. Finally,

according to Chakkol et al. (2018), the overall effect of the barriers to collaboration, in

most cases, led to collaborative inertia for the participating organizations. According to

Vangen and Huxham (2013), collaborative inertia refers to a state where a partnership

arrangement becomes frustrating, conflict-ridden, and unable to yield the expected

benefits of collaboration. The attainment of the status of collaborative inertia, in the

majority of cases, led to the gradual disintegration and ultimate dissolution of the

partnership (Chakkol et al., 2018; Miller & Katz, 2014). However, organizations that

adopted and adhered to the guiding principles of the RV and the RBV concepts can avoid

the state of collaborative inertia that might derail any collaborative arrangement

(Brandon-Jones et al., 2014; Kobayashi, 2014; Shafeey & Trott, 2014). Specifically,

collaborative partnerships, propelled by the by the dual conceptual framework of the RV

and the RBV, must possess and demonstrate the strategic intent to succeed by avoiding

the above obstacles (Yang, Hung-Yi, Shang-Chia, & Chen, 2014).

Requirements for Forging Collaborative Business Partnerships

Collaborative business partnership shares important traits with the phenomenon of

globalization, which strives to eliminate the barriers within and between organizations.

Furthermore, the benefits of collaborative business partnerships are realized better in a

globalized environment than in a traditional and isolated environment (Roja & Nastase,

2013). Specifically, and in addition to the elimination of barriers, globalization creates

the enabling environment for organizations to collaborate efficiently and to exchange

idiosyncratic assets (Ralston et al., 2017). Again, and in tandem with the conceptual

framework of the study (the RBV and the RV), collaboration enabled participating

organizations avail of the unique benefits derivable from increased competitiveness.

Specifically, while possessing unique competencies, the participating organizations

capitalized on the strategic resources, dynamic capabilities, and absorptive capacities of

other network partners. Besides, the joint contributions and exchanges in a collaborative

partnership resulted in relational advantages that yielded relational supernormal profits to

the participating firms (Ralston et al., 2017). However, organizations needed to put in

place and satisfy specific requirements to avail of the benefits of collaborative business

partnerships (Salam, 2017; Yang et al., 2014). Such requirements included the goal congruence of network partners, the possession of relevant resources and complementary core competencies, and the availability, connectivity, and usage of information technology. Other factors included the existence and cultivation of trust, the compatibility and the flexibility of organizational structures and cultures, and the existence of leadership competencies.

The goal congruence of network partners. The objectives of a collaborative partnership would remain unattainable without a congruence of goals of the network partners (Chakkol et al., 2018; Randolph, 2016). Therefore, the existence of goal congruence would facilitate greater alignment between the individual partners' goals and the overall goals of the entire network of firms. Besides, Randolph (2016) established that the shared goals of collaboration often transcended merely justifying the strategic union of organizations. To Randolph (2016), the congruence of goals among and between the network partners promoted and encouraged interfirm affinity and the strategic convergence of competencies and capabilities. In essence, different from individual organizations' corporate goals, the focus of the goals of a collaborative business partnership is on the achievement of specific and measurable results. Such results characteristically yield competitive advantages for the network partners (Anatan, 2014; Iyer et al., 2014; Moon et al., 2017). On the other hand, Randolph described collaboration as an inherently multi-level phenomenon that enabled the interaction of intra-firm, interfirm, and trans-firm traits, behaviors, and strategies to determine and achieve the collective goals of the collaborating partners.

While possible, it is, however, pertinent to note that the achievement of goal congruence posed some challenges to aspiring collaborative partners specifically as it relates to their respective geographic location. According to Chakkol et al. (2018), the majority of organizations based their strategic plans and objectives on their respective national governmental regulations, policies, and local interests. Therefore, and except the collaborating organizations are resident in the same country, it became harder to achieve goal congruence. The achievement of goal congruence over international borders requires some measure of flexibilities on the part of the individual network partners.

The possession of relevant resources and complementary competencies. The possession of human, financial, material, systems, processes, information, and knowledge-based resources are at the core of the existence, capability, and profitability of organizations (Yang et al., 2014). However, the advent of globalization and increased competition among firms required that business managers evolve and adopt new business organizational methods aimed at meeting the ever-increasing business challenges. Accordingly, the initiative of collaborative business partnerships provided the opportunity for multiple organizations to fuse and exchange unique resources and competencies. The fusion and exchange of inimitable resources and skills were with an aim to gaining and achieving higher competitive advantages and performance levels respectively (Anatan, 2014; Roja & Nastase, 2013; Yang et al., 2014).

The conceptual framework of RV and RBV espoused and supported the fact that there exist inherent benefits in collaborative partnerships (Kobayashi, 2014; Li, 2014; Li et al., 2018; Miguel et al., 2014; Moon et al., 2017; Seshadri, 2013). However, each

network partner must possess and contribute relevant, strategic, and complementary core competencies and resources towards the recombination process (Fawcett et al., 2015). On the one hand, the development of collaborative partnerships centers on satisfying the conditions of high resource and capability dependency, and low degrees of substitutability on the other (Yang et al., 2014). It is, however, pertinent to note that the possession of complementary core competencies and resources does not guarantee the flow of relational supernormal profits to the network partners. Derivable relational supernormal profits from the partnership will only flow if the structures, systems, and cultures of the collaborating firms are compatible (Ioanid, 2015; Islam, Jasimuddin, & Hasan, 2015; Kribikova, 2016; Wallace, Hoover, & Pepper, 2014).

Another significant complementary resource necessary for the implementation of a successful collaborative partnership is the ability and capability to manage relationships within the network in ways that promote the initiative, and are beneficial to the members (Miocevic, 2016; Yang et al., 2014). Accordingly, effective relationship management capabilities connote a social connection premised on mutual interests and benefits. Again, such effective relationship management capabilities are essential tools in both business-to-business and business-to-consumer collaborative environments. While differentiating between process, event, and transaction relationship types, Yang et al. (2014) maintained that the relationship that exists between and among the network partners is dependent on quality and closeness criteria. Specifically, in descending order of importance, Yang et al. established that the closeness and quality of collaborative relationships follow the sequence of the process, the event, and the transaction-oriented activities respectively.

Yang et al. (2014) presented and concluded that collaborative relationship management skills are valuable social capitals that serve as lubricants for the wheels and cogs of collaborative partnerships. Therefore, participating network partners must possess such valuable social capitals to ensure productive and successful collaborative business partnerships. Finally, Yang et al. established that there exists a significant positive relationship between the amount of social capital and the ability of the network partners to create new intellectual and knowledge capital required to ensure that the network partners maintain a competitive edge over competitors. Conclusively, a successful collaborative partnership is possible if, and only if, the collaborating organizations contribute the right mix of relevant and complementary human, financial, material, systems, processes, information, and knowledge-based resources.

The availability, connectivity, and usage of information technology. The availability and the ability to deploy the extensive capabilities of information technology contribute to the success of collaborative partnerships (Islam et al., 2015; Lioukas, Reuer, & Zollo, 2016; Yang et al., 2014). Specifically, the Internet and intranet-based systems that information technology facilitates helped establish real-time communications and the exchange of vital information between and among members of the collaborative partnership (Chi, Zhao, & George, 2015; Fawcett et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2014). Besides, investments in systems capabilities that include Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) enhanced and ensured that the benefits of collaboration flowed to the members. Furthermore, the availability and the efficient usage of information technology within the network of firms enabled and ensured the

timely access and exchange of information and decision-making requirements of the

partnership (Chi et al., 2015; Pittz & Adler, 2016).

According to Fawcett et al. (2015), the nonavailability and nonconnectivity of

systems capabilities remain the biggest challenge and obstacle that can impede the flow

of the benefits derivable from collaborative partnerships. Specifically, the nonavailability

and nonconnectivity of systems capabilities suggest that the collaborative network would

struggle to fulfill and discharge its relational obligations. Such inabilities to fulfill and

discharge its relational obligations would result in reduced enthusiasm on the parts of the

partners and the eventual dissolution of the partnership. Again, Li and Nguyen (2017)

and Lioukas et al. (2016) established that the success of any collaborative partnership

depends on the existence of superior information system capabilities that would ensure

seamless connectivity between and among the network partners. Li and Nguyen and

Lioukas et al., however, emphasized the need for the existence of an enabling

environment that includes a nonequity governance structure and a high degree of

interdependence among the partners. Similar conclusions and recommendations also

flowed from the studies by Chakkol et al. (2018).

The existence and cultivation of trust. Trust remains one of the most significant

components of collaborative or exchange relationships (Salam, 2017). Trust facilitates

superior network performance and is an indicator of the quality of the relationship that

exists among and between network partners (Gao & Liu, 2014; Narayanan et al., 2015;

Randolph, 2016). Specifically, the individual network partners that have committed

resources, expertise, knowledge, and core competencies, need the assurance that the

collective effort of the group would result in mutually beneficial outcomes for all members. However, whereas the existence and the cultivation of trust are pivotal to the formation and the success of a collaborative partnership, research findings have, however, revealed that trust is either very weak or absent in the majority of collaborative partnerships (Chakkol et al., 2018; Salam, 2017). Other authors who include Lavie et al. (2012), Fawcett et al. (2015), and Miller and Katz (2014) also alluded to the low level of trust in the majority of collaborative partnerships. To these authors, the most significant factor responsible for the low level of trust in collaborative partnerships is the opportunistic tendencies of the network partners.

According to Chakkol et al. (2018), the establishment and the cultivation of trust among network partners remains a daunting task by any measure. The difficulties of establishing trust in the network flow partially from the diversified goals of the individual partners, and the complexities that arise from the number of participating organizations. Additionally, the differing geographic location of the participating organizations would also contribute to the low level of trust that exists among and between the partners. Chakkol et al. (2018) and Salam (2017), however, recommended the adoption of a gradual process to the building and the cultivation of trust at the early stage of the formation of the partnership. Specifically, Chakkol et al. and Salam recommended that the network partners set realistic goals and agree to the delivery of modest targets. The achievement of realistic goals and modest targets should form the basis for trust among the network partners while further reinforcing the development of trust attitudes and attributes required for collaboration to thrive. Similarly, Randolph (2016) compared

setting and achieving realistic goals and modest targets to adopting the small-wins approach to strategic planning. To Randolph, the attainment of mutual trust through the gradual and successful implementation of low-risk initiatives and goals involve incremental resource commitments. Besides, the adoption, capturing, and locking-in of the small-wins strategy remains a preferred and cautious option for organizations that are new to collaborative partnerships and that do not want to take on high risks and uncertainties. Eventually, however, the network partners in a collaborative partnership would have to commit more to the initiative and venture beyond the small wins. Specifically, the outcomes derivable from the small-wins would not generate a significant level of benefit high enough to warrant, nor compensate, for the efforts invested in forging a collaborative partnership (Randolph, 2016).

The continuous growth and development of trust levels among and between the network partners would reduce the opportunistic tendencies of partners while simultaneously enabling increased adaptation to the overall objectives of the network (Kohtamäki, Thorgren, & Wincent, 2016; Salam, 2017). Furthermore, the overall impact of such outcomes would significantly contribute to and enhance the relational supernormal profits and the performance results that accrue to the network partners. While the attainment of the trust threshold poses a challenge to collaborating organizations, Kohtamäki et al. (2016) referred to the Toyota Company and its partners as an example of a successful collaborative partnership. Specifically, the Toyota Company and its partners developed trust and cross-learning capabilities through enabling practices that include long-term contracts, knowledge sharing practices, and

incentives. Besides, the enabling practices of the Toyota Company and its partners resulted in much-needed collective identity and network behavior of all the network partners. Trust between collaborating network partners is, therefore, a necessary and significant input to forging mutually beneficial and successful collaborative partnership (Salam, 2017).

      Compatibility and flexibility of organizational structures. Organizational structure refers to the adopted method by which organizations segregate, allocate, classify, coordinate, and administratively control and integrate work activities to achieve predefined goals and objectives (Islam et al., 2015; Kribikova, 2016). The internal structure of an organization, therefore, consists of the framework of roles, responsibilities, authorities, communications, and work relationships designed to accomplish the organization's tasks and achieve its objectives. According to Islam et al. (2015), the hierarchical design of the majority of organizations is the platform on which the decision-making processes, systems, and procedures rest. Therefore, the adopted structures of participating organizations in a collaborative network become a significant factor in the workability and success of the partnership (Islam et al., 2015; Pittz & Adler, 2016; Soosay & Hyland, 2015).

      From the above, and according to authors that include Islam et al. (2015) and Zakrzewska-Bielawska (2016), an organic and flexible organizational structure remains the preferred option for firms involved in collaborative partnerships. Specifically, the organic and flexible organizational structure is significantly different from the mechanistic and centralized structures that are less flexible and more complex. Besides,

whereas the mechanistic structure operates under rigid specific norms and regulations, the

flexible organic structure, on the other hand, works through adaptable and informal

control mechanisms and open communication. The operational features of the organic

and flexible organizational structure, therefore, most significantly contribute to the

successful implementation of the initiative of collaboration. Again, the adoption of a

flexible structure enables the partners to overcome the challenges of the multiple and

varied goals and objectives of the individual collaborating firms prior to the formation of

the partnership. Furthermore, a flexible organizational structure enhances and supports a

decentralized decision-making process, interpersonal communications, the multicultural

characteristics, and the leadership requirements of the partnership (Islam et al., 2015;

Pittz & Adler, 2016). Finally, the lofty benefits of the initiative of collaboration require

fluid, flexible, and open structures that would enable the integration of ideas, capabilities,

expertise, knowledge, and core competencies (Kohtamäki et al., 2016). Kohtamäki et al.,

therefore, emphasized that the ability to satisfy these requirements enhances both the

relational and network performance.

In tandem with the above significant role of organizational structure, Kribikova

(2016) further maintained that the internal structures and the elements of organizations

are critical to the achievement of corporate goals and objectives. A misaligned and

mismatched organizational structure, in a collaborative partnership, irrespective of the

quality of employees, technology, information, processes, and systems, would not yield

the expected benefit. Again, Kribikova established that there exists a significant and

positive, but an indirect relationship, between organizational structure and organizational

performance. Specifically, the author established that there exist mediating factors through which changes in organizational structure impact on performance. Accordingly, changes in the basic elements of organizations' structures reflect in more efficient planning, information and communication flows, knowledge sharing, and innovation. Therefore, and to avail of the benefits of collaboration, the formation of collaborative partnerships by organizations certainly require them to make changes to their respective structures. Such changes require participating companies to adopt organic and flexible structures that recognize the new complex and multicultural platform through which the partnership operates. The adoption of organic and flexible structures, in turn, enabled and ensured a near-seamless fusion of the operations of the collaborating firms (Islam et al., 2015; Kribikova, 2016; Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2016).

Cultural affinity and flexibility. The advent of outsourcing and collaborative activities has resulted in more complex and interdependent relationships among multiple organizations (Ioanid, 2015; Kenyon et al., 2016). On the one hand, such interorganizational dependency flowed from the fact that the design, the manufacture, the distribution, and the marketing of products and services presently consist of knowledge, expertise, and inputs from different parts of the world (Iyer et al., 2014). Contrarily, however, the interdependent relationships between and among collaborating organizations have created a multicultural environment that requires effective management, and that would support the achievement of the goals and objectives of collaboration.

Culture is like an iceberg that lies primarily under the surface and beneath the

conscious awareness of individuals. The culture of a particular group of people, therefore, exerts a significant impact on their general ways of life. Culture consists of internalized mental representations that are fundamental to common interpretation, understanding, communication, and overall functioning of society (Lucke, Kostova, & Roth, 2014; Wiewiora, Trigunarsyah, Murphy, & Coffey, 2013; Yang et al., 2014). On another note, Ioanid (2015) and Wallace et al. (2014) reiterated the significant role that culture plays in a multicultural and collaborative environment. Specifically, while greater connectivity exists among and between national and similar cultures, the contrary is the outcome in instances that involve international cultures as obtained in a collaborative partnership. The existence of a lesser degree of connectivity in collaborative partnerships, therefore, necessitates the vital need to understand the influences of culture on the processes of the individual partners (Klein, 2017). Furthermore, and of more significant importance is the need to understand the influence of culture on the synchronized processes of the entire network of collaborating organizations (Ioanid, 2015; Wallace et al., 2014). Such understanding, both individually and collectively, enhances and assures the success of the organizations involved in collaborative partnerships in the present globalized environment. Besides, an in-depth understanding of the various cultures of the collaborating firms promotes knowledge and power-sharing and reduces uncertainty by creating a standard methodology for interpreting events and issues (Lin, Ho, & Shen, 2018). Furthermore, a well-understood culture of the collaborating organizations contributes to the creation of a sense of a common goal, unity of commitment, and a sense of belonging that offers a vision of continuity for the partnership (Klein, 2017;

Yang et al., 2014). Finally, an understanding of the varied cultures of the network

partners significantly contribute to and enhance the relational supernormal profits and the

performance results that accrue to the network partners (Kohtamäki et al., 2016).

The existence of leadership competencies. Leadership plays a significant role in

the formation, implementation, and ultimate success of any collaborative business

relationship. The leadership concept describes the ability of an individual to select, equip,

train, and influence a group of people who possess varying degrees of skills and

capabilities to achieve set organizational goals and objectives (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017;

Northouse, 2013). According to Pittz and Adler (2016), the availability of competent

leadership is critical to managing the myriad of factors and requirements necessary to

facilitate the actualization of collaborative partnerships. Such competent leadership also

ensures that the benefits of collaboration accrues and flows to all the network partners.

