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# Leadership Styles and Competencies of Project Managers in Successful Projects

Monica Senthill  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Monica Senthill

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2018

Abstract

Leadership Styles and Competencies of Project Managers in Successful Projects

by

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MS, Central Michigan University, 2000

BBA, University of Houston, 1992

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2018

## Abstract

Leadership style and competency are relevant to the failure or success of a project. The purpose of this single case study was to explore the leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve information technology (IT) project outcomes. The targeted population included 5 project managers from an organization headquartered in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States who have successfully managed U.S.-based IT projects and improved the project outcomes. The 3 traditional leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and participatory) were the conceptual framework for this study. Data collection included review of archival organizational documents and semistructured interviews with 5 qualified participants. Data were compiled, organized, disassembled, reassembled into a sequence of groups, and interpreted for meaning. The interview protocol, interview transcription, member checking, and methodological triangulation added to the trustworthiness of the findings. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: selecting leadership style, selecting leadership competency, and identifying project factors affecting project outcomes. The implications of this study for positive social change include the potential to increase job opportunities through improved organizational performance that may result from improved project outcomes.

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## Dedication

To God, for providing me with knowledge, wisdom, and courage to move forward until reaching my goal, and strengthening my faith throughout my doctoral study journey.

To my husband, Atiim, for his invaluable and unbelievable support, for having the family helm, and for keeping the family ship afloat while I was submerged in my journey.

To my children, Akai, Akiva, and Atiima, for their understanding when I was not able to participate in activities because I had to finish some type of homework.

To my parents, Lawrence and Lena, who have passed away. Although neither of them completed any college education, I would have not reached this level of academic achievement without the values instilled by them.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The project manager builds and integrates technical and nontechnical competencies to link project implementation and business strategic planning (Pemsel, Mueller, & Soderlund, 2016; Ramazani & Jergeas, 2015). A competent project manager is an essential contributor to successful project outcomes (Bredillet, Tywoniak, & Dwivedula, 2015; Duffield, 2015). The exploration of leadership styles and competencies of project managers may be associated with increased project success, provide beneficial information regarding project outcomes, and result in productive and profitable impacts within organizations (Meyer, 2014; Redick, Reyna, Schaffer, & Toomey, 2014).

### **Background of the Problem**

As organizational leaders continue to increase operations in global markets powered by intense competition, leaders have migrated toward projects, and the scope, cost, and complexity of projects have increased (Ika & Saint-Macary, 2014). Consequently, project management as a professional field has developed, advanced, and continued to change (Ika & Saint-Macary, 2014). Organizational leaders set organizational goals and make decisions on three project management elements: (a) budget, (b) schedule, and (c) scope (Mastrogiacomo, Missonier, & Bonazzi, 2014).

Despite the Project Management Institute (PMI) leaders' attempts to provide frameworks and methodologies for project management activities, information technology (IT) projects continue to fail worldwide and affect organizational performance (Bredillet et al., 2015; Drury-Grogan, 2014; Heumann, Wiener, Remus, &

Mahring, 2015). IT is an essential strategic component in the organizations' business performance (Wagner, Beimborn, & Weitzel, 2014). Leadership style and competency are important factors to success in the management field. Project managers' skills and competencies are elements in the four essential dimensions of project management (Drury-Grogan, 2014). Leadership style and competency are relevant to the failure or success of a project in the project management field (Ahmed & Abdullahi, 2017; Nixon, Harrington, & Parker, 2012; Yang, Wu, Wang, & Chin, 2012).

### **Problem Statement**

Projects continue to fail despite 15.7 million project practitioner roles that organizational leaders will create globally between 2010 and 2020 (Bredillet et al., 2015; PMI, 2013; Savelsbergh, Havermans, & Storm, 2016). Approximately 63% of all projects end up failing due to noncompliance with budget, quality, and time (Liu & Deng, 2015). The general business problem is the loss of productivity and profitability when IT projects fail, leading to negative business outcomes. The specific business problem is that some project managers lack the specific leadership styles and competencies to improve IT project outcomes.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. Project leadership style affects organizational performance and improves sustainable competitive advantage among organizations (Sudha, Shahnawaz, & Farhat, 2016). The specific population included five project managers who have successfully

managed U.S.-based IT projects and improved the project outcomes. Senior management may use the findings of this study to gain a better understanding of project managers' leadership styles and competencies that contribute to increasing profitability, project success, and positive business outcomes. The results of this study may support positive social change by improving organizational performance that will provide jobs, economic stability, and opportunities for the community.

### **Nature of the Study**

I chose a qualitative method for this study. Qualitative researchers gain a deep understanding of a specific human experience (Baille, 2015; Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015). A qualitative approach was the best research method to use to conduct an in-depth exploration and understand the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. I did not choose a quantitative research method because it did not yield the type of pure, rich, and descriptive information desired. A mixed method study can include the findings of exploratory (qualitative) and confirmatory (quantitative) questions (Venkatesh, Brown, & Sullivan, 2016). I did not choose a mixed methods research method because I chose to address only exploratory questions to gain a better understanding of what specific leadership styles and competencies project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. For this reason, a mixed method was not the preferred option.

I chose the single case study for this study. The single case study design included the basis to explore the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. Yin (2017) identified a case study as an

investigation of an event in a real-world context (setting) when the context and event are not clear. In contrast to a cultural-sharing view of an ethnographical approach, the case study approach does not involve only ethnographic or participant-observer data (Yin, 2017). I did not use grounded theory approach because that approach involves researchers dissecting and diluting the event and simplifying the complexity of the event in its real-world setting (Ruppel & Mey, 2015). I did not use narrative inquiry. The approach involves participants telling stories to relay their personal experiences and overly personalizing their experiences (Clandinin, Cave, & Berendonk, 2016). Phenomenological researchers gather individuals' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The lived experiences that researchers use in a phenomenological study can assist researchers with generating thick descriptions and understanding a problem that has not been well studied (Moustakas, 1994). Because I was not interested in the lived experiences of project managers, I did not choose a phenomenological study.

### **Research Question**

Research questions in a qualitative single case study are useful to researchers who choose to explore the occurrence of an event or when the occurrence will be predictive of a certain outcome (Yin, 2017). The purpose of the research question was to address the exploration of the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers may use to improve IT project outcomes. The purpose of the following overarching research question was to provide guidance to explore the specific project managers' leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes.

Research Question: What specific leadership styles and competencies do IT project managers possess to improve project outcomes?

### **Interview Questions**

The expectation was that the data collected from the interview questions included questions to explore the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. Below are the interview questions. These questions are also located in Appendix A.

1. Describe whether you used a managerial, intellectual, and or emotional leadership style to affect project outcomes. Why?
2. From the leadership style you selected in Question 1, describe one or more competencies associated with the managerial, intellectual, or emotional leadership style that you used to affect project outcomes. Describe at least one specific situation, your behavior, and the result(s).
3. From the leadership style you selected in Question 1, which competency best fit what you used to affect project outcomes. Why?
4. Please provide additional information that you think may be relevant for this research.

### **Conceptual Framework**

I used the three traditional leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and participatory) as the conceptual framework for this study. Bass and Avolio introduced the framework in 1993. Three types of traditional leadership styles have attributed to affecting project outcomes: (a) transformational, (b) transactional, and (c) participatory



(Bass & Avolio, 1993; Clarke, 2012b; Fausing, Joensson, Lewandowski, & Bligh, 2015).

A transformational leader is one who can act optimistically and confidently, lead by example, express confidence in his/her followers, explain how to reach the vision, and articulate an appealing and clear vision (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Transformational leaders positively affect organizational creativity, innovation, and team performance (Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014; Humala, 2017).

Transactional leaders work within the norms and rules of the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Transactional leadership defines the relationship between followers and leaders in terms of task-related give-and-take of rewards and actions (Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2014). Transactional leadership can make an indirect and positive impact on organizational commitment (Tyssen et al., 2014).

Participatory leadership or shared leadership is a concept that no one individual performs all leadership functions (Clarke, 2012b; Fausing et al., 2015). A set of leaders collectively shares leadership functions. Using one or more leadership styles and competencies may be required for successful project performance outcomes (Galvin, Gibbs, Sullivan, & Williams, 2014). The leadership ability of project managers is a facet of project management (Heumann et al., 2015; Kaminsky, 2012). Although leadership is the ability to influence others and is the cornerstone of organizational success, senior management may ignore project managers' leadership ability as a factor critical to project success (Papke-Shields & Boyer-Wright, 2017). The conceptual framework for this study included the three traditional leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and participatory).

## Operational Definitions

*Competency:* Competency is the ability to do something well and the skills, knowledge, and personal characteristics that produce favorable results (Galvin et al., 2014; Holtkamp, Jokiner, & Pawlowski, 2015). The competencies associated with the intellectual leadership style are (a) critical analysis, (b) judgment, (c) vision imagination, and (d) strategic planning. The competencies associated with the managerial leadership style are (a) engaging communication, (b) empowering, (c) developing, and (d) achieving. The competencies associated with the emotional leadership style are (a) emotional resilience, (b) self-awareness, (c) intuitiveness, (d) interpersonal sensitivity, (e) conscientiousness, (f) motivation, and (g) influence (Galvin et al., 2014; Lee, Park, & Lee, 2015).

*Leadership competencies:* Leadership competencies include the abilities, skills, knowledge, and personal characteristics possessed by leaders and are associated to the three specific leadership styles: (a) intellectual, (b) managerial, and (c) emotional (Galvin et al., 2014).

*Leadership styles:* Leadership styles are the means of categorizing various types of leader behaviors and the way project managers behave toward other project members. This study included three specific leadership styles: (a) intellectual, (b) managerial, and (c) emotional. These leadership styles are similar to transformational, transactional, and participative styles. Each leadership style has several competencies associated with it (Clarke, 2012b; Galvin et al., 2014).

*Project management success:* Project management success is one of two components of project success and happens when project managers deliver projects on time, on budget, and within scope (Ahmed & Abdullahi, 2017; Kaminsky, 2012; Nixon et al., 2012; Rolstadas, Tommelein, Schiefloe, & Ballard, 2014).

*Project product success:* Project product success is one of two components of project success and includes factors such as user satisfaction and quality that affects a project's end-deliverable (Ahmed & Abdullahi, 2017; Kaminsky, 2012; Nixon et al., 2012; Rolstadas et al., 2014).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

This section includes the areas related to the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study. Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are essential components of any feasible study to prevent valid questions regarding the credibility of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The following three subsections include definitions and specific instances of each term as they relate to this study.

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are what researchers take for granted and function as the basic substance for any proposed study (Grant, 2014). Assumptions are facts not actually verified but considered truthful (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Semenova & Hassel, 2014). One assumption was that the participants understood and answered the interview questions to the best of their knowledge and truthfully. To mitigate these risks, the participants signed the consent form containing full details about participants' confidentiality and rights prior to answering the interview questions. I used a unique

coding to ensure response confidentiality. The second assumption was that the participants had a basic understanding of leadership styles and competencies associated with each. To mitigate these risks, the interview questions included background information and descriptions of leadership styles. Each description of the leadership styles contained a list of the associated competencies.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study. A set of limitations exists in every study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The participants included project managers who have successfully managed U.S.-based IT projects and improved the project outcomes. The study had two limitations or weaknesses. The first limitation was that the findings may be applicable only to IT-based projects and project managers. The second limitation was the use of styles and competencies related to leadership. The use of leadership styles and competencies may exclude styles and competencies project managers need and not related to leadership.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations include the scope or boundaries of the study (Ndu & Agbonifoh, 2014). The purpose of research studies is to outline what the researchers intend to do, but delimitations include what researchers are not going to do (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The emphasis of this study included the exploration of specific leadership styles and competencies project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. The research participants included only project managers who have successfully managed U.S.-based IT projects and improved the project outcomes.

## **Significance of the Study**

This section includes areas related to the contribution to business practice and the implications for social change. The first subsection includes how this study may apply to professional practice. The second subsection includes how this study may provide positive social change.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The results of this study may be beneficial to any organization using IT projects. One or more leadership styles and competencies may be required for successful project performance outcomes (Galvin et al., 2014). The results of this study may provide insight to senior management about the leadership behaviors that contribute to project success in the IT industry. The study can serve as a blueprint to determine the leadership styles and competencies best suited for IT projects. Although focused on the IT industry, the study can apply to a wide range of agencies, fields, and industries using projects worldwide. Organizations' senior management can use the findings of this study to incorporate the leadership styles and competencies explored as necessary for IT project success in two areas: (a) training leadership programs as part of career development of IT project managers and (b) hiring practices when selecting IT project managers for jobs, positions, and promotions.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Project outcomes can affect organizational performance and costs (Clarke, 2012a; Sudha et al., 2016). Leadership style has a significant direct and indirect relationship with financial performance and organizational success (Overstreet, Hazen, Skipper, &

Hanna, 2014). Consequently, increased project success can reduce costs and increase organizational performance.

The results of this study may add to positive social change by improving organizational performance, which in turn can lead to an increase in jobs, economic stability, and opportunities for the community. Increased success or reduction of failure among IT-based projects can lead to technological maturity, competitive sustainability, and a more stable economic environment (Sakas, Vlachos, & Nasiopoulos, 2014). A more stable community can lead to economic stability, supporting growth in existing businesses, and creating new business opportunities.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

Researchers conduct literature review to identify possible gaps that might be worthy of further study and establish a framework of knowledge (Walliman, 2016). Understanding the process of the literature search is helpful in providing context. The literature review provides background information about the business problem, insights into reasons for the business problem, and acknowledgement of potential solutions.

The research for this study started with keywords: (a) *project management*, (b) *information technology*, (c) *failure*, and (d) *success*. Based on the results of these searches, the research for this study continued with keywords followed by (a) *project management success*, (b) *competency*, (c) *critical success factors*, (d) *technical skills*, (e) *nontechnical skills*, and (f) *project leadership*. The research criteria built upon each other, resulting in over 150 works from online databases, published materials, and professional organizational/government websites. Table 1 contains the literature review

matrix. I reviewed and aligned 157 references. The total number of references 5 years old or less is 135, resulting in 85.99% references 5 years or less. The total number of peer-reviewed references is 144, resulting in 91.72% peer-reviewed references. More than 85% of the publications are within 5 years of the anticipated graduation date and are peer-reviewed.

Table 1

*Literature Review Matrix*

Recent references	
Total recent references	135
Total references (overall)	157
Total percentage of recent references	<b>85.99%</b>
Peer-reviewed references	
Total peer-reviewed references	144
Total references (overall)	157
Total percentage of peer-reviewed references	<b>91.72%</b>

*Note.* The percentages of recent and peer-reviewed references are in boldface.

The primary sources included full text peer-reviewed journals from online databases such as Google Scholar, ProQuest databases (ABI/INFORM Complete and ProQuest Central), EBSCO databases (Business Source Complete, Academic Search Complete, and Computer & Applied Sciences Complete), Emerald Management, SAGE Premier, and ScienceDirect. The premise of this study included the literature reviewed and categorized into relevant theories and six themes: (a) projects overview, (b) project management overview, (c) project and business outcome, (d) team performance, (e) leadership styles, and (f) leader competence and project management. Understanding leadership style and competency that project managers possess to improve IT project

outcomes can help project managers and senior management work to avoid or minimize project failure in the future.

### **Relevant Theories**

I expected to find literature review to support the theory that a lack of professional development of project managers mostly affect IT project failures. On the contrary, professional development of project managers had increased by 367% from 2000 to 2010 (Kaminsky, 2012; Ramazani & Jergeas, 2015). The resulting research literature included evidence to another facet of project management – the leadership ability (style and competency) of the project manager (Heumann et al., 2015; Kaminsky, 2012; Meng & Boyd, 2017). Based on the findings of these searches, the exploration of references resulted in a concept that was the foundation of the conceptual framework for this study - traditional leadership styles (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Clarke, 2012b). The three types of traditional leadership styles attributed to affecting project outcomes are (a) transformational, (b) transactional, and (c) participatory (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Clarke, 2012b). Bass and Avolio (1993) suggested that effective organizations require strategic thinking, tactical thinking, and culture building are required for effective organizations. Leadership can affect the development of organizational culture and organizational culture can affect the development of leadership.

**Transformational leadership.** Researchers have provided different definitions of transformational leadership. Humala (2017) defined transformational leadership as leaders with motivation, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and clear vision focusing on the development of follower's individual needs and personal growth. McCleskey (2014)



described transformational leaders as the leaders who inform their followers about the value and importance of desired outcomes and the ways of reaching the outcomes.

Menon (2014) defined transformational leadership as an interaction by the leader with a follower to enhance motivational and mutual levels of creativity within organizations.

Quintana, Ruiz, and Vila (2014) defined transformational leaders as those leaders who exchange information to better motivate the production process outcome. Schaufeli

(2015) defined engaging or transformational leaders as individuals who foster favorable work environment and prompt work engagement.

Four components of characteristics of transformational leaders are (a) *idealized influence* – the capability of leaders to serve as role models and display moral and ethical principles, (b) *inspirational motivation* – the capability of leaders to demonstrate optimism and emphasize commitment, (c) *intellectual stimulation* – the capability of leaders to instill creativity, and (d) *individualized consideration* – the capability of leaders to take into account individual desires and needs within a group (Birasnav, 2014; Humala, 2017). Humala (2017) conducted a case study to identify how leadership affects organizational creativity. Organizational creativity is the formation of useful and valuable products, services, ideas, or processes possessed by individuals working together (Humala, 2017). Transformational leadership in four levels indirectly affects organizational creativity and innovation: (a) the external environment, (b) organization, (c) group, and (d) individual (Humala, 2017).

Similar to Humala (2017), Menon (2014) and Gillet and Vandenberghe (2014) suggested positive effects of transformational leadership. Menon conducted a study to

investigate the association between transformational leadership and leader effectiveness. Menon conducted a study related to the overall job satisfaction of teachers. Menon used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to collect data at 10 Cyprus secondary schools from 438 teachers. The results of the studies conducted by Gillet and Vandenberghe and Menon included support that job performance, team performance, and work adjustment in an international project context were positively related to transformational leadership. Gillet and Vandenberghe suggested the concept of hiring transformational leaders in project intensive organizations.

Overstreet et al. (2014) hypothesized that managing change is critical to the success of organizations and leadership style has direct (immediate) and indirect (sustained) relationships with organizational success. Based on the results of the study, Overstreet et al. were able to discover three important findings: (a) Leadership style has an indirect and direct relationship with financial performance; (b) leadership can have a positive impact directly on organizations' bottom-line; and (c) transformational leadership can impact organizational leaders' propensity to create or adapt new products, processes, or systems. Two things resulted from the study: (a) characteristics of organizations have significant relationships with organizational performance and (b) organizational leaders who have a propensity to be more innovative also are inclined to be more profitable (Overstreet et al., 2014).

Similar to Overstreet et al. (2014), Birasnav (2014) provided an insight into leadership style and organizational performance. Birasnav conducted a study to investigate whether leadership type is associated with organizational performance.

Transformational leaders are leaders with behaviors that can accelerate employees' thinking and can improve their individual performance and overall organizational performance (Birasnav, 2014). Apart from transactional leadership, Birasnav suggested that transformational leaders can have positive and significant effects on organizational performance. The study supported the hypothesis that transformational leadership and organizational performance are positively related (Birasnav, 2014).

Additional literature supports positive association with transformational leadership characteristics and followers. Orr and Bennett (2016) conducted a qualitative study to focus on why leaders told stories in leadership situations. Charismatic leaders are skillful orators with the ability to build trusts in their subordinates; they use storytelling as an effective tool to influence and inspire followers (Orr & Bennett, 2016). This type of leadership is narrative or storytelling leadership. The results include storytelling indirectly builds trust, which Orr and Bennett defined as followers' belief in leaders' ability, integrity, benevolence, and willingness on basis of words, decisions, and actions of the leaders. Also, Cervone (2014) suggested storytelling as one of two strategies for improving project communications.

**Transactional leadership.** Similar to the approach to transformational leadership, researchers have provided different definitions of transactional leadership. Bass and Avolio (1993) identified characteristics of transactional leaders: (a) develop exchanges with their followers, (b) work within status quo (the norms, rules, and procedures), (c) point out what followers will receive if they do something right or wrong, and (d) manage-by-exception. McCleskey (2014) defined transactional leaders as

leaders who focus on a give-and-take between leaders and followers to complete tasks, accomplish performance objectives, motivate followers, avoid risks, and improve organizational efficiency. Menon (2014) described transactional leadership as a relationship between a leader and follower based on an exchange of rewards by the leader for the desired behaviors and practices of the follower. Quintana et al. (2014) defined transactional leaders as those leaders who motivate followers by how followers' outcomes affect production process outcome.

**Participatory.** In participatory leadership or shared leadership, leaders share leadership functions collectively (Clarke, 2012b; Fausing et al., 2015). Leaders spread leadership across organizational units and team members (Hoch, 2014). Two types of shared leadership are (a) numerical and (b) concerted (Clarke, 2012b). Numerical shared leadership is the sum of leadership acts taken place in organizations (Clarke, 2012b). Concerted shared leadership is the emergent state with organizations or teams that spontaneously occur to respond to organizations' needs (Clarke, 2012b). Three conditions exist when implementing the shared leadership style: (a) interdependence, (b) creativity, and (c) complexity (Clarke, 2012b).