Furthermore, a reduced level of benefits accrues to interorganizational collaboration with

hierarchical relationships where leadership resides in the most senior partner or the

largest firm in the network of partners. Rather, Pittz and Adler maintained that

interorganizational collaboration requires a relational leadership style that inspires,

nurtures, supports, guides, and communicates. Specifically, and contrary to a leader-

follower mentality, the attributes of relational leadership tend to empower, enable, and

facilitate rather than control towards specified goals.

Based on the above leadership context, and with the dawn and continuous spread

of globalization, the 21st century heralded new sets of challenges for organizations as

well as for business managers. Globalization, therefore, now requires organizations to

adopt new and innovative measures to remain competitive (Chatterjee, 2016; Fjeldstad et al., 2012; Kilic, 2015; Saunila, 2014). The adoption of such new and innovative measures followed the rapid diffusion of information, innovation, communication technologies, and the ubiquitousness of knowledge and human capital resources. Organizations and business leaders must, therefore, shun traditional management tools and techniques designed to ensure organizational stability, operational efficiency, and predictable performance. Furthermore, the structures of traditional management tools and techniques tend to limit flexibility and create impediments to innovation, creativity, and change. Instead, Chatterjee (2016), Kilic (2015), Fjeldstad et al. (2012) and Saunila (2014) recommended that organizations and business leaders adopt and adapt to changing trends in the market and to the ever-changing organizational requirements if they want to remain competitive and relevant. Again, Fawcett et al. (2015) and Pittz and Adler (2016) differentiated between hard and soft leadership traits that enhance and ensure the success of collaborative initiatives. While alluding to the hard attributes of leadership, Fawcett et al. emphasized the complex nature of collaborative partnerships and advised that leaders and implementers of the initiative possess qualities of change agents, and strong strategic, functional, and analytical skills. Contrarily, Pittz and Adler emphasized on the possession of the soft leadership traits of patience, empathy, honesty, and deference, which promotes and enhances the relational growth, health, and balance of the partnership.

Factors that Impede the Implementation of Collaborative Partnerships

Despite their relevance to the successful implementation of a collaborative business partnership, the above factors, however, also exhibit specific reverse traits. The

reverse features of the ingredients of collaboration pose challenges that limit the benefits derivable from the initiative. There is, therefore, the need for implementers to identify and acknowledge the existence of the reverse traits that have negative implications for collaborative partnerships. The conscious acknowledgment of these risk factors would help business managers strategize on how to manage better and contain their debilitating effects (Fawcett et al., 2015; Miller & Katz, 2014; Vangen & Huxham, 2013).

Diverse goals of the partners. According to Vangen and Huxham (2013), one of the major premises of collaboration is the possession of diverse expertise and resources by the individual network partners. However, the possession of such skills and resources are at the core of the individual organizations' existence and in turn, implies innate and diversified strategic goals and objectives. Therefore, the implementers of collaborative business partnerships should recognize the paradox that exists between goal congruence and the diversified goals of the partners. Specifically, and in addition to triggering a reluctance to cooperate and share information, the diversified goals of the partners lead the partners to seek varied, and sometimes, conflicting outcomes (Fawcett et al., 2015; Li & Nguyen, 2017; Vangen & Huxham, 2013). The conflicting scenarios at play between goal congruence and goal incongruence play out through interfunctional and interorganizational conflicts, disagreements, frustrations, and diminished performance. The ultimate result, therefore, is the sub-optimization or nonoptimization of the platform that collaboration provides. Furthermore, the size of the partnership is another factor that leads to overwhelming complexities of the overall goals of the union. Specifically, the number of member firms complicates the contribution and requirements of the individual

network partners. Moreover, the complexities of goals also have implications for how

members of the network perceive the goals of the partnership.

The trust challenge. A myriad of factors that include ambiguities around the

collaborative agreements and the complexities that arise, and exist, between goal

congruence and the diversified goal of the network partners, pose significant challenges

to the attainment of trust (Randolph, 2016; Vangen & Huxham, 2013). Furthermore,

while the initial adoption of the "small wins" strategy minimizes the risk and the trust

challenge on the network partners, a full-throttled collaborative partnership, however,

stretches the trust challenge (Vangen & Huxham, 2013). On another hand, the

opportunistic tendencies of individual network members further stretch the trust

challenge where, for example, a partner secretly claims ownership of the results of joint

efforts (Fawcett et al., 2015; Lavie et al., 2012; Miller & Katz, 2014).

Again, while organizations require some measure of nimbleness in the present

changing and dynamic business environment, such nimbleness also have negative

implications for trust in a collaborative partnership. Specifically, the relationship and

trust built and nurtured gradually by collaborating partners become susceptible to

changes in the organizational structures or job functions of the major network members

(Vangen & Huxham, 2013). Furthermore, and according to Jarratt and Ceric (2015), trust

is a complex phenomenon that integrates psychological processes with group dynamics

and macro-level organizational structure and culture. Accordingly, the communication

and activities of any of the network partners have a significant impact on the perception

of trust by other network partners. Besides, such significant impacts on the perception of

trust would have a domino effect on the business and relationship management strategies of the individual network partners (Jarratt & Ceric, 2015). Again, Jarratt and Ceric established that a positive perception of trust among and between the network partners promotes the activities of collaboration and improves the network's performance. However, the reverse is the case in instances of a negative perception of trust.

Power imbalances. The issue of power imbalances and which partners wield the most power within and among collaborative network partners remains yet another major factor that impedes the establishment of successful collaborative partnerships (Michalski, Montes-Botella, & Guevara Piedra, 2017; Soosay & Hyland, 2015; Vangen & Huxham, 2013). Specifically, the amount of power that the bigger network partners wield intimidates the less-powerful and smaller partners of the network. Furthermore, unchecked and misused power structures also have significant implications for trust within and among the network partners. It is, therefore, necessary for all members of the collaborative partnership to recognize that both an unchecked or misused power limits the building of trust and also erode any trust that exists among and between the network partners (Lin et al., 2018).

Byrne and Power (2014) and Fawcett et al. (2015) demonstrated the potency and the misuse of power by analyzing the relationship that exists between buying organizations and suppliers. Byrne and Power established that purchasing organizations pitch suppliers against one another in their negotiation processes. The antics of pitching suppliers against one another to achieve the lowest cost of acquisition negate the concept of risk and reward sharing. Such bullish and coercive tactics on the part of the bigger and

more powerful partners only result in compliance-like, rather than collaboration-like, relationships on the part of the smaller and less-powerful partner. Furthermore, Byrne and Power concluded that the activities and actions of the bigger network partner result in dictatorial collaboration where smaller network partners only follow the edicts of the bigger network partners. Specifically, Michalski et al. (2017) identified deficits in collaborative partnerships where power asymmetry existed. The perception or actual existence of a scenario that mimics dictatorial collaboration within the network has a significant negative impact on the trust and the performance of the collaborative partnership.

      The culture paradox. If not properly managed, the cultural makeup and the inefficient management of the cultural dynamics of the collaborating organizations is another factor that portends negative implications on the efficacy and overall success of collaborative partnerships (Islam et al., 2015; Vangen & Huxham, 2013). Specifically, culture presents a paradoxical quandary that is, on the one hand, positive and negative on the other. Culture, on the upside, is a veritable source of knowledge stimulation, creativity, and rewards. Culture, therefore, possesses the qualities that are necessary for the present complex and adaptive business environment. The fusion of cultures that collaboration promotes yields immense synergistic benefits for network partners. However, culture, on the downside, presents a potential source of tension, conflict of values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. These negative qualities of culture are potent enough to dampen and impede the expected benefits of collaboration. For example, and according to Islam et al., culture may act as an impediment to motivation, commitment,

information, and knowledge sharing in a multicultural and collaborative environment.

Based on the above, and of importance to senior business managers, is the need to evolve effective strategies that would contribute to reducing the impacts of the dampening outcomes of a multicultural and collaborative network. According to Vangen and Huxham (2013), the cultural diversity of a collaborative network requires a measure of flexibility on the parts of the individual organizations. Moreover, since the individual organizations have different goals, objectives, structures, national and management cultures, and core competencies during their establishment, and before agreeing to collaborate. Specifically, flexibility on the parts of the individual organizations enables and enhances the accommodation, the fusion, and the joint deployment of capabilities and resources required to achieve the objectives of collaboration. Paradoxically, however, the requirement for flexibility by the individual organizations also has a negative implication that limits the ability to meet delivery targets. Specifically, flexibility on the parts of the individual organizations means a compromise on the structures, processes, and systems through which they deliver on their core processes (Vangen & Huxham, 2013).

Territoriality and turf protection. Territoriality and turf protection are by-products of mismatched cultural and structural elements of the collaboration platform (Byrne & Power, 2014; Fawcett et al., 2015). Specifically, the existence of rigid organizational structures, not opened to the cultural differences of the network partners, mimic a silo operation that is devoid of the essential ingredients of collaboration. Byrne and Power (2014) and Fawcett et al. (2015) further established that the protective activities of network partners to protect local territories and turfs transmit anti-

collaborative signals that impede, and ultimately erode, the benefits derivable from joint value-creation.

Fawcett et al. (2015), however, revealed that high levels of trust and efficient systems connectivity could, to some extent, permeate the barriers of territoriality and turf protection. Specifically, the existence of such high levels of trust and efficient systems connectivity would dampen the negative impact of territoriality and turf protection on the expected benefits of the partnership. Besides, the efficacy of trust and systems connectivity is put to the test when collaborating partners share only tactical and order-related information but are unwilling to share strategic information related to new product development and innovation (Li & Nguyen, 2017). Therefore, the existence of trust and systems connectivity among and between network partners does not necessarily translate to an effective and successful collaborative partnership.

The unwillingness of the individual network to change is another factor that foments territoriality and turf protection. According to Byrne and Power (2014) and Fawcett et al. (2015), and like the majority of individuals and organizations, it is never easy to adopt and imbibe change initiatives quickly enough. Specifically, the majorities of prospective network partners in collaborative partnerships display apprehension towards a new and different initiative that demands them to act, operate, and cooperate differently with external and foreign entities. Byrne and Power and Fawcett et al., however, emphasized that network partners in a collaborative partnership can only avail of the relational advantages derivable from collaboration if, and only if, they are willing to adopt changes that reflect and promote the overarching objectives of the partnership.

The network partners must, therefore, overcome the challenges presented by the 3-way interaction of structural and sociological resistors of trust, systems connectivity, and information hoarding (Byrne & Power, 2014; Fawcett et al., 2015; Li & Nguyen, 2017). Finally, as stated above, and while no specific combination or formula exists, participating organizations in collaborative business partnerships must adopt the list of requirements for forging successful (Miller & Katz, 2014; Saunila, 2014; Soosay & Hyland, 2015; Yang et al., 2014).

Summary and Transition

The evolution and practice of collaborative business partnerships did not happen in a void but evolved through years of transition from the traditional to the modern method of doing business. With the advent of globalization, the need for organizations to collaborate and exchange idiosyncratic assets, therefore, becomes strategically expedient. The conceptual framework of the RV and RBV described the relational and resource requirements that assure the success of collaborative partnerships. The RV and RBV, therefore, provide a veritable platform that supports the successful rollout and implementation of collaborative strategies and the resulting partnerships among and between organizations. Finally, the use of the qualitative research method and the case study design provided the research tools necessary to sufficiently explore and examine the implementation strategies senior managers required to successfully implement collaborative partnerships.

Section 1 contained the Foundation of the Study, the Background of the Problem, the Problem Statement, and the Purpose Statement. The section also included the Nature

of the Study that justified using a qualitative method and the case study design. The section contained work on the review, the critical analysis, and the synthesis of the professional and academic literature in the conceptual framework of the study. Finally, Section 1 contained work that examined the evolution of collaborative business partnerships, the requirements for, and the factors that might impede the smooth implementation and operation of the initiative. Essentially, Section 1 described the evolved complex economic and market conditions that led to the adoption of collaboration among and within organizations.

Section 2 of the study covers the following topics: the role of the researcher; a detailed description of the research methodology and design; and the sample population and participants. Other topics under Section 2 are the data collection and organization instruments and techniques; the data analysis; and the reliability and validity of the findings of the study. Section 3 of the study begins with an introduction and a presentation of the research findings. The section also contains the application of the research findings to professional practice; the implications of the findings for social change and behaviors; and the recommendations for action and further study.

Section 2: The Project

In addition to technological advancements, collaborative business partnerships are increasingly becoming the vehicle through which organizational leaders increase their knowledge base, their innovation capabilities, and the time to market for their products (Fjeldstad et al., 2012; Moon et al., 2017; Narayanan et al., 2015). Accordingly, the growing popularity and adoption of collaborative business partnerships significantly contribute to the competitive advantages that participating firms enjoy (Arthur, 2017; Dey, 2016). The focus of Section 2 of this study includes the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, and the research method and design. Other topics examined under Section 2 include the population and sampling, the ethical research component, the data collection instruments, the data organization techniques, the data analysis, and reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study research was to explore the implementation strategies senior business managers used to forge profitable collaborative business partnerships. The targeted population of the study comprised senior business managers who had implemented strategies to create profitable collaborative business partnerships. The selected senior business managers worked in three large organizations in the oil, gas, and energy sector of a metropolitan area in a western province of Canada. Furthermore, the selected managers worked in organizations that had ongoing collaborative partnership agreements within and outside of Edmonton. The implication for positive social change includes increased and improved interactions between and

among individuals of different social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds. Such

increased and improved interactions could result in reduced racial tension among

different people who reside in Edmonton.

Role of the Researcher

I was the researcher for this qualitative study and, therefore, the primary data

collection instrument. In this study, I adopted a case study design because the goal was to

understand complex social phenomena within a real-life context. In qualitative research

studies, as the researcher, and a human being, I was adaptable and responsive to the task

of (a) participants' recruitment, and (b) the collection and organization of data. My other

functions as the researcher included (a) data analysis, (b) data and document storage and

security, and (c) data interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2016). Therefore,

in tandem with the findings of Marshall and Rossman (2016), I was best suited to fill the

role of primary data collection instrument for this study. Furthermore, while I could

understand verbal and nonverbal communication, I could also process and clarify

information for accuracy. Finally, while I was aware of the significant role I played in

this case study design research, I was also capable of retaining the holistic and

meaningful characteristics of real-life events.

It is pertinent that a prior relationship did not exist between me whether as an

employer, employee, or customer, and the participants in this study. In this study, I

adopted the high ethical standards proposed by the Belmont Report of 1979. According to

Aggarwal and Gurnani (2014), the Belmont Report is a statement of basic ethical

standards and guidelines that sought to monitor the participation of humans in research

studies. The monitoring and enforcement of the statutes of the Belmont Report rely on the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which was established to protect the rights and welfare of human research participants. The IRB, therefore, carries out reviews of research studies and ensures that they meet the necessary ethical requirements before approving.

I abided by the three basic principles of the Belmont Report throughout this study. The three fundamental principles of the 1979 Belmont Report are (a) the principles of respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Therefore, I treated the participants in the study with the utmost courtesy and respect throughout the interview process. While I did not deceive nor lie to them, I also did not expose them to any form of risk (physical, psychological, or emotional). Finally, I treated the participants fairly and equally without considerations of age, gender, and job title.

Although I did not have a relationship with the participants in this study, however, humans, as instruments of data collection, have shortcomings and are, therefore, susceptible to biases. Specifically, my over 15 years of work experience with small to medium and large multinational organizations, operating at both the upstream and downstream sections of the supply chain, made me susceptible to biases. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016) and Patton (2015), the capability to detect and monitor biases allowed me to know when and how my biases influenced and affected the collection and interpretation of data. It was, therefore, important that, rather than try to eliminate my biases, I instead identified and monitored them. Furthermore, I did not try

to infer different meanings that might distort, add, or remove from the responses of the participants. It was also imperative for me to guard against my biases and other preconceived notions that I had about the subject matter by remaining objective during the interview sessions.

I posed open-ended interview questions in a semistructured interview process as part of my interview protocol (see Appendix A). Such open-ended, semistructured interview questions contributed to achieving the objectives of the study and also provided answers and explanation to the overarching research question (Leko, 2014). Furthermore, in tandem with the findings of Leko (2014) and Robinson (2014), my robust interview protocol also included incisive and open-ended follow-up questions aimed at eliciting appropriate and industry-specific responses that I might not have experienced myself. Specifically, the semistructured interview questions aimed to confirm if a relationship exists between collaboration and increased organizational efficiency and performance. All the respondents in the structured interview responded to similar pre-determined questions that elicited explanations of their views on collaborative partnerships. The respondents to the semistructured interviews stated their individual experiences and the accrued benefits (if any) of the collaborative initiative. While the questions in my interviews were the same for all the participants, the respondents, however, freely communicated additional and relevant information on the subject matter during and after my interview sessions. In such scenarios, I asked additional follow-up questions that clarified the issues that the new information revealed (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Furthermore, I controlled my reactions to the responses of the study participants during

the interview sessions. Finally, I used member checking to validate and ensure that the documented responses to the interview questions adequately reflected the messages the participants conveyed. Specifically, member checking involved the validation, through scheduled oral discussions, of the participants' responses to the interview questions (Elo et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). The activities of member checking, therefore, enabled me to confirm that I accurately captured, documented, and interpreted the responses, lived experiences, and views of the participants during the interview sessions.

The implementation of a robust interview protocol yielded a huge collection of qualitative data and notes (Patton, 2015). Such qualitative data and notes included quotations, observation notes, excerpts from documents, field notes, participant interviews, electronic communication, or a combination of these. It was, however, necessary to organize, label, secure, and keep these vital data and notes in safe and functional physical and electronic archives to which I have sole access.

As stated above, the fact that I have years of experience in collaborative activities among and between organizations made me vulnerable to preconceived biases and notions that could both taint and distort the data I gathered from interviewing the study participants. Therefore, to forestall and eliminate such unintended interference and distortion of data, I employed the dual data gathering and analysis help-techniques of reflexivity and bracketing. Specifically, reflexivity referred to my ability to self-reflect on biases and preconceptions (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). Bracketing, however, involved

the deliberate and actual process of setting personal experiences, biases, and preconceived notions about the research topic aside (Mörtl & Gelo, 2015; Yin, 2016).

The adoption of reflexivity and bracketing into the study enhanced the reliability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability of the findings of the study (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). Furthermore, my ability to self-reflect on owns' biases and preconceptions, through bracketing, reduced the likelihood of misrepresenting, making biased interpretations, and drawing false conclusions from the research data. Another critical contribution of bracketing to the study, besides my deliberate effort to set aside personal biases, was that bracketing also involved and required the setting aside of previous research knowledge and findings on the subject matter (Mörtl & Gelo, 2015). My reflective and bracketing abilities are, therefore, in addition to contributing to capturing the untainted views and experiences of the participants, also contributed to eliminating the possibilities of manipulating participants' responses to fit my views. Finally, my reflective and bracketing activities resulted in the unbiased analysis of the data gathered through the interviews (Mörtl & Gelo, 2015).

In this study, and to adequately checkmate my susceptibilities, I adopted an appropriate mix of the three bracketing approaches of Mörtl and Gelo (2015) to bracket my experiences, biases, and preconceived notions about the research topic. Specifically, Mörtl and Gelo mentioned (a) dialogue, (b) the maintenance of a bracketing journal, and (c) the inclusion of all bracketed notions and preconceived biases that emanated through the interviews in the final study. Accordingly, and while eliminating the probability of

data misrepresentation, my adopted bracketing approaches also contributed to and ensured the validity of the data collection and analysis processes.

Participants

The target population of any study is crucial to the overall purpose of the research study. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), the success of any intervention study is dependent on the ability of investigators to recruit and retain appropriate and sufficient numbers of research participants. The targeted population of this study comprised of individuals who worked at the senior management levels of corporate organizations. The selected senior business managers worked in large organizations in the oil, gas, and energy sectors of a metropolitan area in a western province of Canada. Besides, the selected participants also worked in organizations that had ongoing collaborative partnerships with any number of firms within or outside of Edmonton. Finally, I did not know the study participants in this study.

In the *Statistics Canada* journal, Abukhader (2015) defined large organizations as companies that have over 500 employees. I, therefore, worked through Statistics Canada to identify relevant large organizations to co-opt into the study. Besides the employee size, other factors and criteria necessary for identifying participants in the study included (a) the core competencies of the firms, (b) the extent of dependency on external inputs, and (c) the volume and size of the operation. Other relevant factors are (a) the turnover and financial position of the firms, and (b) the respective organizational structures of the firms.

With access to information on the sizes of organizations in Edmonton from *Statistics Canada*, I approached only organizations that met the set participants' criteria for the study. As a guide, I adopted the four phases stipulated in the process of recruiting participants for a research study. The four phases consisted of (a) generating the initial contacts, (b) consenting, (c) screening, and (d) enrollment and retention (Malagon-Maldonado, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). According to Malagon-Maldonado (2014) and Marshall and Rossman (2016), the interaction between me, as the qualitative researcher, and the participants, contributed significantly to understanding the perceived experience of the participants and to the gathering of data. Therefore, in tandem with the recommendations of Malagon-Maldonado and Marshall and Rossman I sent formal letters of introduction and invitation to the participants that met the set criteria of the study.

From the above, I approached participants in the study through e-mails or over the telephone to obtain the necessary permission to collect data and to answer the interview questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). The e-mail contained an introduction of me as the researcher, a brief overview of the study, the purpose and objectives, and the accruable benefits of the research to the sample individuals and organizations to ensure their participation and support. The e-mail also included an electronic attachment of the Participant Consent Form, which the participants reviewed and signed in their reply to the e-mail with the phrase; *I consent*. The Participant Consent Form included samples of the interview questions and an explanation of the audio recordings of the interview sessions with the Audacity audio recorder software. Finally, I

requested and obtained a signed Letter of Cooperation from the leadership of

participants' organizations before I commenced face-to-face interviews and data

collection. In addition to facilitating my interview and data collection processes, the

possession of the Letter of Cooperation was necessary for gaining access to the premises

and facilities of the organizations in which my sample population worked.

<div align="center">**Research Method and Design**</div>

I used the qualitative research method and a multiple case study design for this

doctoral study. My choice of method and design flowed from the problem statement of

the study, which sought to understand and explore a complex social phenomenon.

According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), the qualitative research method and the case

study design are best-suited to explore and examine the lived experiences of individuals.

The chosen research method and design, therefore, enabled a better understanding of the

strategies that contributed to the forging and the implementation of collaborative

profitable business partnerships. The below subsections of research method and design of

the study included definitions, descriptions, rationales, and the applicability of the choice

of research method and design for the study. Furthermore, the subsections discussed and

justified the qualitative method and the case study design as the preferred option in the

basket of existing research methods and designs.

Research Method

The three available qualitative research approaches are the quantitative,

qualitative, and mixed research methods (Ranga & Panda, 2015). According to Ranga

and Panda (2015), while distinctively different from each other in scope and design, the

three research approaches also hold varying advantages for research studies. Furthermore, while it is important for researchers to know about the three approaches, the final choice of an appropriate research method depends on the research purpose, objectives, hypotheses, and the questions the study proposes to answer (Strauss & Corbin, 2015; Wahyuni, 2012). A research method, therefore, consists of a set of specific procedures, tools, and techniques required to gather and to analyze data (Yin, 2016).

According to Thamhain (2014), the quantitative research method contains numbers, figures, mathematical and statistical equations that emanate from the collection and analysis of data. Specifically, the quantitative research approach involves the generation of numeric measures for simple comparisons, rankings, and selections aimed at examining the relationships that exist between two (or more) variables (Ranga & Panda, 2015). Finally, the quantitative research method is best-suited to test theories or hypotheses using statistical tools and methods (Johnston et al., 2014; Mertens, 2014; Thamhain, 2014).

The mixed research method, which combines the quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis, is the second research method. According to Mertens (2014), the fundamental premise of a mixed research method allows for the collection of multiple kinds of data with different strategies and methods. The mixed research method, therefore, avails researchers of the complementary strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Accordingly, the structure and design of a mixed methods study allow for the provision of insights not possible when researchers use either qualitative or quantitative research

methods (McManamny et al., 2014; Schutt, 2014).

As an alternative to the quantitative and mixed research methods, the qualitative research method is a means for understanding and exploring the meanings individuals and groups ascribe to social problems (Burr, 2015; Schutt, 2014). Furthermore, the usage of the qualitative research method flows from the need to explore a problem, study a population, or identify variables that are not easily measured and so, gain a better understanding of the problem (Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

Contrary to the features of a qualitative research method, the quantitative method is unsuitable for this study because it requires examining the relationships that exist between variables. Moreover, quantitative methods involve the testing of hypotheses through the use of statistical analyses (Kahlke, 2014). Similarly, the mixed research method is also unsuitable for this study because it combines the attributes of the quantitative and qualitative methods (Palinkas et al., 2015). Therefore, while the mixed method approach involves the testing of hypotheses, the method further needs to satisfy the requirements of a qualitative study.

For this study, and emanating from the descriptions and attributes of the three research methods, I opted to adopt the qualitative research method because it is the best-suited approach to achieving the research objectives. Specifically, the qualitative research method addresses questions about peoples' ways of organizing, relating to, and interacting with the world (Gopaldas, 2016; McManamny et al., 2014; Schutt, 2014). The qualitative method, therefore, availed me the opportunity to explore the lived experiences of the participants in the study.

Research Design

The research design plays a significant role and is necessary to connect a methodology to an appropriate set of research methods (Wahyuni, 2012). According to Wahyuni (2012), the adoption of appropriate research design allows for the proper examination of the research questions or hypotheses and the corresponding social phenomenon or problem. Specifically, the final choice of an appropriate research design is dependent on the research purpose, objectives, hypotheses, and the questions the study was to answer (Wahyuni, 2012). The applicable research design, therefore, represents the best tool for achieving the objectives of the study.

Renowned for its inductive style, the qualitative research method consists of the case study, ethnographic, narrative, and the phenomenological research designs (Strauss & Corbin, 2015; Yin, 2016). According to Strauss and Corbin (2015), while the phenomenological, ethnographic, and case study designs are used widely for conducting qualitative studies, the most appropriate design for this study was the case study design. In comparison to the other qualitative research designs, the case study approach derived its benefits from its capability to act as a tool for making data-driven comparisons between different scenarios (Yin, 2016). Furthermore, and in contrast to other research designs, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2016). Such real-life events include individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries. Finally, and according to the author, the case study research accommodates both qualitative and quantitative data, therefore, allowing

researchers to get a rich mix of data for the study.

Although according to Gopaldas (2016), the ethnographic, narrative, and phenomenological qualitative research designs possess unique attributes relevant to qualitative studies, they are, however, not as suitable for this study as the case study design. First, an ethnographic study design does not deal with strategies, but only concerned with examining, describing and interpreting the patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group, or a group of people that have interacted over time (Gopaldas, 2016). The ethnographic research design is, therefore, not suitable for this study. Ethnographic study designs require an extended length of time and considerable financial resources (Gopaldas, 2016; Yin, 2016). Secondly, the unsuitability of the narrative design arises from its limited application to business research problems. Specifically, the narrative approach consists of spoken or written texts that give an account of a series of events or actions in a chronological sequence (Yin, 2016). Finally, defined as capturing the common meanings of the lived experiences of several individuals, the phenomenological design is unsuitable for various reasons that include its requirement for large sample sizes (McManamny et al., 2014; Schutt, 2014). Furthermore, while the phenomenological design focuses on understanding the perceptions and perspectives of the participants about a social phenomenon, this study, on the other hand, required the exploration of the participants' lived experiences.

The use of the semistructured interview and the open-ended face-to-face questioning methods, coupled with follow-up questions, enabled the attainment of data saturation in this study. The adopted case study design approach was best-suited to

explore the lived experiences of participants in the study. The approach yielded in-depth

responses about the participants' experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and

knowledge of the subject matter (Patton, 2015). Specifically, the attainment of data

saturation in this research study occurred when the further collection of evidence

provided little or no additional information that would significantly affect the themes,

insights, or perspectives of the study (Gentles & Vilches, 2017). Furthermore, the

prolonged engagement, in conjunction with methodological triangulation ensured that I

attained data saturation in this study.

The activities and processes involved in the attainment of data saturation also

conferred credibility on this study. Specifically, according to Yin (2016), the credibility

of a research analysis is dependent on ensuring that the adequate number of data is

available. Furthermore, Yin (2016) described data saturation as involving the continuous

task of identifying and co-opting new and additional sample population to participate in a

study until the data set is complete. Furthermore, the activities and processes of member

checking contributed to the dependability and credibility criteria of the study. According

to Marshall and Rossman (2016), Patton (2015), and Strauss and Corbin (2015), member

checking involves the validation of responses to the interview questions, through

scheduled oral discussions with the study participants. The member checking I carried

out was, therefore, aimed at confirming that I accurately captured, documented, and

interpreted the responses, lived experiences, and views of the participants during the

interview sessions. As earlier stated, member checking is, best done through scheduled

oral discussions with the participants (Elo et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). For

member checking, I followed the process of (a) conducting the initial interview (b) interpreting the responses of the participants, and (c) validating my interpretation of the collected data through scheduled oral discussions with the participants.

Population and Sampling

The target population of any study is crucial to the overall purpose of the research work. The success of any study is dependent on the ability of investigators to recruit and retain appropriate and sufficient numbers of research participants (Malagon-Maldonado, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I, therefore, limited the targeted population for this purposive qualitative research study to a total of 12 individuals who worked at the senior management levels of three corporate organizations in the oil, gas, and energy sector of a metropolitan area in a western province of Canada. Specifically, I selected four senior business managers from each of the organizations. Besides, the senior business managers I selected also worked in organizations that have ongoing collaborative partnerships with varying numbers of firms within and outside of Edmonton. Again, it is pertinent to state that the use of purposeful sampling in this qualitative study was a conscious option that enabled me to select participants who are available, who have experienced the phenomenon, and who have relevant information that pertains to the phenomenon under study. An important quality of purposeful sampling participants is that they are willing to share their unique experiences as relates to the subject matter (Gentles & Vilches, 2017; Palinkas et al., 2015). Furthermore, the selection of experienced participants, in the subject matter area, ensured that such participants understand, and, therefore, contributed valuable perspectives to the study (Robinson, 2014; Yin, 2016).

From the above, the justification for selecting participants who worked at the senior management levels of organizations in the oil, gas, and energy sector for this case study analysis was to obtain an in-depth interview with each of the participants. Therefore, in tandem with the position of Gentles & Vilches (2017), I explored the lived experiences of the participants until I reached data saturation point when additional and new themes do not emerge. However, while I had stated that I would interview nine senior business managers in this study, I eventually interviewed a total of 12 to achieve data saturation. Specifically, I realized that I had not achieved data saturation when I concluded my interviews of the nine participants as new and additional information that significantly affected the themes, insights, and perspectives of the study emerged. As a result, I opted to recruit and interview one additional participant from each of the organizations in which the original study participants worked. Finally, although it appeared that I had achieved data saturation after interviewing the 11th participant, I, however, continued and interviewed the 12th participant for confirmation that I had truly achieved data saturation.

The eventual selection and interview of a total of 12 participants from the oil, gas, and energy sector who have experienced the research phenomena enhanced the reliability and validity premises of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Specifically, participants, who worked in organizations with ongoing collaborative partnerships shared their lived collaboration experiences and provided details of the factors that make collaboration a success or a failure (Yin, 2016). Finally, the experiences of the sample population of 12 business owners or leaders provided in-depth details of their financial

and operational results before and after the implementation of their respective

collaborative partnerships.

Criteria for the Selection of Participants

Although I planned to select and interview a total of nine individuals who worked

at the senior management levels of three corporate organizations for this multiple case

study research work, I however eventually selected and interviewed a total of 12 senior

business managers. According to Antoniadou (2017), the chosen sample population must

consist of individuals who possess a demonstrable knowledge of the phenomenon under

study. Therefore, while my target was to select three senior business managers from three

different organizations, I eventually selected and interviewed four senior business

managers from each of the three organizations. The senior business managers that made

up the sample population worked in large-sized organizations in the oil, gas, and energy

sector of a metropolitan area in a western province of Canada. The focus on large-sized

organizations evolved from the fact that companies of these sizes are more involved in

research and development activities. Furthermore, and compared to the small-scale

organizations, large-sized companies have sufficient amount of financial, technical and

human resources necessary to support collaborative partnerships (Islam et al., 2015;

Lioukas et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2014). Finally, large-sized organizations possess

internal knowledge base, unique competencies, and are, therefore, the natural attraction to

firms of similar sizes willing to collaborate and exchange idiosyncratic assets (Ralston et

al., 2017). Contrarily, the penchant for short-term profits and benefits, rather than long-

term cooperation and investments, impedes the suitability and the capability of small and

medium scale organizations to engage in collaborative activities. Again, such distinctive differences in the focus and capabilities of the small, medium, and large-sized organizations significantly relate to funding, human resource, and management capabilities (Ralston et al., 2017).

The principal factor that justified the selection and inclusion of participants in this study was the existence of ongoing collaborative partnerships between the organizations in which the participants worked and other organizations within and outside of Edmonton (Canada). Other critical factors and criteria I considered in identifying and selecting participants in the study are (a) the core competencies of firms, (b) the extent of dependency on external materials and technical inputs, and (c) the volume and size of operations. Also relevant in the participants' selection criteria are (a) the lived experiences of the participants, (b) the possession of relevant information that pertains to the phenomenon under study, and (c) the turnover and financial status of the firms. The justification for selecting a total of 12 participants for my case study analysis was so to obtain an in-depth interview with each of the participants and, therefore, attain data saturation point.

It is pertinent to reiterate that all 12 participants I eventually selected for this study worked in organizations that have ongoing collaborative partnership arrangements with a varying number of firms within or outside of Edmonton. Specifically, the collaboration experiences of the participants enabled the documentation of the impact of collaborative partnerships on their respective operations and organizations. Furthermore, the selection of the 12 participants enhanced the reliability and the validity of the study

through the obtaining of responses from senior business managers who have experienced the research phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

My participants' identification and selection process adopted the four phases of recruiting participants for a research study. According to Malagon-Maldonado (2014) and Marshall and Rossman (2016), the four phases of recruiting participants for a research study include (a) generating initial contacts, (b) consenting, (c) screening, and (d) enrollment and retention. Therefore, and in tandem with the recommendations of Malagon-Maldonado and Marshall and Rossman, I sent formal letters of introduction to the chosen organizations. While introducing me as the researcher, the letter also contained a brief overview of the study and stated the purpose of the study. Furthermore, I communicated the accruable benefits of the study to the sample participants and organizations to ensure their participation. Secondly, and to obtain the consent of the participants, I e-mailed an electronic version of the Participant Consent Form to the participants for review. The participants, after that, signed by replying to the e-mail with the phrase; *"I consent"* when they agreed to participate in the study. While the Participant Consent Form included samples of the interview questions, it also contained an explanation of the audio recordings of the interview sessions where I used the Audacity audio recorder software. Finally, the screening, enrollment, and retention of participants required that prospective participants met and fulfilled the set guidelines and conditions necessary for participating in the study. Moreover, the participants had to sign the Participant Consent Form before they were enrolled and before I commenced the interviews.