Organizational leaders are increasingly using team-based work to react to uncertainty and fast-changing environments. Shared leadership is an effective approach to team management (Hoch, 2014). Hoch (2014) conducted a study to examine the association between shared leadership and team performance. Hoch formulated two hypotheses: (a) team performance and shared leadership are positively associated and (b) team performance and shared leadership are associated based on diversity by age and

team tenure. After collecting data from 280 team members representing 46 teams, Hoch discovered a positive association between team performance and shared leadership in more diverse teams through information sharing.

**Different set of leadership styles and competencies.** Similar to the traditional leadership styles, Galvin et al. (2014) suggested a different set of leadership styles possessed by effective project management practitioners. In addition, Galvin et al. identified competencies associated with the leadership styles. Galvin et al. conducted a study to explain the leadership styles and competencies associated with effective management of projects, team members, and processes. The quantitative study included 38 randomly selected participants from the following industries: education, military/law, theatre/entertainment, pharmaceuticals/health, technology, industrial, real estate/finance, and customer service. Galvin et al. asked each participant 10 questions based on a 1-5 scale and required each participant to return the survey within 5 days. Using the survey, Galvin et al. addressed three specific leadership styles: (a) intellectual, (b) managerial, and (c) emotional.

Each leadership skill has several competencies associated with it. Competency is the ability to do something well and the skills, knowledge, and personal characteristics that produce favorable results (Galvin et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2015). The competencies associated with the intellectual leadership style are (a) critical analysis, (b) judgment, (c) vision imagination, and (d) strategic planning. The competencies associated with the managerial leadership style are (a) engaging communication, (b) empowering, (c) developing, and (d) achieving. The competencies associated with the emotional

leadership style are (a) emotional resilience, (b) self-awareness, (c) intuitiveness, (d) interpersonal sensitivity, (e) conscientiousness, (f) motivation, and (g) influence.

Intellectual leadership style involves the intelligence and problem-solving abilities of the project manager and is the cornerstone of not accepting the norm. Managerial leadership style is task oriented and involves project managers completing tasks. Emotional leadership style involves project managers' feelings and the feelings of their team and fits all leadership positions. Managerial leadership styles resulted as the most prevalent in the findings of the study. Galvin et al. (2014) discovered from the findings that leaders can possess 15 different competencies from the three leadership styles.

### **Projects Overview**

Most of the time, projects are created to attain business results (Martins Serra & Kunc, 2015). A project is a task performed one time, unique, and has a purpose to produce an intangible or tangible service or product (Too & Weaver, 2014). People carry out, conceive, plan, and monitor projects (Buvik & Rolfsen, 2015). Projects are time-bounded, budget-driven, and goal-oriented (Clarke, 2012a). Aaltonen and Kujala (2016) conducted a qualitative study to explore the formulation of project strategy. A project's environment consists of an internal and external environment. Senior leaders develop an organization's strategy in response to its organizational resources and environment to increase strategic fit (Aaltonen & Kujala, 2016).

Projects are managers' means to implement changes, master business, implement organizational strategy, and develop and innovate competitive advantage (Mueller, Pemsel, & Shao, 2014; Sanchez, Macada, & del Valle Sagardoy, 2014). A project

strategy is the plan, perspective, guidelines, or position on what to do, the best value for the project outcomes, and how to attain the highest competitive advantage (Martins Serra & Kunc, 2015).

The projectification of society has changed the organizational paradigm to the use of projects that play a focal role in the management of organizations (Miterev, Mancini, & Turner, 2017; Winch, 2014). Organizational leaders have transitioned from managing a single project to concurrently executing several projects, and leaders refer to their organizations as project-based organizations (Miterev et al., 2017; Winch, 2014). Benefits, such as shortened lead-time, increased competition, and high demand for flexibility have led to project-based organizational settings (Miterev, Engwall, & Jerbrant, 2016). In essence, projects can generate the future of people (Bredillet, 2014).

### **Project Management Overview**

In almost all fields of human activity, project management has become the focal role in the management of organizations (Miterev et al., 2017). Project management is a core competency, a means for organizations' senior leaders to achieve strategic objectives and thrive in today's competitive and global economy. Project management is a combination of human art and technical science (Missonier & Loufrani-Fedida, 2014; Strahorn, Brewer, & Gajendran, 2017).

Project management is the application of the skills, knowledge, practices, tools, and techniques used to meet project requirements and applied to project activities (Badewi, 2016; PMI, 2013). Project management practices vary among different type of projects and project management practitioners use project management tools, practices,

and techniques (Badewi, 2016). The six categories of the most widely-used project management methods, tools, and techniques are the following: (a) project management methods, such as Projects IN Controlled Environments version 2; (b) decision-making techniques, such as cost benefit analyses and sensitivity analyses; (c) risk assessment tools, such as probability analysis, and in house risk assessment tools, such as Program Evaluation and Review Technique; (d) computer models/databases, indexes, such as lessons learned files, and expert systems; (e) computer simulations, such as Monte Carlo; and (f) project management tools, such as work breakdown structures and Gantt charts (de Carvalho & Junior, 2015). Henry Gantt, an American mechanical engineer and management consultant, developed Gantt charts nearly 100 years ago, but they remain one of the most used tools for controlling and planning projects (Ong, Wang, & Zainon, 2016). Gantt charts can represent activities that are (a) time-focused, (b) objective, (c) deterministic, (d) analytic, (e) accountable, and (f) sequential (Ong et al., 2016).

Badewi (2016) conducted a component analysis of data collected from a survey that included four categories of project industry types. The four categories that Badewi used to group the industry types were the following: (a) construction and engineering, (b) financial and business services, (c) telecommunications and IT, and (d) software development. The results from the study indicated the following: (a) techniques, practices, and tools used in groups or clusters and referred to as “toolsets” and (b) a significant difference and contrast pattern of practices among the four categories of project industry types (Badewi, 2016).



Project management is useful in other industries other than construction and engineering, financial and business services, telecommunications and IT, and software development. Project management can also be useful in academia. Svejvig and Andersen (2015) conducted a qualitative study to explore how academic professors use project management processes in higher education research projects. Academic professors manage projects as part of their teaching and research agenda, but the perception of higher education does not include being project driven (Svejvig & Andersen, 2015). Svejvig and Andersen focused on the project management processes and tools professors used to manage research projects. Svejvig and Andersen discovered a variety of processes, tools, and proposals used by the participants to manage research projects. The results included four ways the participants used processes and tools in managing research projects: (a) collaborating, (b) involving stakeholders, (c) involving students, (d) and receiving research support. The factors that motivated professors to use the processes and tools included mentoring, accountability, and efficiency. The factors that inhibited professors from using project management processes and tools are the following: (a) project size, (b) awareness, (c) time, and (d) the restriction and complexity involved with using the processes and tools.

### **Project and Business Outcome**

Comprehending project management can contribute to a better understanding of project success, critical success factors, and effects on business outcomes and organizational productivity. Project success has two components: (a) project management success and (b) project product success (Ahmed & Abdullahi, 2017;

Kaminsky, 2012; Nixon et al., 2012; Rolstadas et al., 2014). Project management success occurs when project managers deliver projects on time, on budget, and within scope (Kaminsky, 2012). Project product success includes factors, such as user satisfaction and quality that affects a project's end-deliverable (Ahmed & Abdullahi, 2017; Nixon et al., 2012). Four distinct major success dimensions of projects are the following: (a) impact on customer, (b) project efficiency, (c) preparing for the future, and (d) direct organizational and business success (Sydow & Braun, 2017).

Rolstadas et al. (2014) conducted a study to address the success factors of project management. Three objectives relate to success: (a) social and environmental objectives – the benefits gained by local societies from project execution and results, (b) business objectives – the project results expected from project owners, and (c) project objectives – the deliverables organizational leaders are expected to provide (Rolstadas et al., 2014). Project success is measured using overall project objectives (business objectives) and project management success is measured using time, cost, quality, and scope (project objectives) (Rolstadas et al., 2014).

Five categories of project failure are organizational network, people, process, product, and technology (Anthopoulos, Reddick, Giannakidou, & Mavridis, 2016). Seven common reasons that projects fail are (a) project sponsors lack of devotion to the projects' objective and strategy and insufficient comprehension of the overall project; (b) objectives of projects do not meet the strategic vision of organizations' senior leaders and are not precisely defined; (c) project managers implement projects merely to introduce new technology but not accommodating organizational business requirements; (d)

projects do not support existing technology, causing scope creep and additional capital expenditures; (e) lack of communication; (f) incomplete project scope; and (g) governance related issues (Javani & Rwelamila, 2016). Major issues that cause projects to delay or fail are the following: (a) lack of training, (b) lack of judgment, (c) lack of top management, and (d) lack of expertise (Laux, Johnson, & Cada, 2015).

Risks are identifiable events that seriously affect the progress and outcomes of projects (Chileshe & Kikwasi, 2014; de Carvalho & Junior, 2015). Researchers have suggested that organizational leaders can reduce project failures and failure factors by allocating project risks and managing the risks by use of risk management strategies (Anthopoulos et al., 2016; Carbonara, Costantino, Gunnigan, & Pellegrino, 2015). Risks are situations in which probabilities of known potential outcomes and uncertainties as probabilities of unknown potential outcomes (Teller, Kock, & Gemunden, 2014). Project risks are known-unknowns (Martinsuo, Korhonen, & Laine, 2014). Organizational leaders can address the known-unknowns in the risk management aspect of project management practice. Four types of uncertainties are (a) variation, (b) foreseen uncertainty, (c) unforeseen uncertainty, and (d) chaos (Teller et al., 2014). Martinsuo et al. (2014) conducted a case study to explore whether unforeseeable project situations lead to negative consequences. Project managers do not always differentiate between risk and uncertainty, and they referred to uncertainties as unknown-unknowns (Martinsuo et al., 2014).

Martinsuo et al. (2014) conducted the study to discover better understanding of uncertainties. The study involved cases regarding different projects such as the

following: (a) product development, (b) information systems (IS)/IT, (c) construction project, (d) research and development, (e) business alignment, (f) clinical trial, (g) market prediction model, and (h) feasibility study. Martinsuo et al. suggested an alternative paradigm where project managers have a business perspective and identify opportunities from uncertainties.

Alignment of organization and project strategy are important to strategic objectives, organizational goals, and overall project and business outcome. Projects are organizational leaders' vehicle of delivering organizational strategy. Understanding the background of organizational and project strategy contribute to a better understanding of the effects of projects on organizational performance. Alsudiri, Al-Karaghoul, and Eldabi (2013) conducted a qualitative study to investigate whether the alignment between project management and business strategy affected the delivery of business outcomes. Misalignment between business strategy and organizational goals in large projects are common factors that affect project outcomes, attributing to 30% of projects failing (Alsudiri et al., 2013).

Alsudiri et al. (2013) conducted semistructured interviews of 35 participants including project management team members, executives, and project managers in four case studies in four large Saudi Arabian communication organizations. Alsudiri et al. identified factors such as the following: (a) leadership competency, (b) effective communication, (c) project manager involvement in the strategy development, (d) executive support, and (e) departments' support, as factors that highly affect alignment.

The results of the study suggested that external and internal factors affect project alignment and strategy differently (Alsudiri et al., 2013).

A growing emphasis at the project level exists to align IT to support and integrate business strategy more closely to achieve more. Sanchez et al. (2014) conducted a study to investigate how to maximize business value and measure IT investments. Project portfolio selection is periodic and a means for organizational leaders to select portfolio of projects that meet organizational objectives and not exceed available resources (Sanchez et al., 2014). Organizational leaders use strategy maps to define their strategy (Sanchez et al., 2014). Yeh, Lee, and Pai (2012) conducted a study to determine how information system capability affects business IT implementation strategy. The results of the study indicated that all capabilities, such as individual, group, and organizational level, had significant effects on IT strategy implementation and business performance (Yeh et al., 2012).

Organizational leaders should ask the following questions as guidance for alignment: (a) where to begin; (b) which project best fits company needs; and (c) and how to implement cocreation projects that lead to changes that make the organization more competitive in the long term, do not disrupt existing operations, and enhance innovation and capabilities (DeFillippi & Roser, 2014). Alsudiri et al. (2013) suggested competency as a factor that highly affect alignment. The selection of projects in portfolios is essential to proper alignment with organizational strategy and increase in business value (Sanchez et al., 2014).

DeFillippi and Roser (2014) discovered that cocreation techniques have an impact on strategic priorities and the uniqueness and difference of the product and service offered by organizations. Various benefits of cocreation are the following: (a) better focus on customer experience, (b) better communication of customer needs and interest, (c) better value creation vice technological solutions, and (d) lower risk of market failure (DeFillippi & Roser, 2014). DeFillippi and Roser focused on the importance of projects that generate new products, services, and results cocreated by communities and valuable to customers.

Successful projects can occur despite bad management, and projects can fail even though they were well managed (Ramos & Mota, 2014). To better understand project management and project outcomes, reviewing the past and using lessons learned can facilitate useful development of project management and outcomes. Researching the classics can assist project practitioners to understand the role and nature of the project management field, understand specific project management practices, and build new ideas that can become better concepts (Mir & Pinnington, 2014). Examining the great minds of the past can awaken the forgotten and overlooked.

Multiproject management consists of three models: (a) portfolio, (b) program, and (c) platform (Maniak & Midler, 2014). Project portfolio management (PPM) involves project selection and alignment according to organizational leaders' strategy and global risks (Maniak & Midler, 2014). PPM is the capability to engage tools, methods, and processes to allocate resources within project portfolios to maximize overall success and welfare of the organizations (Albrecht & Spang, 2014). Program management involves

several dependent projects organized to contribute to specific common objectives (Maniak & Midler, 2014). Maximizing partial technologies and commonalities across projects are involved with platform management (Maniak & Midler, 2014).

Albrecht and Spang (2014) conducted a qualitative study to explore evolution and implementation of PPM capabilities in organizations. Albrecht and Spang employed a multiple-case study with the intent to identify potential best practices in six organizations with successful project portfolios and innovators. Albrecht and Spang discovered the level of change within the six organizations, including project performance assessment, reallocating resources for, and stopping poor performing projects.

The review of literature in this section included a synopsis of project and business outcomes. Results of the studies include several factors to improve project and business outcomes: (a) understanding success factors, (b) aligning project strategy with organizational strategy, (c) using cocreation techniques, (d) learning from past project practitioners, and (e) the use of PPM.

### **Team Performance**

Team managers can face huddles when building project teams. A team consists of three or more individuals who work on a common purpose and indirectly and directly relate to the common purpose (Imangulova & Kolesnyk, 2016). The interaction of a team can cause a synergistic effect, which means the team together is more effective than any separate individual (Imangulova & Kolesnyk, 2016). Imangulova and Kolesnyk (2016) suggested that the foundation of project management involves the effective management of a team and can be considered a factor to successful project implementation.

Projects fail for two reasons: (a) project teams doing the wrong job and (b) project teams doing the right job poorly (Tredgold, 2014). A project team doing the wrong job is similar to watching a hamster running in a wheel. In either situation, no progress occurs regardless of how well the project team performs the job (Tredgold, 2014). Leaders' primary goal should implement effective communication, providing objectives and goals to ensure the project team is doing the right job. In some cases, to become sustainable does not always involve project teams working harder, but simply working smarter (Tredgold, 2014). Project teams may believe they cannot achieve excellence because they are not brilliant (Tredgold, 2014). Project teams should not confuse excellence with brilliance. Once project teams focus on the right job, the next thing is for the project teams to implement transparency into performance to hold the teams accountable (Tredgold, 2014).

While Tredgold (2014) provided approaches for project teams to sustain project success on a long-term basis, Jetu and Riedl (2013) provided two cultural values that can affect project team success: (a) personally-focused cultural values and (b) socially-focused cultural values. Personally-focused cultural values are values used to improve project team performance, and socially-focused cultural values are values used to improve team atmosphere. Jetu and Riedl collected data from 854 respondents using a 57-item questionnaire. The respondents came from within ten Ethiopian private and public organizations. Jetu and Riedl developed three aspects of successful IT and business process reengineering (BPR) project teams: (a) project team leadership (b) project team working spirit, and (b) project team developing and learning. If project



managers do not provide enough attention to focus personally on cultural values, the success of the project team may be limited. Jetu and Riedl suggested that addressing cultural issues during project team planning to better predict the function of project teams.

Jetu and Riedl (2013) suggested addressing cultural issues while Unger-Aviram, Zwikel, and Lloyd (2013) conducted a study to investigate the effects of recognition and feedback within project teams and on project performance success. Unger-Aviram et al. collected data from 88 project practitioners and their supervisors from 37 different countries of various industry types using 7-point Likert-type scale survey. The results of the study included support that project management motivation and leadership activities are essential to project team success.

Turner, Kutsch, and Leybourne (2016) addressed the need for project teams to increase knowledge and understanding among team members while improving performance through better solutions. Methods to improve project problem-solving effectiveness include (a) team adaptability, (b) action learning, (c) knowledge, and (d) system thinking (Turner et al., 2016). Turner et al. identified the project plan in conventional project management as a tool project managers use to implement a systematic, mathematical, and logical method to plan and control activities (i.e. predict and prepare). The plan allows project managers to know what to execute, when, how, and to what effect. Conventional problem-solving methods may work well for routine problems and known solutions. Project managers should implant integration of agile

problem-solving methods to promote greater agility, learning, knowledge, and openness to problem solving (Turner et al., 2016).

As Turner et al. (2016) addressed problem-solving among project teams, Alazzaz and Whyte (2015) addressed leadership empowerment among project teams. Alazzaz and Whyte conducted a study to examine the impact of empowerment on productivity. The structural concept is associated with job design and latitude of decision-making and influence by individuals (Alazzaz & Whyte, 2015). Alazzaz and Whyte discovered positive correlation between empowerment and employee productivity.

Regardless of who actually is responsible for communication issues within projects, the project team always has the burden to ensure effective communication (Cervone, 2014). Project challenges and issues can be uncovered with a complete feedback mechanism. Four areas of communication issues are (a) failure to differentiate stakeholder needs, (b) overlooking cultural differences, (c) assuming too little or too much of stakeholders, and (d) failure to recognize how communication methods change over time.

With the area that involves failure to differentiate stakeholder needs, the project team should consider the most effective ways and forms of communication for the various groups of project stakeholders (Cervone, 2014). With the area that involves overlooking cultural differences, the project team should use a variety of techniques to address each cultural group and different groups should work and communicate differently (Cervone, 2014). With the area that involves assuming too little or too much of stakeholders, the project team should not assume too little or too much of a stakeholder

group (Cervone, 2014). With the area that involves failure to recognize how communication needs change over time, the project team should adjust the timing of the communication to the stakeholder group as the involvement of the group changes during the project life cycle (Cervone, 2014). Two strategies for improving project communications are (a) appropriately incorporating defined patterns of storytelling into communications and (b) communicating in defined patterns (Cervone, 2014).

One reason for ineffective communication can be due to project managers withholding information based on keeping mum (silent) about undesired messages and withholding unfavorable information in project settings (Perkins, 2014). Project managers spend 70-90 % of their time communicating with project stakeholders, but project managers fail to communicate relevant information upward to senior managers. Defensive silence (withholding information based on fear) is a framework for fear-based information withholding in project-manager-to-project-sponsor communication. Perkins (2014) formulated five research questions or propositions to further investigate the three factors that influence defensive silence in project-manager-to-project-sponsor communication: (a) project managers' trust in project sponsors, (b) project sponsors' openness to communication, and (c) project sponsors' use of coercive power. The results of the study included a proposed conceptual model (i.e., project manager defensive silence consisting of the three factors that influence project managers' tendency to withhold information from project sponsors as a form of self-protection based on fear) (Perkins, 2014). Bad news does not get better with time. Effective leadership is dependent on effective project communication (Cervone, 2014).

Many factors can impede or enhance the performance of project management teams. Project managers are only as good as their project teams. The literature included factors that can affect team performance: (a) project managers, (b) project teams doing the right things well, (c) cultural values, (d) feedback and recognition, (d) increased knowledge, (e) empowerment, and (f) effective project communication.

### **Leadership Styles**

Comprehending leadership can contribute to a better understanding of the conceptual framework within this study. Leadership in project management includes multiple techniques used by managers to permit the ability to adapt to any situation (Galvin et al., 2014). Some researchers identified a difference between project leadership and management (Ahmed & Abdullahi, 2017; Nixon et al., 2012). Project leadership involves motivating, guiding, and directing people to achieve organizational goals (Ahmed & Abdullahi, 2017; Nixon et al., 2012). Project management involves the preparation and organization of project activities (Ahmed & Abdullahi, 2017; Nixon et al., 2012). Leadership in projects includes three broad categories: (a) leadership style, (b) leadership behaviors, and (c) leadership traits (Clarke, 2012b). Leadership styles are the means for categorizing various types of leader behaviors and the way project managers behave toward other project members (Clarke, 2012b).

To better understand leadership styles, Sudha et al. (2016) conducted a study relating to leadership styles, collective efficacy, and leaders' effectiveness. Sudha et al. referred to collective efficacy as a belief shared by a group of its combined capabilities to reach a certain goal. Sudha et al. collected data from 90 employees using items from the

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Among leadership styles, collective efficacy, and leaders' effectiveness, Sudha et al. discovered transformational leadership was the most preferred style, and transactional leadership influenced leader's effectiveness significantly through collective efficacy. Similar to Sudha et al., Clarke (2012a) discovered positive effects of leadership styles and leaders' effectiveness.