Criteria for the Interview Setting

In tandem with Davis et al. (2017), I engaged and interviewed the purposive sample participants of this study in conducive and comfortable private rooms within the organization in which they worked. According to Davis et al., interviews and data collection within the participants' organizations places them in their comfort zones, makes them readily available, and more comfortable to respond to the interview questions. The rooms I used for the interviews had comfortable chairs and a table, writing materials, good ventilation, and were well lit. Additionally, I recommended the provision of bottled water in the rooms so that participants did not have to gout out for water breaks during the interview sessions. The usage of private rooms that are conducive and within the participants' organizations also facilitated the use of the Audacity audio recording tool. Furthermore, the conduction of face-to-face interviews and data collection within the participants' organization allowed for quicker access to both electronic and paper documents that the participants shared with me. Finally, while conducting the interviews and data collection within the participants' organization was preferable, I, however, encouraged the use of private rooms away from the participants' desks. Specifically, my use of private rooms for the interviews eliminated the usual workplace distractions that derail or negatively impact the interview and data collection processes.

Sampling Method and Data Saturation

As a method of the qualitative research study, the adopted purposive sampling method allowed for the choosing of participants by their suitability and the meeting of delineated research objectives (Suen, Huang, & Lee, 2014). Similarly, the purposive

sampling method enabled access to relevant senior business managers, who have the requisite knowledge, the experience of the subject matter, and who willingly shared their lived experiences. Additionally, according to Suen, Huang, and Lee, the adoption and the use of the purposeful sampling method allowed me to reach data saturation point.

As stated above, the sample population of the study eventually comprised of a total of 12 (up from nine) individuals who worked at the senior management levels of three large-sized organizations in the oil, gas, and energy sector of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Specifically, I selected four senior business managers from each of the three organizations. Besides, the sample participants also worked in organizations that have ongoing collaborative partnership arrangements with a varying number of firms within or outside of Edmonton. Finally, the ability of the participants to share lived experiences contributed immensely to understanding the implementation strategies required to forge collaborative profitable business partnerships.

The attainment of data saturation in a research study occurs when the further collection of evidence provides little or no additional information that significantly affects the themes, insights, and perspectives of the study (Gentles & Vilches, 2017). In other words, the point at which the results of the most recent interviews are consistent with the interview data earlier and already collected. At the stage of data saturation, it is reasonable and logical to believe that further interviewing produces no additional and different data sets. Accordingly, and as earlier stated, I used member checking to ensure that I attained data saturation. I also pursued data saturation through the continuous task of identifying and co-opting new and additional sample population to participate in the

study until the data set is complete. Therefore, whereas I had earlier selected a total of nine participants for the face-to-face interviews, I eventually conducted interviews with 12 participants. Specifically, I interviewed four participants, as against three participants, in each of the three organizations in which the participants worked. The attainment of data saturation meant that additional interviews and collection of data yielded no new information that significantly affected the themes, insights, or perspectives of the study (Gentles & Vilches, 2017; Yin, 2016).

Ethical Research

Research ethics relate to the day-to-day ethical issues that come with carrying out research works and are synonymous with the assessment and management of the risks that participants in a study can encounter (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). According to Wallace and Sheldon (2015), the possible risk events in research include physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal harms. Participants in a study are; therefore, open to the risks of a devaluation of personal worth, the damage to social networks or relationships, medical side effects, and anxiety as a result of the interview.

Before the commencement of the interview sessions, I made a formal request for a Letter of Cooperation to the organizations in which the selected participants worked. Specifically, the Authorization Official of the Letter of Cooperation granted me access to the selected participants, meeting rooms, and relevant documents needed during data collection. Secondly, I clarified that participation in the study was voluntary. The senior business managers that agreed to participate in the study signed the Participant Consent Form, which contained information that notified the participants that compensation and

incentives are not available for participating in the study. However, I stated that I would

e-mail the results of the study to the participants so that they have access to the study

findings. Finally, I assured the participants of the confidentiality of any, and all

information, they give to me during the interview sessions.

I also informed the participants that they could withdraw from participating in the

study at any time before the publication of the conclusion without any form of penalty.

Specifically, it is not mandatory for participants to give reasons, but only need to signify

their intention and desire to withdraw from their earlier agreement to participate in the

study. Participants can communicate their intention and desire to withdraw from the

study by e-mail, text message, or phone call to me and Walden University via the IRB.

From the above, the data collection phase of the study commenced after the

issuance of a Letter of Cooperation by the organizations in which the selected

participants worked. Furthermore, the study did not commence until I obtained the

necessary Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval number (02-05-18-0481119) from

Walden University. Finally, data collection activities only commenced after the

presentation and review of my research proposal by the university's Research Committee

or the IRB (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). With the IRB approval, I ensured that plans are in

place for the protection of participants in the study from all possible risk events. It is also

pertinent to reiterate that I adopted the high ethical standards of the Belmont Report of

1979 for this research. Accordingly, I ensured that I abided by the three fundamental

principles of the Belmont Report, which were (a) the principles of respect for persons, (b)

beneficence, and (c) justice. Therefore, as stated above, I treated the participants in the

study with the utmost courtesy and respect throughout the data collection process. While

I did not deceive nor lie to the participants, I also did not expose the participants to any

form of risk (physical, psychological, or emotional). Finally, I treated the participants

fairly and equally without considerations for age, gender, and job title.

The interview phase was another significant milestone in the study. Specifically,

the interview sessions of qualitative research provide an opportunity and a platform for

the researchers to gather data that contribute to understanding the participants' lived

experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Gopaldas, 2016). According to Castillo-Montoya

(2016) and Gopaldas (2016), the activities that foster the quality of interviews include the

access to and the selection of participants, the building of trust, the location and length of

the interview sessions, and the order and clarity of questions. It is also advisable to

approach participants in the study through e-mails or over the telephone to obtain the

necessary permission for data collection and to answer the interview questions (Marshall

& Rossman, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

The e-mail to the participants introduced me as the researcher, contained a brief

overview of the study, stated the purpose and objectives, and communicated the

accruable benefits to ensure their participation and support. The e-mail also included an

electronic attachment of the Participant Consent Form, which the participant reviewed,

and signed when replying to the e-mail with the phrase; *I consent*. The Participant

Consent Form included samples of the interview questions and an explanation of the

audio recordings of the interview sessions using the Audacity audio recorder software.

After concluding the interviews, all the data I collected followed strict research data management (RDM) protocols. According to Cox and Pinfield (2014), RDM consists of different activities and processes associated with the data lifecycle. Specifically, RDM protocols involve the design, the creation, the storage, the security, the preservation, the retrieval, the sharing, and the reuse of data (Cox & Pinfield, 2014). Cox & Pinfield (2014) identified other protocols of an RDM as including considerations for the technical capabilities, and the ethical, legal, and governance frameworks.

Finally, I ensured that the collection and storage of all data for the study aligned with the requirements of Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Therefore, and in strict compliance with the requirements of the IRB, I ensured that all the physical and electronic files that contained data that relate to the study were under locks, keys, and secured passwords. Specifically, as the researcher, I have sole access to these records. I ensured that all electronic data on external hard drives or flash drives had password protection. Furthermore, I stored all of the written data transcripts and findings in a password-protected safe that protected the rights and identities of the participants. Specifically, in tandem with the findings of Beskow, Check, and Ammarell (2014), I did not reveal the actual names of the participants nor the organizations in which they worked after completing and publishing the study. Rather, I referred to the participants using pseudonyms of Participant (P) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. Similarly, I referred to the organizations in which the participants worked as Organization A, B, and C. Finally, I plan to delete all the collected data on external hard drives, flash drives, and transcripts after 5 years (Antoniadou, 2017; Cox & Pinfield, 2014).

Data Collection Instruments

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study research was to explore the strategies senior business managers used for forging collaborative profitable business partnerships. It was, therefore, necessary to collect data that were relevant to providing answers to the research question. As the researcher and the primary data collection instrument of this qualitative study, I opted for a case study design because the desire was to understand complex social phenomena within a real-life context. My role as the primary data collection instrument flowed from one of the essential characteristics of a qualitative research study that stated that the researcher is the primary instrument for data gathering and analysis. Specifically, and in tandem with the findings of Bradbury (2015) and Dingwall and McDonnell (2015), I was adaptable and responsive to the task of data gathering, and, therefore, was best suited for the role of the primary data collection instrument. Furthermore, I understood verbal and nonverbal communication, and was also capable of processing and clarifying information for accuracy. Finally, as the researcher and the primary data collection instrument, I was capable of retaining the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.

Based on my stated capabilities as the researcher, and with an acknowledgment and understanding of the significant role of the researcher, I explored and exploited two out of the four Wahyuni's (2012) data collection methods. Specifically, Wahyuni established that the benefits of the case study research method flowed from the distinct primary qualitative data collection methods. According to Wahyuni, the data collection methods were (a) direct participation, (b) interviewing, (c) document analysis, and (d)

participant observation. However, of these four methods, I utilized only the (a)

interviewing, and (b) document analysis methods of data collection. Furthermore,

according to Patton (2015), the semistructured interview method was best-suited to

explore the lived experiences of participants and availed me the opportunity to ask

follow-up questions that yielded in-depth responses about the participants' experiences,

perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge about the subject matter. On the other

hand, the document analysis method allowed me to conduct a review of the selected

companies' documents for data gathering purposes (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Specifically, for document analysis, I reviewed the pre and post-collaborative operational

performance and profitability of the organizations in which the participants worked. I

also reviewed the schedule of invites and frequency of joint operational and planning

meetings. The review of documents, therefore, revealed the frequency of information

sharing and the degree of coordination and integration of strategic and operational plans

between the network partners. Essentially, the combined usage of the interviewing and

document analysis methods confirmed the existence of a significant relationship between

collaborative partnerships and increased organizational performance.

As part of my interview protocol (see Appendix A), I adopted the semistructured

approach to questioning. According to Patton (2015), the use of the open-ended interview

questions remains the best-suited to explore the lived experiences of the study's

participants. Therefore, the semistructured approach to questioning and the open-ended

interview questions facilitated and yielded detailed responses about the participants'

experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge of collaborative partnerships.

Besides, the adoption of the open-ended interview questions also afforded me the flexibility and opportunity to give clarity to my questions and to ask follow-up questions from the respondents. In tandem with the findings of Strauss and Corbin (2015), opting for the semistructured interview method also enabled me to maintain a level of consistency and uniformity over the subject matter during interview sessions. In strict adherence to the interview protocol, the participants in the semistructured interview responded to similar and pre-determined questions that elicited explanations of their views on collaborative partnerships. The respondents also shared individual experiences and the accrued benefits of ongoing collaborative initiatives. Finally, the participants were free to communicate additional and relevant information on the subject matter during, and after my interview sessions. In such scenarios, I asked other questions to clarify the issues that the new information revealed (Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

As previously stated, and as my second data collection instrument, the document analysis method availed me the opportunity of requesting and reviewing relevant documents from the organizations in which the participants in the study worked. Specifically, the review of documents connotes a historical perspective of the context of the subject matter from the points of view and practices of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I, therefore, reviewed documents that included (a) existing and ongoing collaborative agreements, (b) minutes of meetings, and (c) incidents and event logs. I also reviewed documents that related to (a) announcements and bulletins, and (b) formal policy statements. The opportunity to review these relevant company documents enabled me to confirm the degree and extent of information sharing between and among the

network partners. Additionally, while showing the existence and frequency of joint planning sessions, document analysis also revealed the fusion of individual organizations' plans towards the achievement of aggregate network objectives.

In this study, I used methodological triangulation, reflexivity, bracketing, and member checking to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings of this multiple case study. According to Fan and Sun (2014), the credibility and validity of a study are fundamental and necessary to support the overall findings. Specifically, methodological triangulation refers to the use of, and the contribution of, multiple data sources to compare, cross-check, and to validate the data collected by a researcher (Mok & Clarke, 2015; Sarma, 2015). Firstly, methodological triangulation provided me with a more comprehensive picture of the subject matter in comparison to that of the data. Secondly, methodological triangulation ensured the credibility of the research analysis by making comparisons enabled by the availability and exploitation of multiple data sources (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Sarma, 2015). Thirdly, the comparison enabled by methodological triangulation supported and enhanced the reliability, validity, credibility, and confirmability of the qualitative research findings (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2015; Mok & Clarke, 2015; Sarma, 2015).

The use of member checking contributed to and enhanced the credibility and validity of the study. Specifically and as earlier described, member checking involved the validation of the participants' responses to the face-to-face interview questions, through scheduled oral discussions. Such discussions were aimed to confirm that I accurately captured, documented, and interpreted the responses, lived experiences, and views of the

participants during the interview sessions (Elo et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Member checking, therefore, contributed significantly to reducing the likelihood of my bias and the misrepresentation of the participants' responses during the interpretation and analysis of data. I also pursued data saturation through the continuous task of identifying and co-opting new and additional sample population to participate in the study until the data set is complete. The attainment of data saturation meant that additional interviews and collection of data did not yield new information that significantly affects the themes, insights, and perspectives of the study (Gentles & Vilches, 2017; Yin, 2016). Data saturation was, therefore, the point at which the results of the most recent interviews were consistent with the interview data already collected, and when it was reasonable and logical to believe that further interviewing was unlikely to produce different data. Finally, while the use of reflexivity and bracketing guarded against any preconceived biases, member checking, on the other hand, ensured an accurate representation of the documented views of the participants during the interview sessions. Therefore, for member checking, I followed the process of (a) conducting the initial interview, (b) interpreting the responses of the participants, and (c) validating my interpretation of the collected data. These processes were carried out with the participants through scheduled face-to-face oral or phone discussions (Elo et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The interview protocol of this study began with an invitation to participate letter to the sample population. After the first and initial contact of obtaining permission to collect data from the participants, and after I received the participants' consent forms, I

made a second call in which I confirmed the interview date, the time, and the location of the scheduled interviews. Before commencing the interviews, I made a formal request for a Letter of Cooperation to the organizations in which the selected participants worked. Specifically, the Authorization Official of the Letter of Cooperation granted me access to the selected participants, meeting rooms, and relevant documents needed during data collection. Finally, I issued a third and final reminder of the interview date, time, and location the day before the scheduled interview. On the scheduled day, and before the commencement of the interview, I, once again, clarified that participation was voluntary and that the participants could withdraw anytime without any form of penalty. I also gave each participant a copy of the electronically signed consent form for a final review. The adoption of a robust interview protocol detailed in Appendix A served as a checklist during the interviews. The robust interview protocols also kept me focused on asking the right and relevant questions about the subject matter (Patton, 2015; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Furthermore, the interview protocol also ensured that I asked a uniform line of questioning of each of the participants. To make the participants comfortable and to build rapport, I began the interview sessions by discussing general issues before I delved into the interview proper (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015). I used the Audacity recording tool on my Mac Book for my face-to-face interviews with the participants. Besides, the recording application on my iPhone 6 served as a backup to my laptop during the interview sessions. While I set appropriate interview session time limits of between 45 to 60 minutes, I, however, continued with interviewing the participants that were willing to go beyond the set time limits.

Data Collection Technique

The collection of qualitative data in this study followed lengthy interview sessions and document analysis that resulted in substantial and combined pieces of information contained in transcripts, field notes, electronic communication, and entries from social media. According to Castillo-Montoya (2016) and Patton (2015), the transcripts generated from the qualitative data collection process require prompt and proactive organization, codification, and analysis of the data. My data collection technique, therefore, involved keeping a research log that consisted of a comprehensive list of sources I planned to search and the ones I already searched. Besides, I stated the purpose of each of my searches and kept a summary of significant findings.

Adjudged suitable as a data collection method for qualitative research and case study design, Gopaldas (2016) and Wahyuni (2012), described interviews as either structured or unstructured verbal communication between the researcher and the sample population. Accordingly, the advantages I derived from my interviews included increased depth of responses, ability to clarify questions and answers, the possibility of follow-up questions, the increased proportion of responses, and the greater flexibility on my part as the researcher (Gopaldas, 2016; Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014; Wahyuni, 2012). In tandem with Marshall and Rossman (2016), the flexibility factor allowed me to alter the order of questioning (as necessary) during the interviews. Other advantages derived from my interviews were (a) collection of data in natural settings, (b) facilitation of the discovery of nuances in culture, and (c) the facilitation of analysis, validity checks, and triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016)

My choice of qualitative research, with case study design, also resulted in benefits that included the ability and opportunity to access and review secondary data in relevant company documents as part of the data collection technique (Gopaldas, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Wahyuni, 2012). The benefits of access to secondary data through document analysis included (a) the ability to obtain more comprehensive and relevant information, and (b) access to documented events, crises, and conflicts (Gopaldas, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Wahyuni, 2012). Other benefits, which tallied with the work of Marshall and Rossman (2016), included (a) easy and efficient administration and management, (b) the consistency and the contribution of documented data to the robustness of the research findings. Finally, according to Marshall and Rossman (2016), the document review process was unobtrusive and nonreactive. The process seamlessly aligned with the natural operational settings of the organizations in which the participants worked.