Researchers (Furunes, Mykletun, Einarsen, & Glaso, 2015; Muhonen, Jonsson, & Backstrom, 2017) conducted a study to investigate whether leadership behavior has an indirect effect on organizational climate and a direct effect on employee well-being. Muhonen et al. (2017) used three measures: (a) psychological well-being, (b) leadership behavior, and (c) social organizational climate. Using the questionnaires, Furunes et al. (2015) and Muhonen et al. measured the following: (a) psychological well-being using the General Health Questionnaire-12, (b) leadership behavior using empowering leadership and employee-centered leadership, and (c) social organizational climate using QPSNordic. The researchers discovered two things: (a) Social climate reconciles the relationship between employees' well-being and leadership behaviors and (b) no direct effect exists between well-being and the two leadership behaviors. However, Clarke (2012a) discovered inconclusive findings regarding leadership behaviors.

Quintana et al. (2014) conducted a study to examine the specific competency developed by organizational leaders and analyzed leadership behaviors. Quintana et al. defined being employable as having the qualities required to progress in the workplace and maintaining employment, employment as having a job, and employability as having the capabilities to enhance employment activities. The researchers found that leadership is

required for jobs based on two assumptions: (a) Leaders can significantly influence team members' performance, and (b) effective leaders motivate team members to accomplish relevant organizational goals (Quintana et al., 2014).

To gain a better understanding of leadership traits, Hassanzadeh, Silong, Asmuni, and Wahat (2015) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between global leadership and trait development through experience. Globalization involves effective organizational leaders who will lead followers toward cultural diversity for international operational success (Cumberland, Herd, Alagaraja, & Kerrick, 2016; Kassen, 2014). Globalization is an ongoing process. Globalization is the integration of economies, societies, and cultures through a global communication and trade network (Cumberland et al., 2016; Hassanzadeh et al., 2015).

To lead in the twenty-first century, organizational leaders have shifted toward globalization and demanded new leaders with competencies to adapt to cultural sensitivity and diversity (Hassanzadeh et al., 2015). The new leaders, global leaders, lead personnel and organizational businesses across borders of time zones, countries, language, and culture. Seven categories of global leadership competencies are the following: (a) cultural awareness and sensitivity, (b) knowledge and skills, (c) global mindset, (d) learning from experience, (e) communication, (f) maintaining and developing relationships, and (g) traits or attitudes (Hassanzadeh et al., 2015). Contrariwise, Clarke (2012b) identified leadership characteristics and competencies as two components of leadership traits. Clarke discovered leadership traits contributed an insignificant portion to leadership effectiveness areas. Effective leadership depends upon

the ability of leaders to change their styles, behaviors, and traits to suit situations (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014).

### **Leadership Competence and Project Management**

The paradigm of skills required for leaders to possess has shifted. Soft skills include interpersonal and social skills, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and empathy (Ingols & Shapiro, 2014). Ingols and Shapiro (2014) described hard skills as the quantifiable and measurable technical skills, such as intelligence, determination, rigor, and vision. Soft skills become important as one progresses on the career ladder, while hard skills can be easily outsourced (Ingols & Shapiro, 2014). Ingols and Shapiro explored various leadership styles that adhere to soft skills: (a) the respectful leader, (b) the transformational leader, (c) the awakened leader, and (d) the authentic leader.

MBA students considered soft skills, such as conceptual competence, business planning, interpersonal skills, leadership, and team performance, as critical for professional excellence. Ingols and Shapiro (2014) asked three questions to MBA students: (a) What can you learn from the leaders' leadership, (b) what past or present leaders do you admire, and (c) what about the leaders do you admire. Ingols and Shapiro (2014) categorized the leaders as the following: (a) work and academic, (b) business, (c) spiritual, (d) family and friends, (e) sport, and (f) political. MBA students indicated soft skills more often as admirable leadership skills and hard skills slightly more often as lessons learned from admired leaders. Ingols and Shapiro proposed that senior management of business schools and organizations should include soft and hard

leadership skills in their curriculums and workplace to improve individual and organizational performance and competitive advantage.

Berg and Karlsen (2014) also emphasized soft skills as tools for leaders and positive effects on project outcomes. The tools include positive meaning, positive emotions, positive relations, and signature strengths (Berg & Karlsen, 2014). Positive emotions include joy, optimism, gratitude and self-efficacy (Berg & Karlsen, 2014). Leaders perform leadership through relations (Berg & Karlsen, 2014). Leaders' ability to communicate clear vision and implement that vision by transformational leadership can positively affect the performance and well-being within work contexts. Berg and Karlsen conducted semistructured interviews with three project managers from three project-oriented organizations in different oil and gas industries, construction industries, and information systems. As a result, Berg and Karlsen discovered that positive meaning, positive emotions, positive relations, and signature strengths can lead to positive results such as reaching milestones, goal achievement, customer satisfaction, personal development, and project success. Ingols and Shapiro (2014) and Berg and Karlsen emphasized the soft skills (or nontechnical skills) leaders needed in the business workplace and their positive effects on projects.

Kaminsky (2012) used Heifetz's adaptive leadership framework (advanced in mid-1980s and 1994) as the framework for the nontechnical practices for leading projects. Kaminsky conducted a convenient, purposeful sampling of IT project managers who their organization's senior management rated successful. Kaminsky (2012) conducted semistructured interviews to assess the leadership actions project managers use



and proposed a framework (or toolbox) of leadership actions (resulting from responses of participants) that could work together for successful IT project management. The overall toolbox consisted of seven technical actions and 10 nontechnical actions. As project managers should evolve into project leaders, Kaminsky proposed the framework as a guideline for developing and training IT project managers.

Similar to Hassanzadeh et al. (2015), who conducted a study to investigate global leadership traits, Meyer (2014) conducted a study to investigate project leadership competencies. Comparable to the competencies discussed by Galvin et al. (2014), Meyer discussed three main leadership styles: (a) intellectual, (b) managerial, and (c) emotional. To gain different perspectives, Meyer collected data from the project manager, project owner, and project team member regarding project leadership styles.

From the project manager's perspective, project leadership competencies should include the following abilities: (a) build teams into efficient subgroups to best meet the project objectives and (b) communicate across different time zones, cultures, and geographies (Meyer, 2014). From the project owner's perspective, project leader competencies should include the following abilities: (a) keep track of the progress of projects, (b) effectively communicate goals, and (c) set clear goals (Meyer, 2014). From the project team's perspective, project leadership competency should include the following abilities: (a) ensure communication and information flows freely, (b) measure project progress, and (c) ensure project teams meet deadlines (Meyer, 2014). Meyer (2014) discovered communication and planning as common project leadership competencies. Similarly, from the study they conducted, Ramos and Mota (2014)

discovered the following: (a) Lack of communication was the main determinant of failure in IT projects and (b) communication was linked to how organizations' personnel interact and establish organizational culture.

The six tasks project managers implement are (a) manage and lead project activities, situations, and contexts; (b) make decisions; (c) use professional standards in their practice; (d) manage conflicting interests among various stakeholders; (e) comply with rules and regulations; and (f) deliver the best possible and most feasible outcome (Bredillet, 2014). Competent project managers are crucial to leading and managing successful projects (Bredillet, 2014; Bredillet et al., 2015). Project management and strategic planning share the same algorithm to solve problems. Consequently, researchers (Corte, Del Gaudio, Sepe, & Zamparelli, 2017; Maddalena, 2012) discovered six project management steps: (a) build the right teams to work on projects, (b) determine and communicate the nature and progress of projects with key stakeholders, (c) create accountability frameworks, (d) observe organizations' activities, (e) ensure timely implementation through monitoring, and (f) conduct postproject evaluations and assessments to determine whether projects' implementation were successful.

### **Transition**

This section included the background of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose statement, the nature of the study, the overarching research question, and interview questions. This section also included the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance of the study. The last subsection of this section included the literature review. The literature review

included discussions on six main areas: (a) projects overview, (b) project management overview, (c) project and business outcome, (d) team performance, (e) leadership styles, and (f) leadership competence and project management. The following section will contain a more detailed discussion of the project, a qualitative single case study. The final section will contain the findings of the study, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and conclusion of the study.

## Section 2: The Project

In this qualitative single case study, I explored the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. Despite attempts for the PMI leaders to provide framework and methodologies in project management activities, IT projects continue to fail worldwide and adversely affect organizational performance (Drury-Grogan, 2014; Heumann et al., 2015; Hornstein, 2015). Section 2 includes the business purpose of the study, my role as the researcher, and the method and design of the study. Section 2 also includes information about the participants, population and sampling, ethical research, and the reliability and validity of the study.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. Project leadership style affects organizational performance and improves sustainable competitive advantage among organizations (Sudha et al., 2016). The specific population included five project managers who have successfully managed U.S.-based IT projects and improved the project outcomes. Senior management may use the findings of this study to gain a better understanding of project managers' leadership styles and competencies that contribute to increasing profitability, project success, and positive business outcomes. The results of this study may support positive social change by improving organizational performance that will provide jobs, economic stability, and opportunities for the community.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In the study conducted by Lang et al. (2014), the researchers contacted interested participants, explained the study, arranged the interviews, and answered any participants' questions and concerns. The researchers also provided the consent form to the participants prior to the interviews. The researchers were the data collection instruments in the study (Lang et al., 2014). Similarly, I was the data collection instrument for this study. I was actively involved in every stage of the research process. The stages included designing the method of the study, planning the approach, and obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct the study. Other stages included the collection, organization, analysis, and interpretation of data and maintenance of ethical considerations of participants that may occur. Designing the exploratory, open-ended questions for the interviews and performing any required validations facilitated the participant responses.

To accomplish business objectives, organizational leaders have evolved toward using projects (Papke-Shields & Boyer-Wright, 2017). Consequently, business leaders in industries, such as software, engineering, construction, and even IT, seek skilled project managers (Papke-Shields & Boyer-Wright, 2017). My relationship with the topic included participating as a project team member in projects in the IT industry during my 15 years of experience as an IT specialist. IT projects continue to fail worldwide and affect organizational performance (Drury-Grogan, 2014; Heumann et al., 2015; Hornstein, 2015). During the 15 years as an IT specialist, I have observed project managers of IT projects with failed and successful outcomes.

Vanclay, Baines, and Taylor (2013) identified principles of ethical social research involving humans to comply with the three scientific norms presented by the Belmont Report. The principles are the following: (a) voluntary participation, (b) full disclosure of funding sources, (c) participant right to withdraw, (d) presumption and preservation of anonymity, (e) data protection, and (f) confidentiality. I considered these scientific norms and principles while conducting the research throughout this study. The informed consent and coding during data collection and organization facilitated the compliance of these norms and principles. Furthermore, the Walden University IRB reviewed this study to ensure I protected the ethical protection of the human participants.

Through bracketing or epoché, the researcher can see beyond preconceptions and assumptions (Snelgrove, 2014). Suspending (epoché) or bracketing any judgments or preconceptions relative to the interview process is important (Moustakas, 1994; Sorsa, Kikkala, & Astedt-kurki, 2015). Researchers, such as Snelgrove (2014) and Sorsa et al. (2015), suggested avoiding personal biases by disregarding personal beliefs and experiences. Bernard (2013) and Sorsa et al. suggested that setting aside judgments and bracketing preconceptions will be important to ensure personal bias does not interfere with data collection. As I established a working relationship with the participants, I disregarded any personal beliefs and experiences to guard against introducing any personal biases about the single case study.

Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggested the use of interview protocols to increase the quality of data obtained from interviews. An interview protocol includes (a) a list of interview questions, (b) a script of what the researcher will say before and after the

interviews, (c) reminders of when to collect the informed consent form, and (d) a reminder of the information the researcher is collecting (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Castillo-Montoya and Drury-Grogan (2014) described the interview protocol as a procedural guide for directing a qualitative researcher and ensuring consistency throughout the interview process. The consistent use of the informed consent, a greeting script, open-ended interview questions, and no deviations from the interview protocol mitigated the risk of imposing personal beliefs, experiences, and beliefs (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Sorsa et al., 2015).

The interview protocol or procedural guide I used for this study is located in Appendix B. The interview protocol includes a list of open-ended interview questions (see Appendix A), when to collect the informed consent, a greeting script of what to say before the interviews (see Appendix C), and reminder that data collection involved the exploration of the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers use to improve IT project outcomes.

### **Participants**

Kaminsky (2012) conducted a qualitative study and collected data for IT projects from U.S.-based companies. Kaminsky applied the findings collected from the U.S.-based companies to IT project management. Martinsuo et al. (2014) included only project managers in their case study involving project implementation. In their study, Eskerod (2017) used participants who stakeholders and peers considered successful and had enough training or skills in delivering projects. Eskerod identified the participants as expert project managers. Practitioners develop over time with the understanding of

constraints and opportunities that enables them to act in a skilled manner. For this study, the timeframe for this level of expertise was at least 5 years of project management experience. I solicited and selected participants for this qualitative single case study based upon a single criterion: project managers who have successfully managed U.S.-based IT projects and improved the project outcomes.

The population consisted of project managers who provided project management of information management and IT services and support for an organization headquartered in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The study involved the review of available archival organizational documents and recording of participants' interviews (as agreed to by the participants). I established a working relationship with the participants by providing the purpose of the study and reassuring the confidentiality of the participants' involvement in the study. I contacted the participants five times: (a) to obtain consent for the informed consent, (b) to schedule time of interview, (c) to confirm scheduled time of interview, (d) to conduct interview, and (e) follow-up via email correspondence for member checking. I provided the benefits of this study, which are included in the informed consent, to the participants. The participants bought into a working relationship because the participants may become more aware of their leadership style and competency, make a positive contribution to increase project success, and assist me as a colleague of the same organization.

### **Research Method and Design**

In this study, I explored the specific leadership styles and competences project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. The research method subsection



includes detailed discussions on the method (qualitative). The research design subsection includes detailed discussions on the design (case study) for this study.

### **Research Method**

I used a qualitative single case study for this study. Researchers can gain a close-up view with a richer and deeper understanding with qualitative research, which researchers may miss in a quantitative study (Gergen et al., 2015). Qualitative research involves an in-depth exploration into a single phenomenon/experience (Bailey, 2014; Runfola, Perna, Baraldi, & Gregori, 2017).

Quantitative researchers gather a variety of information quickly, which enables researchers the ability to apply the results to a large number of cases (Baille, 2015). For this reason, quantitative research would not be conducive for deeply exploring the specific leadership styles and competencies used by IT project managers to improve project outcomes. Qualitative data collection involves depth and the gathering of rich narratives (Venkatesh et al., 2016). By using qualitative data collection, I gathered information from the IT project managers' applied perceptions of their leadership style and competency.

Mixed methods research is a combination of more than one research method, such as quantitative and qualitative methods (Venkatesh et al., 2016). Researchers use mixed method research: (a) to explore and identify interventions, knowledge, and skills for successful project management and (b) to increase project effectiveness (Baptista, Santos, Pascoa, & Sandig, 2016; Duffuaa & Hadidi, 2017). Mixed methods research involves the researcher's ability to address exploratory (qualitative) and confirmatory (quantitative)

research questions simultaneously (Venkatesh et al., 2016). I did not choose mixed methods because the emphasis of this study was on addressing exploratory questions only to gain a better understanding of which specific leadership styles and competencies project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes.

### **Research Design**

I used a qualitative single case study for this study. A case study includes a contemporary phenomenon in a real-world setting (Wagner et al., 2014; Yin, 2017). The researcher can study an object in a holistic manner with a case study (Yin, 2017). Moustakas (1994) identified phenomenological research as a means to better understand lived experiences; however, Yin (2017) identified a case study as a means to better understand a phenomenon and real-life events. Ruppel and Mey (2015) suggested that researchers should communicate with practitioners in the organizations in the case study to gain a better understanding of real-world practices in their present state.

Case studies can be either a single case study or multicase study (Yin, 2017). Researchers may have critical, unusual, longitudinal, revelatory, and common reasons to use a single case study (Yin, 2017). A single case study design involves a deeper understanding of the case (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Hughes, Rana, and Simintiras (2017) used a single case study design to explore factors leading to the failure of IT projects. Aaltonen and Kujala (2016) conducted a single case to explore project strategy. I chose to use a single case study to capture the conditions of an everyday situation (leadership styles and competencies used by project managers) and relate to a theoretical interest (improve IT project outcome).

The case study involves researchers investigating everything in a situation (Cronin, 2014). Investigating everything may include a specific phenomenon, activities, individuals, or groups (Cronin, 2014). Petty et al. (2012) suggested the use of the case study to understand a specific, complex thing, such as a process, a system, a policy, an institution, or a person or people. Yin (2017) emphasized the use of the case study, in particular, the single case study, as a means for researchers to focus on analyzing cases that may be typical, extreme, or revelatory. The focus of this study was to explore and explain the phenomenon of interest (specific leadership competencies and styles project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes), not the cultural description resulting from an ethnographical approach. Grounded theory is the best method for developing theories about social and psychological processes (Petty et al., 2012; Ruppel & Mey, 2015). The intent of this study is not to build or validate a theory as would be the case for grounded theory.

Narrative inquiry involves the telling of stories about autobiographical truths consistent with experiences in a personal and cultural way (Clandinin et al., 2016; de Leeuw et al., 2017). Narrative research involves the personal reflection of one event or series of events of one or more individuals (Petty et al., 2012). For this reason, I did not choose narrative inquiry because of its overly personal nature. With a case study, researchers can focus on one or more cases relating to a particular set of individuals, groups, organizations, processes, or activities through a bounded system (Yin, 2017). Qualitative single case study research includes the method to gain an understanding when studying a contemporary phenomenon (Giorgi, 2017; Venkatesh et al., 2016; Yin, 2017).

Data saturation occurs when researchers find no new additional data in data collection to develop conceptual category aspects (Tran, Porcher, Falissard, & Ravaud, 2016). Data saturation involves the point where new data collected become counterproductive and provide diminishing returns (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Determining the appropriate sample size in qualitative studies can attribute to reaching data saturation. Following up with the participants can permit the researcher to obtain unexpected thoughts, themes, concepts, and ideas (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Researchers cannot assume they have reached data saturation because they have used all resources (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is not about the number and one size does not fit all (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I followed up via email correspondence for member checking. To reach data saturation, any new data brought up with one participant required me to reinterview previous participants regarding the new data. I continued this process until I reached data saturation. I annotated participants' nonverbal gestures and body language in a journal during the interview.

### **Population and Sampling**

Population refers to all possible participants who have certain characteristics that fit a study criterion, and a sample is a subset of the population (Englander, 2016; Giorgi, 2017). Sampling refers to smaller units that can statistically relate to the population at large (Englander, 2016). Researchers have to choose smaller units (sample) that represent features and possess the same characteristics of larger units (population) (Brodsky et al., 2014).

The first step was to identify the target population. The population included project managers who have successfully managed U.S.-based IT projects and improved the project outcomes. The targeted research participants included project managers from an organization headquartered in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The organization consists of employees who provide project management of information management of IT services and support.

After identifying the target population, the next step was to determine the sampling method. Two main sampling categories exist: (a) probability and (b) nonprobability (Kandola, Banner, O’Keefe-McCarthy, & Jassal, 2014). Probability sampling method involves the random sampling of elements from the population and each element has an equal and independent chance of selection in the sample (Kandola et al., 2014). Five main types of probability sampling methods are (a) simple random, (b) systematic random, (c) stratified random, (d) cluster, and (e) multistage (Kandola et al., 2014). Nonprobability sampling methods involve sampling of elements through nonrandom methods of selection in the sample (Kandola et al., 2014). Three main types of nonprobability sampling methods are convenience, purposive, and snowball (Kandola et al., 2014; Suen, Huang, & Lee, 2014). Probability sampling methods are commonly associated with quantitative research, and nonprobability sampling methods are most common in qualitative research (Kandola et al., 2014).

I chose purposive sampling for this qualitative single case study. Purposive sampling method is one of the nonprobability sampling methods. Researchers use the purposive aspect in case studies to reflect how they select case studies (Yin, 2017).

Purposive sampling involves the following: (a) having a general sense of the expected criteria of the single case study, (b) selecting cases information-rich, and (c) selecting participants that answer the question, *Do the participants share the occurrence of the phenomenon that the researcher is looking for?* (Englander, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Purposive sampling involves researchers examining specific characteristics of a population (Kandola et al., 2014). In purposive sampling, researchers are involved in the investigation of participants based on the researchers' judgment and researchers hand-pick participants based on the researchers' knowledge and experience in the area (Kandola et al., 2014).

Researchers use purposive sampling to specifically select participants who match the criterion to ask the interview questions with the intent of providing rich information (Suen et al., 2014). The strategy I used to select information-rich cases for this study was criterion sampling. Criterion sampling involves the researcher reviewing all cases based on some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2015). Ofori (2013) used purposive sampling to select a sample in the study of project management critical factors. Using purposeful, criterion sampling, can facilitate the revealing of major strengths or weaknesses in the qualitative analysis (Patton, 2015). The area of interest in this study included the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes.

Researchers can use data saturation to establish the sample size of the majority of qualitative studies (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). Leedy and Ormrod (2012) suggested that an adequate sample size for data saturation consists of five to 25

participants; however, Padgett (2017) contended that five to 10 participants will suffice to reach saturation. Yin (2017) did not view case studies as sampling units but rather as opportunities to provide insight into contemporary events in their real-life context. When researchers find no new additional data in data collection, data saturation occurs (Tran et al., 2016). Data saturation is not about the numbers but depth (Fusch & Ness, 2015). One size does not fit all, and researchers must determine the sample size according to what will have the best opportunity for data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Consequently, I used a sample size of five participants for this case study: (a) to explore the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes and (b) to reach data saturation.