Contrarily, there exist disadvantages in qualitative data collection instrument of interviews. Such disadvantages include (a) scheduling difficulties, (b) possibilities of biases through suggestive questions, (c) extensive and difficult to manage and analyze data, and (d) the relatively high cost of implementation (Patton, 2015; Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014; Wahyuni, 2012). Another disadvantage of interviews, according to Marshall and Rossman (2016), is that some study participants are reluctant to participate in audio-recorded interviews. Other disadvantages of interviews are (a) dependence on the cooperation of the participants, (b) dependence on the researchers' interpersonal skills, and (c) difficult to replicate (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Similarly, there exist disadvantages in the use of document analysis. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), the disadvantages of document analysis include the risk of inferred, and possibly wrong, interpretation of information contained in documents obtained by the researcher. Furthermore, the low, or a lack of required interpersonal skills might constitute an impediment to the researcher's ability to gain access to relevant documents. Finally, the researcher is susceptible to the risk of fixating on details contained in documents and might, therefore, draw the wrong conclusions from the information in the documents (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

In continuation of the data collection process, I (a) explained the process and objectives of document analysis to the participants, and (b) reiterated to the participants that all information and data collected from the documents were confidential. Upholding the confidentiality clause ensured the nondisclosure of the identity of the participants, the organizations in which they worked, and the proper archiving of all the data I collected. According to Roulston and Shelton (2015), in addition to securing the collected data, proper archiving of data enabled easy retrieval and significantly contributed to the ease of data analysis.

Additional activities for my data collection included the usage of a pen and a reflective journal to record the day, time, and location of the interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). As earlier defined, reflexivity referred to my ability to self-reflect on biases and preconceptions (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). In tandem with Roulston and Shelton (2015), my ability to self-reflect on owns' biases and preconceptions reduced the likelihood of misrepresenting, making biased interpretations, and drawing false

conclusions from the research data. Furthermore, I used bracketing to guard against

tainting the data with personal experiences, biases, and preconceived notions about the

research topic. Bracketing should be in the original research plan from the beginning of

the project (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Mörtl & Gelo, 2015; Roulston & Shelton, 2015).

My reflective and bracketing abilities, therefore, contributed to eliminating the

possibilities of manipulating participants' responses to fit my personal views. Finally, my

reflective and bracketing activities resulted in the unbiased analysis of the data gathered

through the interviews, in line with the postulations of Chan et al. (2013), Mörtl and Gelo

(2015), and Roulston and Shelton (2015).

As described in the previous section, I used member checking, through scheduled

face-to-face oral discussions with the participants, to validate my interpretation of the

collected data. In instances when face-to-face oral discussions were difficult or

impossible to schedule, I reverted to conducting member checking over the phone with

participants in the study. According to Harvey (2015), the sharing of data with the study

participants enabled the participants to identify and point out inaccuracies in the

interpretation of the data. Participants were, therefore able to confirm that their views and

lived experiences were accurately captured and reflected. Essentially, for member

checking, I followed the process of (a) conducting the initial interview (b) interpreting the

responses of the participants, and (c) validating my interpretation with the participants

through scheduled oral discussions with the study participants. The activities of member

checking exercise should enhanced the credibility and validity of research studies

(Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2015).Consequently, I

conducted my member checking activities in this study with the intent of significantly

reducing the likelihood of my bias and the misrepresentation of the participants'

responses during the interpretation and analysis of data.

Data Organization Technique

I carried out the organization and management of the raw text data gathered

through the process of face-to-face interviews and document analysis before I proceeded

to the data analysis phase of the study. The organization and management of the

qualitative research data must involve the delineation of categories of data, ascertaining

the place of raw and refined data, and taking steps to account for every recorded content

(Gopaldas, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Wahyuni, 2012). The data management

exercise in this study consequently involved activities that included the categorization of

data and the labeling of tapes and transcripts that ensured the clear identification of data

sources. Such categorization and labeling of data enabled the easy retrieval of

information from the pile of documents collected for review purposes and from the

transcribed responses of the participants.

I also utilized the NVivo Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

(CAQDAS) tool to code and analyzed the data I gathered from the interview sessions

following the instructions from Marshall and Rossman (2016), Patton (2015), and Strauss

and Corbin (2015). Furthermore, the collection and storage of all the data I gathered

through this study aligned with the requirements of Walden University's Institutional

Review Board. Finally, I ensured closed and restricted access to all the physical and

electronic files that contained data that relate to the study. As the researcher, I had sole

access to these records. All external hard drives and flash drives that pertained to the

study, and that contained electronic data, had password protection. The data on these

devices would cease to exist after 5 years when I will delete them. Besides, I stored all of

the written data transcripts and findings in a password-protected safe that ensured that I

protected the rights and identity of the participants. Such transcripts would also cease to

exist after 5 years as Antoniadou (2017) and Cox and Pinfield (2014) recommended in

their studies.

The data organization technique of this study respected and prioritized the

confidentiality assurance given to all participants. Therefore, I provided and used a

locked filing cabinet, with password protection for the paper and electronic copies of all

the data I collected. I will maintain this password-protected filling cabinet for a minimum

period of 5 years after which I will appropriately destroy all the records. According to

Bakari (2014), data organization and management involves other necessary and important

activities that precede the data analysis phase of the study. Therefore, I (a) cross-checked

data for accuracy, (b) carried out a review of the journal that contained my reflective and

bracketed preconceived notions and biases, (c) entered data into the qualitative data

analysis software, and (d) reviewed notes for emerging insights and themes.

According to Gopaldas (2016) and Wahyuni (2012), the task of data organization

and management revolve around three activities that deal with data storage, the

transcribing of audio sources, and the cleaning of data. Wahyuni established that the

collection of data from multiple sources, as with this study, requires a functional archive

that would enable the easy retrieval of the collected data. Therefore, after assuring the

participants of the confidentiality of their identity and responses, I stored the paper and

flash drive copies of all collected data in a locked filing cabinet, to which I had sole

access, for a minimum period of 5 years. Furthermore, and in tandem with the 5 years

lock-up period condition, I ensured that the electronic versions of the data on my

computer and mobile phone had password protection. The act of securing all versions and

copies of the collected and transcribed data aligned with the requirements of Walden

University's Institutional Review Board, which stipulates respect for the privacy and

rights of all participants in the study. In tandem with Antoniadou (2017) and Cox and

Pinfield (2014), I would appropriately destroy all the collected data after the confidential

storage period of 5 years elapse.

Data Analysis

I opted for the qualitative research method and a case study design for this study.

Qualitative research studies produce large amounts of data in nonstandard formats and

are, therefore, problematic and not readily amenable to mechanical manipulation,

analysis, and data reduction (Gopaldas, 2016; Sarma, 2015). Another feature of the

qualitative research method is that qualitative data analysis mostly involves converting

texts into data (Bakari, 2014; Gopaldas, 2016). To Bakari (2014), the process of

qualitative data analysis begins with the preparation and the organization of the text data

for analysis. Besides, the exhaustive data analysis process of a qualitative study give

more clarity to readers about how the researcher handled and treated the data gathered

from the interviews (Sarma, 2015).

The data analysis phase of a qualitative study is achievable through the

implementation of a five-stage process that includes data compilation, disassembly, reassembly, interpretation, and conclusion (Cox & McLeod, 2014; Yin, 2016). Furthermore, according to Cox and McLeod (2014) and Yin (2016), there are four triangulation types made up of data source triangulation, investigator triangulation, methodological triangulation, and theoretical triangulation. Therefore, in conjunction with the five-stage process, I adopted methodological triangulation for my data analysis. With a multiple case study design, the methodological triangulation method was the most appropriate as I examined data from different respondents, but collected through the same method and by asking the same questions.

The rigorous data analysis process also involved member checking, which enhanced the transparency and the subsequent dependability of the study (Bakari, 2014; Sarma, 2015). While describing member checking as involving the validation of interpreted data from the participants in a study, Marshall, and Rossman (2016), however, described triangulation as activities aimed at providing the researcher with a more comprehensive picture of the subject matter in comparison to that of the data. Specifically methodological triangulation, enabled by the different participants, aided in comparing, cross-checking, and validating the response data. Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014) used the method in their study. Marshall and Rossman (2016) supported the use of the method to confirm the value of composite data.

From the above, data analysis, therefore, involves the working, the organizing, the breaking down, the synthesizing, the searching for patterns, the discovering of valuable information, and the conclusion the researcher reports on from a set of data (Sarma,

2015). Specifically, qualitative data analysis involves the systematic examination of a set of data to determine its parts, the relationship among the parts, and the overall relationship to the subject matter that initiated the collection of data. While recommending the need for an overlap to exist between the processes of data collection and data analysis, Sarma (2015) established that such overlaps allow for flexibilities in the data collection procedures such that researchers remain open to emerging ideas and patterns.

Sequential Process for Data Analysis

The task of data analysis commenced after the interview and data organization stages of the study. According to Houghton et al. (2015) and Yin (2016), the logical sequence for data analysis, the steps that I adopted, followed the order of (a) planning, (b) interviewing, (c) transcribing, and (d) analysis. After these four stages, I proceeded with the activity of member checking, aimed at validating my interpretation of the collected data, through scheduled oral discussions with the study participants. In tandem with the works of Elo et al. (2014) and Marshall and Rossman (2016), validation, by member checking, was done through scheduled oral face-to-face discussions with the participants. Specifically, member checking helped validate and ensured that the documented responses to the interview questions adequately reflected the messages the participants intended to convey (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

The process of data analysis continued after the confirmation of the accuracy of data by the participants. Therefore, I uploaded the audio recordings into the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) tool, NVivo for Windows.

According to Long, Doerer, and Stewart (2015), NVivo possesses the capability and capacity to facilitate the identification of keywords and themes in the collected data. I listened to and transcribed the audio recordings using the NVivo transcribing tool. The NVivo transcribing tool enabled a replay of the recordings in slower motion, therefore, allowing me to type, and keep a record of participants' responses word-for-word in line with Marshall and Rossman (2016), Patton (2015), and Strauss and Corbin's (2015) recommendations. I also separated the face-to-face semistructured interview data from the document analysis data. Furthermore, using the NVivo software to organize the data, I carried out a thematic analysis of emerging themes. According to Antoniadou (2017), thematic analysis enables the identification of emerging patterns and themes from qualitative data. I used the NVivo software to code and analyzed the interview data to gain accurate insight into the perceived experiences of senior business managers who worked for, and in, organizations that have ongoing collaborative partnerships. Finally, in tandem with Wahyuni (2012), I used transcript cleaning to remove all information that might reveal the identity of the study participants. I replaced the removed telltale information about the study participants with unique codes that ensured that their identities remained confidential.

To enhance the ease of data analysis, I created unique pseudonyms for the respective interview data of each of the participants (Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 3). According to Carter and Sholler (2016), interview data requires coding before the analysis phase. Carter and Sholler described coding as labels used for assigning meanings to the raw descriptive data collected during the face-to-face

semistructured interviews. To further enhance my data analysis, and in tandem with the

position of Antoniadou (2017), I used the thematic analysis method to identify and

analyze emerging patterns from the collected data. Specifically, while enabling the

examination of the interview data, the use of thematic analysis also allowed for the

comparison and documentation of common and similar lived experiences of the study

participants (Antoniadou, 2017).

In this study, I used the NVivo software program to assist in identifying and to

note the frequency of themes from the interview data. According to Cope (2014) and

Antoniadou (2017), the NVivo software supported the interpretation and coding of the

texts, the performance of keyword searches, and the organization of the texts. Therefore,

data analysis, using the NVivo software provided the best opportunity to gain an accurate

account of the perception and lived experiences of business managers who worked for,

and in, organizations that have ongoing collaborative partnerships.

From the interview data, I used Microsoft Word to create and to manage different

categories of the emerging themes. Through the use of coding by nodes, I also carried out

a preexploration of frequently used words during the interviews (Table 2). Such

preexploration generated a word-cloud of keywords that emerged during the interviews

(Figure 1). The effective theming and coding process included (a) organizing the data set;

(b) becoming acquainted with the data; (c) classifying, coding, and interpreting the data;

and (d) presenting and writing the report (Antoniadou, 2017). Finally, I used the open,

axial, and selective coding methods in my data analysis. According to Carter and Sholler

(2016), open coding occupies the lowest realm in the coding hierarchy and involves

exploring and understanding the raw data collected during the interview sessions. The open coding stage of data analysis involved analyzing the transcripts of the interview and the transcription of the participants' responses. The transcribed responses of the participants, with the use of open coding, enabled me to explore the meaning of the collected data. On the other hand, as a higher level coding method, axial coding allowed me to identify and make connections between codes (Carter & Sholler, 2016). The axial code method, therefore, sieved and narrowed the broad codes of the open code method. Finally, Carter and Sholler (2016) posited that the selective coding method leads to the identification of the core themes of the collected data by combining related codes into single codes such that broad categories of data emerge. The selective coding methods, therefore, enabled me to make logical connections and to identify relationships that existed among and between the broad categories of data.

In tandem with Yin (2016), I concluded the data analysis phase of this study with efforts aimed at linking the identified and developed themes to the conceptual framework and the literature of the study. Therefore, for the conceptual framework, I established the relationship that existed between the emerging themes and the dual framework of the RV and the RBV. On the other hand, for the literature review, I showed the relationship between the emerging themes from the data and the themes in the literature that included globalization, efficiency, profitability, time to market, and competition. Finally, I compared my findings in this study to findings in recently published studies of Arthur (2017) and Dey (2016). Such comparison enabled the verification of the findings of this study.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity tests of a research study are critical to the overall

quality of the study (Barry, Chaney, Piazza-Gardner, & Chavarria, 2014). Other studies

by Bakari (2014), Houghton et al. (2015) identified four criteria that the qualitative

research must satisfy. Specifically, Bakari (2014) and Houghton et al. (2015) established

that rigorous qualitative research demands that the researcher verifies the credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research process and the reporting

of its findings. Therefore, although the four methods contributed to the elimination of

bias on my part, they also ensured the quality and integrity of all the data I gathered

during the interview sessions. Furthermore, although not measurable, there was the need

to establish these four criteria using qualitative methods that include member checking

and triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). According to Elo et al. (2014) and

Marshall and Rossman (2016), member checking involve the validation of interpreted

data, through scheduled oral discussions, with the study participants. My member

checking activities, therefore, ensured that I accurately represented the documented views

of the participants, during the interview sessions, in my data interpretation. Triangulation,

on the other hand, provides the researcher with a more comprehensive picture of the

subject matter in comparison to that of the data. Specifically, for triangulation, I availed

of the multiple sources of data to compare, to cross-check, and to validate the interview

data (Carter et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Reliability

The reliability test of qualitative research is synonymous with efforts, on the part of the researcher, to record the multiple interpretations of, the intentions in, and the meanings that surround situations and events (Barry et al., 2014). Consequently, Barry et al. (2014) defined reliability in qualitative research as a fit between what researchers record as data and what occurs in the natural setting of the phenomenon under research. Of the four criteria for qualitative research, the dependability criterion is synonymous with the reliability test of a qualitative research

The dependability criterion of a qualitative study focuses on the assumption of replicability and is synonymous with credibility (Sarma, 2015). Dependability essentially involves the establishment of consistent findings, following the replication of a similar inquiry with different participants, but in the same context. Besides, for this study, the adoption of the overlapping methods of interviews, and the repeated site visits during the interview phase of the study ensured the credibility of findings and the dependability of the study. Other direct measures that contributed to the dependability criteria of this qualitative study include the development of a research protocol that contained the details of the sampling, data collection, and data analysis methods (Sarma, 2015). The development of such protocols enhanced the transparency and the subsequent dependability of the study. Furthermore, the detailed description provided by my interview protocol also increased the likelihood of replicating the findings of the study under similar context depicted in the study.

From the above, and to establish the dependability criteria of this study, I made an audio recording of the participants' interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I also made a list and maintained a record of all the data I gathered during the interview phase of the study (Yin, 2016). Finally, I used member checking, through scheduled oral discussions with the study participants, to validate my interpretation of the collected data. Specifically, the use of member checking ensured that the documented responses to the interview questions adequately reflected the information and messages the participants intended to convey (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). I also employed the NVivo data analysis software tool to transcribe, to code, and analyze the data I gathered during the interviews. Marshall and Rossman (2016) recommended the us of strict steps in the collection and analysis process. Patton (2015) instructed researchers to be diligent in following steps that help in achieving quality in research study. Strauss and Corbin's (2015) postulations included the need to maximize the potentials of all research tools in use.

Validity

The validity test of qualitative research is an indication of its accuracy and shows the extent to which the research conclusion corresponds with reality. Accordingly, the stronger the degree to which the research conclusion corresponds to reality, the greater the validity (Johnston et al., 2014; Yilmaz, 2013). Finally, the three remaining criteria of credibility, transferability, and confirmability of qualitative research contribute to the validation of data gathered during the interview process.

Credibility. The credibility of qualitative research refers to the believability of

the research finding from the participants' points of view (Sarma, 2015). Specifically, the

credibility of the qualitative research refers to confidence in the findings of the study

(Baskerville, Kaul, & Storey, 2015). The studies by Baskerville et al. (2015) and Sarma

(2015) both equated credibility to internal validity, which denotes the trustworthiness of

research findings. Similarly, research findings showed that activities that include

prolonged systematic engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and systematic

and conscientious data analysis increase the probability of credible research findings

(Baskerville et al., 2015; Carter et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). Furthermore, qualitative

research gains credibility when it adheres to defined and accepted data collection

procedures across the community of researchers (Sarma, 2015). To Sarma, the prolonged

engagement and persistent observation at the site of the research, triangulation, and peer

debriefing contribute to ensuring the credibility of a qualitative study. Specifically, using

various sources of data collection in data triangulation is crucial for the credibility of

qualitative research. Finally, Carter et al. (2014) and Sarma advised researchers to

communicate the significance of multiple sources of data collection to their audience to

let them know how such sources contribute to the overall truthfulness of the research

findings.

From the above, the prolonged engagement and the adoption of data source

triangulation of collected data lent credence to the research findings (Carter et al., 2014;

Cox & McLeod, 2014; Houghton et al., 2015). I also used member checking to enhance

further the credibility of the study. Specifically and as earlier described, member

checking in this study involved the validation, through scheduled oral discussions with

the study participants, of my interpretation of the collected data. Such validation ensured

that responses, views, and perceptions were correctly and completely captured (Marshall

& Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). The use of member checking,

therefore, contributed significantly to the reduction in the likelihood of bias on my part.

Finally, the existence of a match between the original data set and the subsequent

interpretation, after member checking, of the data set supported and enhanced the

credibility criteria of this qualitative research study (Elo et al., 2014).

Transferability. The transferability criteria of qualitative research study refer to

the generalizability of the research findings to other contexts or settings (Elo et al., 2014;

Sarma, 2015). Specifically, generalizability is achievable through a thorough description

of the context and assumptions that are central to the analysis of the research.

Furthermore, the burden of the determination of the degree of transferability to which the

findings of a study applies to other contexts rests on future researchers (Sarma, 2015).

In this study, I strived for thoroughness and a vigorous description of the contents,

interviews, transcripts, meanings, interpretations, analysis, and reporting. I, however, left

the transferability and generalizability of my study to other researchers, professionals,

and users (Houghton et al., 2015). A detailed description of the process of participant

selection, interview data, field observations, documents and archival sources, and the

coding and analysis processes enhanced the transferability and generalizability of the

study. Furthermore, a description of my knowledge of the phenomenon, my relationship

(if any) with the participants and the exhaustive description of data analysis also allowed

for clarity to readers about how I treated the data gathered through the interviews (Elo et al., 2014; Sarma, 2015).

Confirmability. The confirmability criteria of a qualitative study refer to the extent to which the findings of the study reflect the data and the responses of the participants in the study (Baskerville et al., 2015). Confirmability, as a quality criterion of qualitative studies, should, therefore, not emanate from the researchers' bias and motivation but the lived experiences, perceptions, responses, and ideas of the participants (Sarma, 2015). According to Sarma (2015), the use of triangulation ensures confirmability and, therefore, reduces the effect of the researcher's biases, preferences, and interests. Furthermore, a detailed methodological description and the availability of an audit trail enable scrutinizers to see the adherence to research practices which in turn increase the acceptability of the findings (Sarma, 2015). Specifically, audit trails allow readers to trace the course of data analysis from data gathering to the formation of results during the research work.

From the above, I achieved the confirmability of the data of my study through establishing running frequencies of words and themes with NVivo for accurate analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Besides, and as stated and described above, I ensured data saturation through the process of member checking. Furthermore, in tandem with Patton (2015), I achieved data saturation for this study through the continuous task of identifying and co-opting new and additional sample population to participate in a study until the data set is complete. Specifically, I had stated that I would interview a total of nine business managers who worked at the senior

management levels of three corporate organizations in the oil, gas, and energy sector of a metropolitan area in a western province of Canada. However, I realized that I had not achieved data saturation when I concluded my interviews of the nine participants as new and additional information that significantly affected the themes, insights, and perspectives of the study emerged. As a result, I opted to recruit and interview one additional participant from each of the organizations in which the original study participants worked. Finally, while it appeared that I had achieved data saturation after interviewing the 11th participant, I continued and interviewed the 12th participant for confirmation that I had truly achieved data saturation. All through the interview processes, I used member checking to confirm that I adequately and correctly captured, documented, and interpreted the responses, lived experiences, and views of the participants. Member checking, therefore, contributed to the dependability and credibility criteria of the study.

Summary and Transition

In Section 2 of this study, I restated the purpose of the research to explore the implementation strategies senior business managers required for forging collaborative profitable business partnerships. I, therefore, opted to use the face-to-face semistructured interview format to explore and document the lived experiences and perceptions of senior business managers who adopted and practiced collaborative business partnership. I described my critical role as the researcher, the participants' selection process, my commitments to the study participants, and to the management and the security of all forms of data collected during the interviews. Furthermore, while stating my adoption of

the qualitative research method and the multiple case study design, I provided

justifications for choosing the method and design for the study.

I concluded the Section 2 of this study by describing the data collection

instrument and the processes through which I collected, organized, and analyzed data.

Furthermore, I provided a detailed discussion on how I ensured and enhanced the validity

and reliability criteria of the study. The contents of Section 3 of the study consisted of the

findings and discussed the prospects for applying such findings in professional practices.

Finally, Section 3 included discussions on the implications of the findings for social

change.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the implementation strategies that senior business managers in a metropolitan area in the western province of Canada used to forge profitable collaborative business partnerships. The data analysis, collected through semistructured interviews and document reviews, revealed the emergence of nine common themes of varying magnitude and importance:

- Planning, organizing, and managing work

- Recombination and deployment strategies

- Aligned vision, purpose, and strategic direction

- Knowledge of the industry

- Dealing with complexities

- Effective communication and presentation

- Leadership, people, and relationship management strategies

- Managing conflicts

- Decision-making strategies

According to the participants, these emergent themes were critical for implementing effective and successful collaborative partnerships. Specifically, the infusion of the emergent themes with the recombined knowledge, expertise, capabilities, and inimitable resources and skills of the network partners make up the critical ingredients for forging successful collaborative business partnerships. Furthermore, the fusion of the emergent themes with the inimitable resources and skills of the network

partners enabled them to achieve of higher competitive advantages and performance levels as detailed in the conceptual framework of the RBV and RV.

Exploration

The data analysis process started with data cleaning. Thus, the transcripts passed through data cleaning and validation processes to streamline the naming convention. Checks on grammar and mechanics helped while avoiding any change in either verbiage or meaning. Such technical checks helped to eliminate the undesired effects of perceived meanings to phrases used by the participants. Thus, the final raw data maintained its original integrity. Furthermore, as the researcher, my interpretations of the participants' responses did not distort nor stand out in the final raw data. Some queries required the presence of the interview questions for composite evaluation and a clearer understanding of the participants' responses. Furthermore, text mining, through the use of NVivo qualitative analysis software yielded query results that undergirded this report. Finally, data assembling, dissembling, and re-assembling activities, in line with Van Kaam's (1959) guideposts, were possible due to the availability of new functions in Nvivo11.

Following the need for certainty in applying Van Kaam's method, the lower level analytical activity depended on Moustakas's (1994) examples which included the following: (a) compiling participants' responses, confirming transcript accuracy, (b) producing meaning from interpretations, (c) confirming meanings, (d) analyzing the raw data, (e) producing the draft report, (f) compiling the research analysis elements, (g) exploring for outcomes, and (h) disassembling the research analysis elements. The findings that emerged from the above test-run helped in choosing specific queries that

aligned with the research problem, the purpose, and the nature of the study. The research question and interview questions were already in alignment with these elements. The objective, therefore, was to ensure that the analysis process and sequence were in alignment with the above requirements. Furthermore, there were follow-up interviews with the participants aimed at eliciting explanations for additional information provided during the semistructured interviews and the review of documents. I achieved data saturation with the follow-up questions when there was no revelation of new information. Finally, I achieved methodological triangulation through the multiple sources of data that include the participants' interview responses, the review of allowable company documents, schedule of operations review meetings, and work breakdown schedules of assigned tasks.

A critical factor in strictly following Van Kaam's guideposts was the need to ensure validity and reliability. On the other hand, the data analysis process had to be subjected to the strict adherence of the Van Kaam's model because the transferability of studies is characteristically outside of the researcher's control. Initial emergence of elements, variables, factors, and keywords created the need to engage in lower exploration levels in a stepwise fashion. The stepwise lowering of querying levels led to a reduction of the keywords through the use of the process of coding by nodes. Through the use of coding by nodes, a manageable number of keywords emerged. Further analyses aided the determination of the themes of the study.

Figure 1. Preexploration keywords

The structure of the preexploration word cloud triggered the need to examine the words with the highest volume of usage by the participants. Therefore, in the word cloud depicted in Figure 1, the higher the frequency of usage of particular words, the larger the corresponding font sizes of the words. Additional inquiries involved the use of charts, models, and dendrograms that conveyed the intended meanings the participants expressed.

Presentation of Findings

The central research question of this study was: What implementation strategies do senior business managers used to forge profitable collaborative business partnerships? The themes that emerged from the data collected from the participants (in no particular order of importance), following data analysis and the achievement of methodological

triangulation, and through successive querying and analyzing using input-output conduit

format are:

- Planning, organizing, and managing work

- Recombination and deployment strategies

- Aligned vision, purpose, and strategic direction

- Knowledge of the industry

- Dealing with complexities

- Effective communication and presentation

- Leadership, people, and relationship management strategies

- Managing conflicts

- Decision-making strategies

Emergence of Themes

The 12 participants in the study emphasized and reiterated that the ability of

senior business managers to implement the nine themes that emerged was critical to

achieving successful collaborative business partnerships. Specifically, in tandem with the

RBV and the RV conceptual framework, collaboration would only succeed if, and when,

the collaborating partners, with unique and inimitable competences and capabilities, work

together in an exchange relationship. It is the successful recombination, management, and

implementation of the unique and inimitable competences and capabilities, in a mutually

beneficial relationship, that yield competitive advantages for the partnership. Based on

the participants' responses, the quest to effectively exploit synergies and leverage

operational performance involved factors that seemed to follow the input-output format

in the graphical depiction represented by Figure 2. Furthermore, a critical analysis of the

graphic representations of the overall data, collected from the multiple sources, revealed

that all participants were generally of similar views in their responses. However, the

intensity and enthusiasm with which each participant addressed each of the themes that

emerged from their responses were markedly different and reflected the unique

experiences of the participants. Specifically, while a participant might rate planning,

organizing, and managing work as the most crucial strategy in forging successful

collaborative partnerships, another participant might rate the same theme as the least
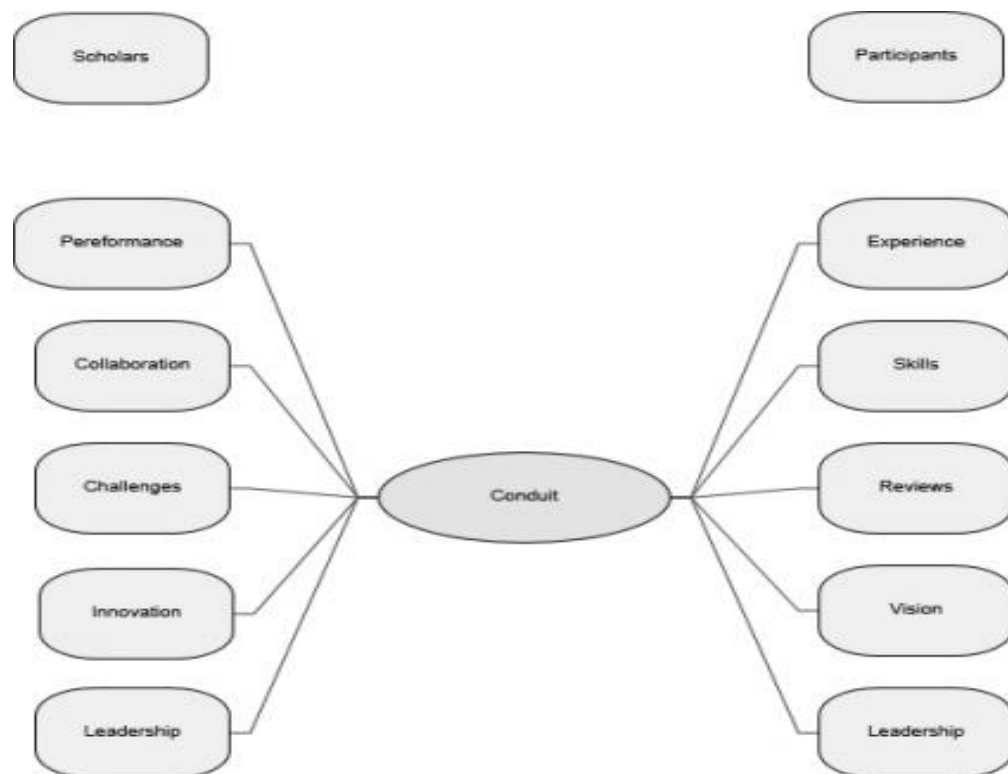
strategy.

Figure 2. *Input-Output theme emergence format*

Planning, organizing, and managing work. Although referenced with varying degrees of intensity, all the participants, however, agreed that the planning, organizing, and the effective management of work schedules among and between the collaborating partners is a crucial strategy that would support the successful implementation of collaborative partnerships. Specifically, the majority of the participants confirmed that planning, organizing, and the management of work schedules by the appointed team and project leaders of the collaborating organizations would significantly reduce work complexities and scopes of decision-making necessary to achieve set goals and objectives.

As an implementation strategy for forging successful collaborative partnerships, the planning, organizing, and management of work schedules reflected the planning functions of leaders discussed in the literature review section of this study and the findings of Gandolfi and Stone (2017) and Pittz and Adler (2016). The findings of Gandolfi and Stone confirmed that the achievement of set goals and objectives are achievable when leaders equip, train, and influence groups of people who possess varying degrees of skills and capabilities. In explaining the planning functions of the team leaders and managers, Participants 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, and 12 differentiated between short-term (tactical) planning and long-term (strategic) planning in their operations. The participants described short-term (tactical) planning as internal to their operations and concerning operational resource allocations and utilization that range between 3 to 6 months. According to the participants, other activities in the short-term planning horizon might include seasonal and task-specific casual labor hirings and overtime works. On the

contrary, the participants described the long-term (strategic) planning goals of partnerships as the planning activities that extend past their internal operations to the external environments in which they operate. Such planning activities are concerned with investment decisions, profitability objectives, and targets, organizational structures, policies, and processes.

The analysis of the responses of the participants showed that the proactive planning, organizing, and management of work is a necessary and critical strategy that would enhance the actualization of successful collaborative partnerships. According to Asmussen, Jesper, Steger-Jensen, and Wæhrens (2018), the planning, organizing, and management of work would increase the likelihood of realizing the set goals and objectives of organizations. Specifically, according to Participants 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, and 12, their planning activities involved the consideration of all upstream, downstream, internal, and external operational and strategic constraints that might impede the achievement of set goal and objectives. The proactive consideration of these constraints enabled the identification of cost-efficient and workable alternatives and solutions. Participants 3, 9, 11, and 12 further identified the work breakdown structure (WBS) document as an important output of the planning, organizing, and work management process. The WBS document, according to the participants, essentially identifies the sequence of scheduled tasks, distributes and allocates tasks, and specifies the start and finish times of tasks. Besides contributing to streamlining tasks, a well-formed and implemented WBS would enhance the maximization of team performance, project turn-around-time, profitability, and ultimately the success of the partnership.

Recombination and deployment strategies. As was discussed in the RBV section of the literature, one of the critical and basic tenets of collaborative partnerships is the possession of unique and inimitable skills, competencies, and resources by the collaborating organizations and the individuals that work in the organizations. In the analysis of the interview data, all the participants (Participants 1-12) consistently expressed and touted the need for the effective rollout, deployment, and implementation of recombined functional and technical skills and resources. Firstly, all the participants vehemently insisted that there would not be a need for collaboration (ab initio) without the possession of unique and inimitable skills and resources by organizations and individuals. Secondly, the participants confirmed that the possession of unique and inimitable skills and resources by organizations and individuals was not a sufficient criterion for a successful collaborative partnership. Albeit expressed and communicated differently, Participants 1-12, all maintained that the harnessing and the deployment of the skills and resources available to collaborative partnerships require the involvement of experienced managers of human, material, and financial resources. The contribution of this strategy to the success of collaborative partnerships tallies with the findings of Anatan (2014), Roja and Nastase (2013), and Yang et al. (2014) as in earlier notations within this study under the requirements for forging collaborative business partnerships.

According to Participants 4, 9, and 11, the task of harnessing, deploying, and managing the abundant skills, human, material, and financial resources of the partnership is exclusively reserved for the most experienced manager within the partnership. The ceding of this function would, therefore, necessitate the formation of teams and the

appointment of team leaders. While alluding to the same view expressed by Participants 4, 9, and 11, Participants 1, 3, 7, 8, 10, and 12 also stated and agreed that the formation of teams, and the roles teams play, was crucial to the success of partnerships. Specifically, while team leaders coordinate and manage the day-to-day activities of team members, the team leaders, in turn, report to the most experienced manager responsible for managing the overall partnership. Finally, according to Participant 2, the adoption of the concept of teaming in collaborative partnerships contributes immensely to disaggregating a supposedly unwieldy operation into a better-managed operation. The agreement to choose an experienced overall leader and the formation of teams would enhance the efficient deployment and utilization of human, material, and financial resources. Furthermore, the strategy enhances the clearer visibility of project timelines, proactive planning activities aimed at the successful implementation of collaborative partnerships.