### **Ethical Research**

The Belmont Report, the basis of institutional ethics in the United States, included three scientific norms that govern research involving humans: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (United States National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Six principles of ethical social research comply with the three scientific norms: (a) voluntary participation, (b) full disclosure of funding sources, (c) participant right to withdraw, (d) presumption and preservation of anonymity, (e) data protection, and (f) confidentiality (Vanclay et al., 2013). The use of the informed consent and coding of data collected facilitated the compliance with the principles of ethical social research presented by Vanclay et al. (2013) and the three scientific norms included in the Belmont Report. The informed consent form included information about (a) the purpose of the study, (b) the data

collection procedures, (c) the voluntary nature of the study, (d) the risks and benefits of participating in the study, (e) compensation (or lack of), (f) confidentiality, (g) data protection, and (h) participants' flexibility to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time during the process.

The participants did not obtain any monetary incentives for participating in the study. An incentive for participating in this study included the benefit of participants' shared experiences regarding project managers' leadership styles and competencies to facilitate senior management's improved understanding. Consequently, senior management can better understand the project managers' leadership styles and competencies that contribute to increasing project success, profitability, and positive business outcomes.

Each interview began with the greeting script (see Appendix C) and reaffirmation of consent, followed by the interview using the open-ended interview questions (see Appendix A). Leedy and Ormrod (2012) suggested the use of coding (pseudonyms) to maintain confidentiality, distinguish between participants, and keep data confidential. I used pseudonyms in my study. Only I have the coding to distinguish each participant in my pseudonym plan. To protect the rights of the participants, maintenance of data and pseudonym coding will be for 5 years in a safe place. Walden's University's approval number for this study is 12-13-16-0386359 and it expires on December 4, 2018.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Two types of data are (a) primary and (b) secondary (Kumar, 2011). Researchers can use several options to collect data using primary sources: (a) questionnaire, (b)



interview, and (c) observation. Secondary data are data researchers have not collected for a particular research purpose and the data already exist (Prada-Ramallal, Takkouche, & Figueiras, 2017). The use of different sources of verification permits the testing of validity and demonstrates methodological triangulation (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). I used interviews and review of archival organizational documents to achieve methodological triangulation. Primary data for a case study are collected via semistructured interviews and the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Arriaza, Nedjat-Haiem, Lee, & Martin, 2015; Lang et al., 2014). I was the primary data collection instrument.

Drury-Grogan (2014) conducted semistructured interviews using an interview protocol for the case study and included participants within the same organization. Drury-Grogan used open-ended questions to allow the participants to express their view. With semistructured questions, the researcher and participants can have a flowing conversation between topics, rather than the researcher moving strictly from one question to the next (Drury-Grogan, 2014). Svejvig and Andersen (2015) used semistructured interviews in their study to discover what project management processes and tools the participants used in projects. Kaminsky (2012) also conducted semistructured interviews to determine project managers' leadership actions. I conducted semistructured interviews with exploratory, open-ended questions (see Appendix A) using an interview protocol (see Appendix B) to obtain information from IT project managers.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The overarching research question for this study was as follows: What specific leadership styles and competencies do IT project managers possess to improve project outcomes? The purpose of the overarching research question was to provide guidance to explore the specific project managers' leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. The data collection technique was semistructured interviews and interview observations. Kaminsky (2012) conducted semistructured interviews to assess the leadership actions that project managers use. To explore project management success factors, Drury-Grogan (2014) conducted semistructured interviews within the same organization using an interview protocol. Svejvig and Andersen (2015) used semistructured interviews in their study to discover what project management processes and tools the participants used in projects. I collected data using semistructured interviews containing open-ended questions to gather qualitative single case study data to explore the specific project managers' leadership styles and competencies to improve IT project outcomes.

Advantages for collecting data using interviews are as follows: (a) The interviewer obtains training in probing and clarifying responses that can lead to more reliable data, (b) the interviewer can be flexible in administering questions in particular circumstances to particular individuals, (c) there is less potential for technical problems when completing the interview questions, and (d) the interviewer can experience the cognitive and affective aspects of participants' responses (Fowler, 2014). The

disadvantages of using interviews include the time involved with scheduling with participants and the high cost of data collection per unit (Fowler, 2014).

Petty et al. (2012) and Runfola et al. (2017) recorded and later transcribed interviews. The duration of each of the interviews took up to 90 minutes. Each interview lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. Drury-Grogan (2014) audio-recorded (with permission) and later transcribed each interview. Each interview duration for this study took up to 90 minutes. I recorded and transcribed each interview for this case study.

Researchers must possess skills to ask good questions, stay adaptive, be a good listener, avoid biases, and have a firm understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2017). I gained more practice and strengthened my skills with semistructured interviewing techniques. Using the interview protocol as a guide, I provided participants with the informed consent. After receiving confirmed consent from the participants, I provided a copy of the consent to each participant and begin each interview with a greeting (to include receiving permission to record the interview). Along with the responses of the participants, I made notes of the location, time, and date of the interviews. I also made notes of the participants' nonverbal responses and body language in a journal during the interviews.

Researchers conduct follow-up questions and debriefing after interviewing to allow participants to make comments, ask questions, and add information that participants missed during the interview (Carter et al., 2014; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Thomas, 2017). Member checking or respondent validation is a method to increase the credibility of a study (Carter et al., 2014; Harvey, 2015; Petty et al., 2012). Member

checking involves verifying researcher's interpretation of data collected with responses provided by participants (Petty et al., 2012). During and at the end of each interview session, I conducted member checking by restating and summarizing the responses obtained from the interview questions to determine accuracy. I debriefed, thanked the participants for their time, and coordinated a follow-on interview to facilitate data saturation.

Along with interviews, Yin (2017) identified five additional sources of evidence for case studies: (a) documentation, (b) direct observation, (c) participation observation, (d) archival records, and (e) physical artifacts. Yin suggested that documentation can be relevant to every case study. Advantages of documentation include stable, unobtrusive, specific, and broad. Disadvantages of documentation include retrievability, reporting bias, access, and biased selectivity (Yin, 2017). Using multiple sources of evidence enables data triangulation that can increase reliability (Bureau & Andersen, 2014; Carter et al., 2014; Drouin, Stewart, & Van Gorder, 2015). I used methodological triangulation and as additional sources of evidence for this case study, I used archival organizational records.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Researchers (Alsudiri et al., 2013; Fernandes, Ward, & Araujo, 2014; Yin, 2017) described uploading transcribed data to a computer-assisted tool, such as NVivo, HyperRESEARCH, Atlas.ti, and The Ethnograph to assist with coding and categorizing large amounts of data. To assist with recording, transcribing, and analyzing data, I used Audacity®, Microsoft Word®, and NVivo®. I downloaded all software to my personal

computer. My personal computer is password-protected, and any hard copy data are stored in a locked container to ensure confidentiality.

Data storage includes results from field notes, the interview questions, and filing of hard copy documentation (Padgett, 2017). Researchers can use research logs within computer software to organize what participants are responding to (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). Researchers can organize participants' responses according to transitions, categories, missing data, theory-related material, repetitions, and similarities (Gale et al., 2013). For emerging themes, I kept a research log on Microsoft Word® and used letters to identify and organize the participants' responses. I coded and organized participants' responses. The data collected are being stored for 5 years. I will remove the electronic data from the computer using reliable third-party removal software and shred any hard copy data using a reliable shredder.

### **Data Analysis**

The basis of this case study consists of exploring IT project managers' specific leadership styles and competencies to improve IT project outcomes. Types of data triangulation include investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Brau & Andersen, 2014; Carter et al., 2014; Drouin et al., 2015). Yin (2013) suggested methodological triangulation as the type of triangulation more likely to strengthen the validity in a case study. For this study, I used methodological triangulation. I collected data from participants via interview questions (see Appendix A) and reviewed archival organizational documents.

Alsudiri et al. (2013), in their study about alignment of project management and business strategy, used a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program entitled NVivo® in three ways: (a) to construct themes and categories, (b) to extract words and sentences from the transcripts to relate to each constructed theme, and (c) to analyze the data. Researchers assigned pseudonyms to distinguish between participants in keeping data confidential, used NVivo® to analyze interview data through thematic application and analysis, and suggested proofreading transcribed data twice (Fernandes et al., 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2012; Yin, 2017). I transcribed data collected from the semistructured interviews using Microsoft Word®, uploaded transcribed data into NVivo® for data analysis, and organized and cataloged the data by a unique numeric identifier (or pseudonym). I used the pseudonym for each participant to protect the confidentiality of the participants. For example, in the pseudonym 00109102017, 001 indicates the sequence when the participant completed the interview questions, 09 indicates the month the participant completed the interview questions, 10 indicates the day the participant completed the interview questions, and 2017 indicates the year when the participant completed the interview questions. Only I have the coding to distinguish each participant in my pseudonym plan. I proofread the transcribed data more than twice and used NVivo® to simplify emphasizing commonalities for exploring and capturing emerging themes that may contribute to increasing project success, organizational profitability, and positive business outcomes.

## **Reliability and Validity**

Qualitative research involves researchers witnessing those participating in an event, researchers documenting in detail what they witnessed, and researchers identifying the meaning or results of what they witnessed (Cypress, 2017). Reliability and validity in qualitative are ways to establish confidence and trust in the results of a study (Baille, 2015; Harvey, 2015). The general criteria of reliability and validity in qualitative research are in the following sections.

### **Reliability**

To accomplish qualitative rigor in qualitative research, four elements must exist: (a) dependability, (b) confirmability, (c) transferability, and (d) credibility (Baille, 2015; Venkatesh et al., 2016). Dependability is an element needed to accomplish reliability. Dependability occurs when one researcher can trace the decision trail of another researcher in a study (Baille, 2015). The qualitative researchers' concern is whether the same results will occur twice (Venkatesh et al., 2016). The strategy to address dependability is to report in detail the processes within the study (Baille, 2015). Reporting includes the research design and implementation, data collection, and the effectiveness and any changes that may affect the study (Harvey, 2015). To ensure dependability of this study, I have documented in detail (a) the role of the researcher, (b) participants, (c) research method and design, (d) population and sampling, (e) data collection including instruments, organization, and techniques, and (f) data analysis.

## **Validity**

Confirmability, credibility, and transferability are three elements needed to accomplish qualitative rigor relating to validity (Baille, 2015; Harvey, 2015).

Confirmability is the other element needed to accomplish qualitative rigor that relates to reliability (Baille, 2015). Confirmability occurs when researchers establish dependability, credibility, and transferability in a study (Baille, 2015). Confirmability of a study can lead to the sense of trustworthiness of the findings (Baille, 2015).

Confirmability can also lead to trustworthiness of applicability and overall research (Baille, 2015). A strategy to support conformability includes audit trails (Cope, 2014).

Audit trails include a description of the research path to include research method and design, data collection, data analysis, and data results (Cope, 2014). Yang, Lewis, and Wojnar (2016) maintained an audit trail of the study results. Baille (2015) identified audit trail as a means for the researcher to trace the course of the study step-by-step. I documented how the data gathered led to the formation of recommendations through procedures described in detail and decisions made during the course of this study.