Aligned vision, purpose, and strategic direction. The strategy of aligned vision, purpose, and strategic direction is similar to the views of all 12 participants that there would not be a need for collaboration (ab initio) without the possession of unique and inimitable skills and resources by organizations and individuals. Specifically, for successful collaborative partnerships, the collaborating organizations and individuals must share similar goals and objectives. The relevance of this strategy to the forging of successful collaborative partnerships tallies with findings in the literature review section of the study. According to Chakkol et al. (2018) and Randolph (2016), the objectives of a collaborative partnership would remain unattainable without a congruence of goals of the network partners. Besides, while the existence of goal congruence would facilitate greater

alignment between the individual partners' goals and the overall goals of the entire network of firms, it would also promote and encourage interfirm affinity and the strategic convergence of competencies and capabilities required for successful partnerships.

While reiterating the crucial role of the strategy of aligned vision, purpose, and strategic direction, Participant 6 mentioned the need for would-be collaborating organizations and individuals to carry out due diligence on all would-be members. Such due diligence exercise would aim to confirm, among others, the vision, mission, and strategic focus of each would-be member. Participant 6 also stated that the due diligence exercise should review the organizational structure and culture in determining and understanding the ethos of would-be collaborating organizations. Finally, Participant 6 maintained that, personally, "the strategy of aligned vision, purpose, and strategic direction trumps all other strategies." Participant 6 further identified various calamitous events and outcomes that could develop when, and if, organizations with unaligned vision, purpose, and strategic direction forge collaborative partnerships. Such catastrophic outcomes, according to Participant 6, "could involve colossal loss of revenue, damage to reputation, and, in extreme situations, the collapse of entire businesses."

The analysis of the participants' responses and the observed body languages displayed while discussing and explaining the strategy of goal congruence lend credence to its significance as a strategy required for forging successful collaborative partnerships. As earlier expressed in the literature review section of this study, and in tandem with the findings of Anatan (2014), Iyer et al. (2014), and Moon et al. (2017), the success of any

collaborative partnership is dependent on successfully implementing the strategy of vision and goal congruence. Specifically, the identification and unification of visions, goals, and objectives, and the alignment of organizational structures and cultures promotes and encourages interfirm affinity and the strategic convergence of competencies and capabilities required to yield competitive advantages for the network partners.

Knowledge of the industry. Although not the most prominent of the themes that emanated from the data analysis, however, approximately 42% of the participants identified the need for vast knowledge of the industry in which a partnership operates as a necessary strategy that would enhance success. According to Participants 1, 2, 7, 11, and 12, the complexities that exist in the oil, energy, and gas sector, and the uniqueness of the Canadian oil sand mining techniques makes it paramount that the individual leading the collaborative partnership possesses a thorough knowledge of the industry. Specifically, Participant 11 linked the strategy of the possession of thorough knowledge of the industry to activities that involve strategic investment decisions in innovation, research and development, finance, and human resources. According to Participant 11, "the peculiarities of the oil, gas, and energy sector, the fluctuating price of oil in the international market, and other market dynamics of demand and supply, should make this strategy the exclusive preserve of a leader with deep insights of the industry and market."

As a strategy, according to Participants 2 and 7, the possession of relevant industry experience and market knowledge would allow for proactiveness on the part of the individual leading the partnership. Furthermore, knowledge of the industry would

ensure the availability of realistic forecasts and actionable plans to address both internal

and external resource constraints. Such forecasts and plans, developed with the

knowledge of the industry are, therefore, necessary for the success of collaborative

partnerships.

Dealing with complexities. Extreme complexities exist in the world's oil, gas,

and energy markets. More so in the unique oil sand environment of Canada oil industry.

The data analysis revealed the participants' awareness of, and the negative impact, that

such complexities might have on the operations, and ultimately, the success of the

partnership. Specifically, there was an overwhelming consensus from all 12 participants

on the need for the evolvement of a strategy uniquely focused on dealing with the hydra-

headed complexities of the oil sand industry of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The 12

participants concurred that the existence and the ability to implement strategies that deal

with solving complex problems, some operational, and others emanating from the forged

collaborative partnerships between organizations with different structures and cultures, is

crucial to the success of collaborative partnerships.

Participants 1, 2, 7, 11, and 12 saw a direct and complementary relationship

between the strategies of knowledge of the industry and dealing with complexities. In

buttressing their reasons, the participants emphasized, albeit with different level of

enthusiasm, that the strategy of dealing with complexities would be difficult to

implement efficiently and effectively without a deep and thorough knowledge of the

industry and the markets in which members of the partnership operate. Specifically,

according to the participants, collaborative partnerships evolve from the agreement

between two or more organizations, with different but compatible structures and cultures, to work together for the joint benefit of the members. However, to Participant 1, despite the benefits accruable from collaborative partnerships, the agreements to work together represent the first contact with multifaceted complexities that requires the full-time attention and dedication of experienced and well-knowledgeable managers. Therefore, according to Participant 1, and to enhance the success of the partnership, "such managers must possess sound analytical and problem-solving skills to steer and direct the daily operations of the forged partnerships." Besides, with contending jostling for resource allocations amid tight project deliverable timelines, the supervising manager of the partnership must be able to understand the intricacies of the operation and proffer appropriate and cost-effective strategies, solutions, and action plans aimed at achieving set goals and objectives.

In tandem to the findings of Yang et al. (2014), the analysis of the interview responses similarly showed that all 12 participants agreed that the possession of inimitable skills, technical competences, and complementary resources are critical to the forging of successful collaborative partnerships. However, there was an unwavering consensus among the participants that the possession of skills, competencies, and resources are not, themselves, sufficient to guarantee the success of collaborative partnerships. Specifically, all 12 participants acknowledged the need for the role of experienced and knowledgeable managers of human, financial, material, and technical resources to coordinate and manage the complex operations of the partnership.

Effective communication and presentation. As discussed in the literature

review section of this study, finding in the works of Ioanid (2015), Iyer et al. (2014), and Kenyon et al. (2016) alluded to the need for effective communication strategies to support and enhance the success of collaborative partnerships. Specifically, the interdependent relationships, among a complex mix of individuals from different cultural backgrounds, which developed after the forging of collaborative partnerships by organizations requires a strategy that would clearly and effectively communicate and present the vision, mission, and objectives of the coalition. The implementation of robust communication strategies, by the management team of the coalition of organizations, would contribute significantly to the timely completion of tasks, decision-making, the reduction in, and the resolution of conflicts and disputes.

On the average, Participants 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 11, confirmed the existence of about 16 different nationals from 5 continents in the workforce that make up the collaborative partnerships in which they work. The multicultural nature of these partnerships and the subsequent workplace environment that evolved from the forged partnerships required multi-pronged modes and means of communicating that considers factors that include, amongst others, language barriers, ideologies, and cultural beliefs. While evoking respect for the different nationals, the consideration for language barriers, ideologies, and cultural beliefs makes for peaceful coexistence among the workers and a peaceful work environment. Furthermore, while emphasizing the need for coherent and effective communication strategies, Participants 6 and 9 made references to the remote and isolated oil wells, living hostels, and camps that house the multifunctional teams working in and under harsh weather and climatic conditions. According to Participant 9, the

operation managers, camp managers, and team leaders must implement the strict communication rules and guidelines that emanated from the overall communication strategies adopted by the coalition of organizations that make up the partnership. While reiterating the importance of communication strategy to the success of collaborative partnerships, Participant 6 advised the need to include sensitivity and diversity training under communication strategies. On this point, Participant 6 said, "I recalled how an offhand comment in one of the camps I worked in nearly turned into a free-for-all fight between two groups from, apparently, different cultures."

On a final note, and although sparingly discussed and mentioned by the participants, the communication strategy of collaborative partnerships should also inform and enlighten both internal and external stakeholders on ongoing and prospective projects and relevant ethical and environmental issues. Such issues should be appropriately presented using different mediums and platforms accessible to the targeted audience. According to Participant 2, to guarantee the continuous buy-in to the ethos of the partnership, the communication strategy should include weekly operational meetings and briefings at the team levels. Besides, Participant 2 advised top-level monthly meetings and briefings for the respective team leaders and managers of the various components of ongoing and prospective projects.

Leadership, people, and relationship management strategies. The significance of leadership competencies and strategies in the formation of successful collaborative partnerships featured in the literature review section of this study. In their findings, Pittz and Adler (2016) established that the availability of competent leadership is critical to

managing the myriad of factors and requirements necessary to facilitate the forging and the successful operation of collaborative partnerships. In tandem with the findings of Pittz and Adler, the data analysis carried out on the responses of the entire 12 participants revealed significantly high correlations between the need for, and the deployment of leadership strategies and the success of forged collaborative partnerships.

In the words of Participant 4, "leadership strategies and competencies are everything." When asked to expound, Participant 4 said that all his prior comments would "come to naught without the corralling functions of an experienced leader, with a 360-degree overview of the entire operations, who can formulate relevant strategies aimed at ensuring that the partnership functions seamlessly and successfully." On another hand, Participants 3, 4, and 5 made sparing references to the leadership styles most suitable to the unique type of partnerships that exist in the Canadian oil sand industry. While Participants 3, 4, and 5 specifically mentioned the need for an inspirational leader, further explanations (as confirmed to me on follow up questions) of a second leadership style, however, tallied with situational leadership style. Specifically, Participants 3, 4, and 5 stated that the leadership styles of the chosen individuals responsible for managing the operations of partnerships would reflect the kinds of strategies and policies they formulate and propose and that guides the partnerships.

Using different choice of words to differentiate between transformational and situational leadership styles, and the strategies and policies that flow from the respective styles, Participants 3, 4, and 5 affirmed that both leadership styles perform unique but equally important functions in the quest for the success of collaborative partnerships. To

Participants 3, 4, and 5, transformational leadership style and its resultant strategies are responsible for investment, innovation, and financial decisions. Contrarily, Participants 3, 4, and 5 explained that situational leadership style and strategies are more relevant to the day-to-day operational and human resource activities of partnerships.

Besides the functions of transformational and situational leadership styles expressed by Participants 3, 4, and 5, the analysis of Participant's 8 responses uniquely identified an additional layer of leadership strategy in the quest for successful collaborative strategies. Accordingly, and in sync with transformational leadership functions, Participant 8 identified people and relationship management strategies as very crucial to the success of multifunctional, multicultural, multi-language, and multi-religious teams. Exhibiting vast knowledge and experience, Participant 8 stated that, "collaborative partnerships are relationships between two or more organizations who have agreed to work together for the common benefit of the members." Therefore, according to Participant 8, "the supervising manager of the collaborative relationship must demonstrate capabilities, through relevant leadership strategies, that aim to motivate team members and employees to perform above expectations." Specifically, to reaffirm the need for appropriate leadership strategies, Participant 8 is stated "the success or otherwise of collaborative partnerships depend on the relationship building and management skills of the supervising manager. Also, excellent relationship building and management capabilities would enhance the level of influence the supervising manager can wield on the entire members of the partnership." However, irrespective of whether transformational or situational, the review of data collected from all 12 participants

revealed that leadership strategies and competencies (inclusive of relationship and people management) are critical to the successful formation of collaborative strategies.

Managing conflicts. The need for strategies aimed at proactively preventing the occurrence of, and reactively managing the existence of conflicts featured prominently in the analyzed data collected from the 12 participants who work in organizations involved in collaborative partnerships. The crucial requirement for strategies targeted at conflict prevention and management in collaborative partnerships find relevance in issues previously discussed in the literature review section of this study. Specifically, while studies by Chakkol et al. (2018) and Randolph (2016) discussed the need for congruence of goals of the network partners, that of Islam et al. (2015) and Salam (2017) respectively discussed the need for compatibility and flexibility of organizational structures and the cultivation of trust. Finally, Ioanid (2015) and Kenyon et al. (2016) discussed the need for cultural affinity and flexibility by collaborating organizations.

Similar to previously proffered strategies, the review of the participants' responses and relevant organizational documents overwhelmingly concluded that the existence of conflict prevention and management strategies are critical to the forging of successful collaborative strategies. With an almost similar level of enthusiasm in speech and body language, all the participants had a point or two to make on the strategy that deals with conflict resolution. In Participant's 7 own words, "there's just no way conflict would not break out in a multifunctional, multicultural, multi-language, and multi-religious team of over 75 people – and that's just a team out of probably a dozen others." Participant 7 was, however, quick to note that the majority of conflicts are easily

manageable interpersonal skirmishes. On the contrary, Participant 9 (who works in the same organization as Participant 7) agreed with the cause of conflicts but emphasized that the timely detection of tension and conflict makes the difference between easily manageable skirmishes and out-of-control disagreements and fights. Participant 9 continued "although the manageable skirmishes have insignificant impacts on operations, the reverse is, however, the case with the out-of-control disagreements and fights that can grind entire operations to a halt and cause irreparable damages to partnerships.

Participant's 1 approach to conflict prevention and management strategies was somewhat unique compared to the other participants. Participant 1 identified and differentiated between operational conflicts (occurring among and between team members in the day-to-day work activities) and strategic conflicts (occurring at the project coordinating and management levels) in partnership organizations. According to Participant 1, "day-to-day operational conflicts, while not desirable, can be effectively managed through robust human resources policies and guidelines. On the other hand, however, strategic conflicts are significantly more destructive and could spell doom for partnerships."

In different words and with different levels of enthusiasm, the entire 12 participants agreed that the success of forged collaborative partnerships would require the formulation of appropriate conflict prevention and management strategies. Such strategies should focus on solving and managing conflicts that can emanate from factors that impede the successful implementation of collaborative partnerships discussed in the literature review section of this study. Specifically, appropriate strategies are required to

address conflicts emanating from the diverse goals of the partners (Fawcett et al., 2015; Li & Nguyen, 2017; Vangen & Huxham, 2013) and trust challenge (Randolph, 2016; Vangen & Huxham, 2013). Other factors include power imbalances (Michalski et al., 2017; Soosay & Hyland, 2015; Vangen & Huxham, 2013), culture paradox (Islam et al., 2015; Vangen & Huxham, 2013), and territoriality and turf protection (Byrne & Power, 2014; Fawcett et al., 2015).

While, for privacy reasons, access was not possible for the review of the human resource (HR) incident report books in organizations where I collected data, the three organizations, however, allowed a review of their relevant Code of Conduct booklets. The review of the code of conduct booklets revealed that the organizations had identified an array of offenses, misdemeanors, and violations that employees might commit. Employees that commit such offenses, misdemeanors, and violations would trigger a range of HR actions aimed at managing the incidences and meting out appropriate sanction.

Decision-making strategies. In no similar terms, the majority of the 12 participants expressed the dual-linkage of experiences in the oil sand environment and in collaborative working relationships with the required strategy that deals with the ability to make and implement sound decisions. Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, and 12 were more vocal and enthusiastic on the need for supervising managers of collaborative partnerships to be analytical in approaches to making decisions that enhance the continued existence and profitability of the partnership. Participant 2 quipped, "the forging of collaborative partnerships by previously competing organizations is, in itself, a

strategic decision by leaders of the organizations to work together." The literature review section of this study succinctly captured the views expressed by Participant 2. As discussed in the findings of Chatterjee (2016), the practice of collaborative partnership itself evolved from the strategic decision by organizations to manage the consequences of globalization better. Furthermore, the adoption of collaborative partnerships also enabled the fusion of financial, material, human, and knowledge-based resources by organizations in efforts aimed at remaining competitive and profitable.

While emphasizing the crucial role of decision-making strategies for the success of collaborative partnerships, Participant 12 stated, "collaboration breathes and lives decision-making." Asked to explain, Participant 12 said that, "strategic decisions by proponents of collaboration is responsible for the existence of collaborative partnerships. Only continuous and sound strategic decisions would ensure the partnerships remain viable and successful. Poor decision-making would result in failure and collapse."

The analysis of the responses of Participant 6 revealed a unique term in support of the need for timely decision-making processes within collaborative partnerships. Participant 6 used the term "the urgency of now" to indicate the rapid nature of decision-making in a dynamic, complex, and competitive environment of the oil, gas, and energy industry. Participant 6 further explained: "in a globalized world, developments in information technology and technologically-propelled initiatives in supply chain management has necessitated the need for quick responses and decision-making by relevant supervising managers of collaborative partnerships." It is pertinent to note that Participant's 6 views tally with the findings of Chi et al. (2015) and Pittz and Adler

(2016) discussed in the literature review section of this study. Specifically, Chi et al. and Pittz and Adler found that the availability and the efficient usage of information technology within the network of firms enabled and ensured timely access and exchange of information and decision-making requirements within the partnership.

According to Participant 7, the need for timely and sound decision-making strategies is relevant to the team and people management functions of the supervising manager of the partnership. To Participant 7, agile and sound decision-making strategies would enhance the implementation of the strategy necessary to prevent and manage conflicts. Therefore, whether in the strategic or tactical areas of collaborative partnerships or the transformational and situational leadership styles, the review and analysis of the responses of the 12 participants revealed significant correlations between the existence of sound decision-making strategies and the success of the forged partnership.

Linkage of Findings to the Conceptual Framework

The RBV and the RV were the conceptual frameworks of this study. In the RBV, the differences in firms' performances flowed from their respective strategic resources, which included core competencies, dynamic capabilities, and absorptive capacities (Shafeey & Trott, 2014). The significant tenet of the RBV was the accumulation of rare, valuable, and inimitable resources and capabilities by firms in collaborative relationships (Bromiley & Rau, 2016; Kobayashi, 2014). On the other hand, in the RV, the critical resources of firms spanned their boundaries and companies earned, aside from normal profits, additional supernormal profits through the keeping and maintenance of exchange relationships (Miocevic, 2016; Ro et al., 2016). Accordingly, the keeping and

maintenance of exchange relationships enabled firms in collaborative partnerships to earn supernormal profits that are not possible if they existed and operated in isolation.

In alignment with Yin (2016), I linked and described the ways the identified and developed themes relate to the conceptual framework and the reviewed literature of the study. For the conceptual framework, I established that relationships existed between the emerged themes and the dual framework of the RV and the RBV. The applicability of the RBV and the RV concepts to my study flowed from the competitive advantages derived from the accumulation of resources and capabilities by the collaborating organizations. Besides, the additional supernormal profits that accrued from the relationship between the partners created additional values and benefits over what an individual organization could have generated if operating in isolation. By leveraging the combined assets, resources, expertise, and capabilities within the partnership, the members were able to produce and deliver goods and services more efficiently and more profitably. The improved financial and profitability performance of the three organizations that participated in this study followed the review of pertinent documents that included the released 3 previous years of annual financial reports. Moreover, interorganizational collaboration allowed the partners to share responsibilities, risks, and benefits (Anatan, 2014; Kobayashi, 2014). On the other hand, for the literature review, I showed the relationship between the emerging themes from the data and the themes in the literature that included globalization, experience, efficiency, profitability, relevant and complementary skills, and competition.

Linkage of Findings to Existing Literature

Finally, I compared my findings in this study to findings in recently published studies by Arthur (2017) and Dey (2016). Such comparison enabled the verification of the findings of this study. In Arthur (2017), the author set out to explore the strategies that some retail managers used to motivate their sales associates to maintain a competitive advantage over competitors in the marketplace. According to Arthur, the ability to craft strategies that result in competitive advantages significantly increases profitability and customer satisfaction. It is pertinent to note that while the topic of my study is different from Author's, the overarching objectives of both studies, however, sought to craft, explore, and exploit strategies necessary to give organizations competitive advantages over their rivals in the marketplace. Again, the themes that emerged from Arthur's work were similar to the themes that emerged from my study. Arthur (2017) identified four emergent themes that included essential strategies, ethical factors, risk factors, and the value of sustainable strategy toward stakeholders, suppliers, and customers. Comparatively, the themes that emerged from my study are leadership, quality performance, processes and procedures, experience, commitment, visionary individuals, dealing with challenges, possession of requisite skills, innovativeness, review of the contracts, and leadership styles. It is, therefore, obvious that there exists a match between themes that emerged from Arthur's study and the themes that emerged from my study.

The study by Dey (2016) involved an exploration of strategies that supply chain managers in Ghana used to reduce disruptions in the supply chain. The themes that

emerged from this study included identification of disruptions before they occur, information sharing and collaboration between partners, management strategies to mitigate supply chain disruptions, inventory optimization, availability of human capital, energy, and finance problems. Again, the majority of these themes shared significant similarities to the themes I identified in my study. Of specific note was the view Dey (2016) had on the emerged theme of *collaboration*. According to Dey, the ability of supply chain network partners to collaborate was critical to the efforts to recover from disruptions. To Dey, the existence of a functional collaborative network would have a positive impact on the speed with which stakeholders work together after a disruption, the extent of the cost, and the estimated recovery period. A second critical factor, in Dey (2016), necessary for reducing disruptions in supply chains were *mitigating strategies*. The mitigating strategies in Dey (2016) were similar to the *planning, organizing, and managing work,* and the *dealing with complex situations* strategies that emerged in the responses of the majority of the participants in my study. Based on these findings, it is, therefore, apparent that the findings of my study were consistent with the findings in the existing literature.

Application to Professional Practice

The ability to identify the success (or failure) of collaborative business partnerships is inherent in its overall impact on the operations of the collaborating organizations, and by extension, other businesses. Therefore, while contributing to the existing body of knowledge, the findings of this study could be useful for business leaders and practitioners to have a more informed understanding of the applicability, the

implementation challenges, and the benefits accruable from the initiative of collaborative business partnership. Specifically, professional business practices could benefit from the potential for increased innovation, performance, efficiency, and profitability when network partners recombine diverse and inimitable skills, experiences, perspectives, and resources (Smith, Alshaikh, Bojan, Kak, & Mohammad Mehdi, 2014). Again, in affirmation of the significant contribution of collaborative partnerships to business practices, Miller and Katz (2014) alluded to the growing adoption of collaborative partnership. According to Miller and Katz, the adoption of the initiative caused a substantial shift by Cisco (the Information Technology leader) away from the command-and-control business structure towards collaboration. Therefore, as a result of the rapidly changing global workplace, the complexities of communication, knowledge transfer, and decision-making, Cisco now devotes more of its product development effort to collaborative solutions. Furthermore, the speed to market necessary for organizational success is ever accelerating and requires faster and greater innovation and newer ways of recombining resources necessary to deliver higher quality goods and services profitably.

The initiative of collaborative business partnerships portends unique advantages for organization leaders who can successfully implement it. Collaborative partnerships harness and bring important people, stakeholders, and resources together to address and solve complex situations. The combined perspectives of actors within collaborative partnerships have the potential of yielding significant performance results for the network partners. Specifically, according to Miller and Katz (2014) and Moon et al. (2017), the skillful and practical utilization of collaborative partnerships would, most likely, lead to

smarter solutions, faster time to market, greater efficiency and the elimination of waste, and greater profitability.

Implications for Social Change

As captured in the Walden Social Change Impact Report (2014), positive social change refers to involvement in activities that tangibly improve the lives of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies - both locally and around the world. Evolved social change includes a range of activities such as volunteering, donating money, goods, services, and educating others about a particular issue or cause.

Based on the above explanation, the findings of this study significantly contribute to social change through the impact on the people, the ways of life, and the relational interactions between and among individuals of different social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds. Specifically, the interdependencies promoted and encouraged by collaborative partnerships created the opportunities and conducive environments that might enable people from different cultures, with different and inimitable capabilities, skills, and resources to work productively together. Furthermore, the productive negotiated work orders created by collaborative partnerships might enable improved relational interactions and reduced racial tensions among people from different cultures and backgrounds (Cloutier & Langley, 2017). Another likely contribution of this study to social change is that the increased wealth generated and the subsequent changes in the status of individuals translate and contribute to more affluent and socially responsible communities. Specifically, the more affluent and socially responsible the people became, the less the crime and societal ills the society encountered.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the responses of the participants, and the summary of the study's findings, there existed a high probability of success for well-forged and implemented collaborative business partnerships. Specifically, the research findings showed that collaborative partnerships would succeed with the appropriate implementation of strategies of (a) planning, organizing, and managing work; (b) recombination and deployment strategies; and (c) aligned vision, purpose, and strategic direction. Other strategies that would enhance the success of collaborative partnerships include (d) knowledge of the industry; (e) dealing with complexities; (f) effective communication and presentation; (g) leadership, people, and relationship management; (h) managing conflicts; and (i) decision-making. It is, therefore, necessary and recommended that the business managers of organizations that intend to collaborate must adhere to tested experiential strategies culled from the participants in this study.

The results of this study contribute to the body of knowledge and business management practices. It is, therefore, necessary to disseminate the results to the business communities, the educational sector, and private individuals. I will utilize conferences, seminars, webinars, training, and coaching platforms to achieve such widespread level of dissemination of the results and the best practices embedded in the findings of the study.

Recommendations for Further Research

I considered the study of the implementation strategies that senior business managers used to forge profitable collaborative business partnerships, and the subsequent social implication, a work in progress and a phase in the quest to understand better the

initiative of collaborative business partnership. As detailed and as in-depth as this study was, it was not possible for me to address all the issues, implementation challenges, and other factors that might significant impacts on the forging of collaborative business partnerships due to earlier identified, highlighted, and acknowledged limitations in the study.

The limitations of a qualitative research study constitute the combination of existing boundaries, shortcomings, influences, and events that restrict but are not under the researcher's control (Gopaldas, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The limitations in this study include (a) inability to confirm and verify the responses of the participants, (b) biases in responses, and (c) the possibility that the participants would not accurately recall events. Other limitations are (d) the burnishing of individual and organizational inputs and accomplishments, (e) the likelihood that participants would withhold organizational secrets and strategic information, and (f) the stipulation that participants are experienced senior managers who presently work in organizations with ongoing collaborative partnership arrangements.

Based on the observed limitations of this study, it is, therefore, necessary and recommended that:

1. Future researchers improve efforts on ascertaining the veracity of participants' responses.

2. Future researchers should explore the possibility of gaining access to more documentary evidence that support the verbal responses of study participants.

3. Future researchers should broaden the participant base to exploring team members' contribution to the success of collaborative partnerships.

4. Future researchers should explore relationship-building strategies aimed at improved accessibility to a larger pool of qualified and experienced participants and relevant documents.

As stated earlier in the study, limitations exert significant negative influences on the scope, the results, and the conclusions of research studies (Anney, 2014; Edereka-Great, 2015; Modilim, 2016). While challenging, it is, however, necessary for future researchers to strategize on overcoming the limitations identified in this study by devising methods and means aimed at confirming and checking the responses of study participants. Furthermore, future researchers should hold regular sessions to discuss and enlighten participants on the issue of confidentiality. Such open and sincere discussions might reduce the tendencies of withholding organizational secrets and strategic information.

Reflections

The pursuit of the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) has been both a wholesome and stressful experience, in all ramifications, for me. It was wholesome, in the fact that I marveled at the vast array of information and knowledge that this experience availed me. I had brilliant experiences in all of my online classes and also forged lasting relationships with some of my course mates and lecturers. Another beautiful and exciting experience for me was the *Residency Programs* I attended in

London and Barcelona. These residency programs were the platforms that shaped the title of my dissertation.

I also experienced and encountered stressful situations all through my doctoral journey. Such stressful events emanated from constantly joggling contending, and equally important (or more important), aspects of my personal life. The most important contending factors in the scenario I found myself were family and business. Specifically, and irrespective of their saying that they understood that I had to study, my family could only cut me so much slack. Specifically, birthdays, anniversaries, extended families, and religious events have a way of coinciding with college assignments and deliverables. In addition to the demands of the family was the fact that I still needed to contribute (financially) to the upkeep of my family. Finally, the Walden University tuition expenses were piling, still outstanding, and extending the financial stress.

My over 15 years work experience in small to medium and large multinational organizations made me susceptible to biases in this study. It was, therefore, important that, rather than try to eliminate my biases, I instead identified and monitored them. It was also imperative that I guard against my biases and other preconceived notions that I had about the subject matter to remain objective and not influence the study participants. I employed the dual data gathering and analysis help-techniques of reflexivity and bracketing to forestall and eliminate my biases. According to Roulston and Shelton (2015), my adoption of reflexivity and bracketing in this study enhanced the reliability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability of the findings of the study.

While I did not impose my views on the participants, nor tried to influence their responses; however, I did have unvoiced, concealed, and preconceived idea about the significance and the dual roles of trust and turf protection in the forging of effective and successful collaborative business partnerships. Whereas I had expected that the issue of trust would generate and lead to active discussions during the interviews, however, I was surprised that the issue of trust was insignificant to the forging of collaborative partnerships. The insignificance of trust in this study has, therefore, caused me to reassess my notion of the role of trust in the forging of effective and successful collaborative partnerships. I began to ask myself questions like:

1. Does the existence of a binding legal contract dampen the effect or significance of trust in the forging of collaborative partnerships?

2. Does the geographical location in which the partnership resides, and operates, dampen the effect or significance of trust in the forging of collaborative partnerships?

3. Does the cultural make-up of the organizations and individuals network partners dampen the effect or significance of trust in the forging of collaborative partnerships?

While these questions require answers, it is not in the purview of this study to provide the needed answers. However, future researchers could modify these questions in carrying out approved studies that would provide answers. Furthermore, the provision of answers to these questions would contribute to the expanding body of knowledge in the study of collaborative partnerships.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the implementation strategies senior business managers used to forge successful and profitable collaborative business partnerships. To fulfill the purpose of this study, I interviewed a total of 12 qualified participants who worked in organizations that presently have ongoing collaborative partnership agreements and working relationships with other organizations within and outside of Edmonton. Nine important themes, crucial to the forging of collaborative business partnerships, emerged from the extensive face-to-face semistructured interviews. The themes that emerged are (a) planning, organizing, and managing work; (b) recombination and deployment strategies; and (c) aligned vision, purpose, and strategic direction. Other themes included (d) knowledge of the industry; (e) dealing with complexities; (f) effective communication and presentation; (g) leadership, people, and relationship management strategies; (h) managing conflicts; and (i) decision-making strategies.

The data analysis of this study showed that the 12 business managers that participated in this study agreed, albeit with different rankings, that it is possible to forge effective and successful collaborative business partnerships through the implementation of the enumerated strategies. Accordingly, the successful implementation of collaborative partnerships is possible if practitioners, and would-be adopters of the initiative, work towards amassing, exploring, and implementing the nine strategies of the emerged themes of the study.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

What you will do	What you will say—script
1. Introduce the interview and set the stage for interviewing the participants. 2. Present consent form to participants and go over contents. Answer questions and concerns of participant. 3. Explain the presence and the need to use a recording device. 4. Give participant copy of consent form. 5. Reiterate the confidentiality clause as pertains the participants and all the data and information collected. 6. Explain the process and approximate duration of member checking to participants.	A. Good morning Mr. or Mrs. XXX. My name is Victor Oluwi, a current doctoral student at Walden University. My major is International Business in the College of Management and Technology. My research study focuses on exploring the implementation strategies that senior business managers in the metropolitan area of a western province of Canada require for forging collaborative business partnerships. B. Thank you for taking the time to respond to the invitation and to participate in this study. Here is a copy of your signed consent form for your record. C. I would want to believe you have read, understood, and in agreement with the content of the informed consent form. However, should you have any questions or concerns, I would like to address them before we commence with the interview.
7. Turn on recording device. 8. State date and time of interview 9. Follow procedure to introduce participant(s) with coded identification. 10. Begin interview with question #1 and follow through to question #6. 11. Follow up with additional questions when necessary. 12. Watch for nonverbal queues 13. Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth	A. What implementation strategies did you employ in forging the collaborative partnership? B. What implementation challenges did you encounter? C. How did you determine the success of strategies implemented to forge collaborative business partnerships? D. What relevant skills were necessary to forge collaborative business partnerships? E. What relevant experiences were necessary to forge collaborative business partnerships? F. Is there anything you would like to add about the strategies you have used to forge collaborative business partnerships?

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

What you will do	What you will say—script
14. Thank the participant(s) for participating in the study. 15. Remind and give contact numbers to participants for follow up questions and concerns.	
16. Wrap up interview thanking participant 17. Schedule follow-up member checking interview	A. Thank you for taking out time to participate and to share your experiences on the subject matter with me. B. I will transcribe the interview data and return to you for transcript review to ensure the correctness of the interview data within the next 2 days. C. I would like to agree a time to meet with you for about 30 minutes, or less, to review the result of my analysis and the interpretation of the findings of the interview.

Follow-up Member Checking Interview

1. Introduce follow-up interview and set the stage	Good afternoon. Thank you (once again) for participating in this study. This member checking session is a follow-up to our previous interview on the implementation strategies senior business managers in the metropolitan area of a western province of Canada require for forging collaborative business partnerships. The process of member checking would not exceed 30 minutes. Similar to the earlier interview, I would make a recording of this follow-up interview so that I can accurately document your responses to my questions and to any other information you might share with me

2. Share a copy of the succinct synthesis for each individual question	A. I would like to share the analysis and the interpretation of your experiences you shared during our previous interview for validation.
3. Ask probing questions related to other arising information. Note the information must be related so that you are probing and adhering to the IRB approval.	B. I wrote down each question and have a succinct synthesis of the interpretation.
	C. Here is a printed copy of the succinct synthesis of your responses to each question you answered.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Follow-up Member Checking Interview

What you will do	What you will say—script
4. Walk through each question, read the interpretation and ask: Did I miss anything? Or, What would you like to add?	D. I will read each question and each synthesis to you so that you can confirm the accuracy of my interpretation.
5. I will ask the closing question: What other experiences, not covered in this interview would you like to share that might benefit future business leaders who plan to forge a collaborative business partnership? Succinct synthesis of the interpretation in one paragraph or as needed.	E. Please inform me if the synthesis represents, and accurately reflect your answers or if there is additional information I missed in my synthesis.
	F. What factors did you consider when you chose the organization(s) you collaborate with? Succinct synthesis of the interpretation in one paragraph or as needed.
	G. With the benefit of hindsight, what could you have done differently when you forged a collaborative partnership? Succinct synthesis of the interpretation in one paragraph or as needed.
	H. What fail-safe measures, incentives, and sanctions (if any) did you put in place to ensure that the collaborating partners operate within the set guidelines of the partnership? Succinct synthesis of

	the interpretation in one paragraph or as needed.
	I. What were the critical challenges you encountered at the early stages of the partnership? Succinct synthesis of the interpretation in one paragraph or as needed.
	J. How do you resolve conflicts within the partnership? Succinct synthesis of the interpretation in one paragraph or as needed.