Credibility is the element that allows others to view with confidence the event of interest from the participants' perspectives (Baille, 2015). The results of the participants mirror the views and others recognize who share the same experience (Cope, 2014).

Another strategy to implement credibility includes triangulation (Carter et al., 2014).

Member checking or respondent validation is a strategy to increase the credibility of a study (Carter et al., 2014; Harvey, 2015; Petty et al., 2012). Member checking involves verifying researcher's interpretation of data collected with responses provided by



participants (Harvey, 2015; Petty et al., 2012). To establish credibility, I used member checking. During and at the end of each interview session, I conducted member checking by restating and summarizing the responses obtained from the interview questions to determine accuracy. Following up with the participants after completion of the interview questions ensured the researcher's interpretation of the responses was an accurate representation of the participants' experiences (Carter et al., 2014; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Thomas, 2017). Follow-up questions enable participants to make comments, ask questions, and add information that researchers may miss during the initial interview (Carter et al., 2014; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Thomas, 2017). I followed up after the interview to ensure I depicted an accurate representation of participants' responses.

Transferability is the third of three elements needed to accomplish qualitative rigor relating to validity. Transferability is the capability of transferring research findings from one group to another (Cope, 2014; Baille, 2015). The qualitative researchers' concern includes whether they can apply or transfer the findings from one group in a study to another group or situation (Cope, 2014). The criterion of dependability depends on how thorough the qualitative researcher describes the research context (Baille, 2015; Harvey, 2015). The judgment of the transferability is the responsibility of the researcher who wants to transfer the results (Cope, 2014; Morse, 2015). Cope (2014), Cypress (2017), and Morse (2015) suggested the researcher provide detailed information surrounding participants, data collection methods and techniques. I established transferability by providing a detailed description of the participants, population and

sampling, research method and design, and data collection instruments and techniques used in this study.

Data saturation involves the point where new data sources become counterproductive and provide diminishing returns (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Primary data sources may include interview, observation, and document analysis (Petty et al., 2012). Secondary data sources may include data that researchers have not collected for a particular research purpose and the data already exists (Prada-Ramallal et al., 2017). Following up with the participants after completion of the interview questions (primary data source) will ensure the researcher's interpretation of the responses is an accurate representation of the participants' experiences (Carter et al., 2014; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Thomas, 2017). Following up with the participants can permit the researcher to obtain unexpected thoughts, themes, concepts, and ideas (Thomas, 2017). I continued to follow up with the interview participants (primary data source) until I reached data saturation.

### **Transition and Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. In Section 2, I discussed the business purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, the method, the design, and participants of the study. In Section 2, I also discussed the population and sampling, ethical research, and reliability and validity of the study. In the following section, Section 3, I will provide an introduction that includes the purpose of the study and a brief summary of the findings. In the remainder of the Section 3, I will

discuss the presentation of the findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research. I will conclude Section 3 with reflections and conclusion of the study.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This section includes overarching themes resulting from data collection and analyses. The section includes the following: (a) introduction, (b) presentation of the findings, (c) application to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for action, and (f) recommendations for further research. I will conclude Section 3 with reflections and my conclusion of the study.

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. I used archival organizational records as a second data source for methodological triangulation purposes. Four of the five participants stated they used all three leadership styles, managerial, intellectual, and emotional, to improve IT project outcomes. Four of the five participants selected empowering as the competency they used to improve IT project outcomes. The participants suggested four factors affecting project outcomes: (a) communication, (b) sharing knowledge, (c) taking risks, and (d) assessing situations. Three themes emerged in support of the research question: (a) leadership style chosen, (b) leadership competency chosen, and (c) project factors affecting project outcomes. An analysis of the findings showed that leadership style and competence chosen along with certain project outcome factors are critical in improving IT project outcomes. The following section includes the findings in more detail.

## **Presentation of the Findings**

I conducted a single case study on an organization of personnel who provides project management of information management and IT services and support. I created the interview questions (see Appendix A), asked the interview questions to the participants, and collected and analyzed their responses to support answering the overarching research question: What specific leadership styles and competencies do IT project managers possess to improve project outcomes? I used Audacity® to record and transcribe each interview. I used NVivo® software to analyze the transcriptions. As a result of the analysis of participants' interviews and archival documents reviews, I uncovered three themes: (a) leadership style chosen, (b) leadership competency chosen, and (c) project factors affecting project outcomes.

### **Emergent Theme 1: Leadership Style Chosen**

I asked the participants interview questions regarding three specific leadership styles that as project managers they possess to improve IT project outcomes: (a) intellectual, (b) managerial, and (c) emotional. Four (80%) participants acknowledged using all leadership styles to be effective. Project Manager (PM) 1 stated all three were used. On member checking, PM1 indicated that all three were used to get a positive outcome. PM2 stated all three styles are needed to be effective and all aspects of these leadership styles are all important. PM3 stated no particular leadership style was used, and on member checking, PM3 suggested all leadership styles were used. PM5 stated all three of the leadership styles were used "most definitely." Table 2 contains a summary of leadership styles chosen by the participants.

Table 2

*Summary of Leadership Styles*

	PM1	PM2	PM3	PM4	PM5
Managerial	X	X	X	X	X
Intellectual	X	X	X		X
Emotional	X	X	X		X

Galvin et al. (2014) suggested intellectual, managerial, and emotional leadership styles as those leadership styles possessed by effective project managers, and similar to transformational, transactional, and participatory leadership styles. Intellectual leadership style involves the intelligence and problem-solving abilities of project managers and is the cornerstone of not accepting the norm, similar to transformational leadership style (Galvin et al., 2014; McCleskey, 2014). Managerial leadership style is task-oriented and involves project managers completing tasks, similar to transactional leadership style (Galvin et al., 2014; McCleskey, 2014). Emotional leadership style involves project managers' feelings and the feelings of their teams, similar to participatory or shared leadership style (Galvin et al., 2014; McCleskey, 2014).

According to the findings of Galvin et al.'s (2014) study, all three types of traditional leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and participatory, attributed to project outcomes. According to Galvin et al., leadership in project management includes multiple techniques used by managers to permit the ability to adapt to any situation. Bass and Avolio (1993) described transformational leadership with four components: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. Munyeki and Were (2017) studied

each component separately and concluded that all components of transformational leadership have significant and positive effects on project-based organizations. Bass and Avolio described transactional leadership with reward exchange between leaders and their subordinates. Birasnav (2014) suggested transactional leadership can positively affect organizational performance. The type of leadership used can be determined by the culture. Transformational leadership is most likely seen in highly innovative organizational cultures (Bass & Avolio, 1993). In contrast, transactional leadership is most likely seen in existing organizational cultures based on operative norms (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Clarke (2012b) suggested shared (or participatory) leadership is more effective for projects of increased complexity and uncertain (or risky) situations.

Some researchers have suggested that the transformational, transactional, and participatory leadership styles positively attribute to project, organizational performance, and overall organizational success (Birasnav, 2014; Munyeki & Were, 2017). Gillet and Vandenberghe (2014) proposed hiring transformational leaders in project intensive organizations. Birasnav (2014) suggested that transformational leaders have positive and significant effects on organizational performance. Overstreet et al. (2014) advocated that transformational leadership can impact leaders' propensity to be more innovative and inclined to be more profitable. Transformational leadership seems to be effective in both permanent and project-based organizations in times of change (Tyssen et al., 2014). Hoch (2014) discovered positive association between team performance and shared leadership.

Aga, Noorderhaven, and Vallejo (2016) suggested that transformational leadership indirectly and directly affect project success. Transformational leadership includes a leadership style that promotes an environment appropriate to enhance team building and commitment (Aga et al., 2016). An important project success factor includes effective project leadership. Munyeki and Were (2017) suggested that project managers' leadership style had a significant influence on project success.

The findings from Theme 1 aligned with the existing body of knowledge and the conceptual framework for this study. Galvin et al. (2014) suggested that all three types of traditional leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and participatory, attributed to project outcomes. Galvin et al. also suggested that leadership in project management includes multiple techniques used by managers to permit the ability to adapt to any situation. Member checking did not yield additional information for Theme 1. PM1 proposed that the leadership style “depends on the project you are working on.” Similarly, PM2 proposed that the leadership style used is “depending on how a project is going or the direction everything is taking within the project” and “an effective leader is going to transition between different leadership styles, based on the circumstance.” Along with PM1 and PM2, PM3 suggested that “you just have to transition between different types of styles depending how the project is going.” PM5 suggested that the leadership style is “depending on the circumstances that are given in a project.” The review of archival organizational documents showed that strategies are in place to improve multiple techniques used by project managers to adapt to any situation. For example, the organization's methods to implement lessons learned include the following:



Documenting lessons learned to provide an opportunity for team members and/or contract partners to discuss successes during the project, unintended outcomes, and recommendations for others who will be involved in similar future projects. Use of lessons learned is a principal component of an organization's commitment to continuous improvement and adaptive management.

### **Emergent Theme 2: Leadership Competency Chosen**

Galvin et al. (2014) discovered 15 different competencies from the leadership styles. Table 3 is a summary of the leadership competencies chosen by the participants. *Empower* or *empowering* occurred 22 times throughout the interviews. Four of five (80%) of the participants selected using empowering and empowerment mentioned as a leadership competency they have used. PM2 added, "Empower them. I think empowerment is fantastic." PM3 stated, "Definitely empower them and also part of the emotional thing because if they are concerned about whether or not they succeed or fail based on their decisions." PM3 further stated that the project was successful not because PM3 chose it but because the team felt confident about the progression of the project. PM3 empowered the team to move forward based on what transpired.

Table 3

#### *Summary of Leadership Competencies*

	PM1	PM2	PM3	PM4	PM5
Critical Analysis			X		
Judgement			X		
Engaging communication		X		X	
Empowering		X	X	X	X
Self-awareness	X				
Intuitiveness	X				

Empowering is encouraging team members and using resources to broaden members' work vision (Galvin et al., 2014). Empowering is one of the competencies associated with the managerial leadership style. PM4 suggested, "Empowering encourages teamwork, and teamwork is very important." PM5 stated, "I empower them to do the right thing, and I will weigh the outcomes of how they're accomplishing things." According to Dong, Liao, Chuang, Zhou, and Campbell (2015), empowering behavior can motivate employee creativity.

Engaging communication, empowering, developing, and achieving are competencies associated with the managerial leadership style (Galvin et al., 2014). Critical analysis, judgment, vision, and strategic planning are competencies associated with the intellectual leadership style (Galvin et al., 2014). Self-awareness, emotional resilience, intuitiveness, interpersonal sensitivity, influence, motivation, and conscientiousness are competencies associated with the emotional leadership style (Galvin et al., 2014).

Berg and Karlsen (2014) suggested that soft skills, such as developing and encouraging positive emotions among team members, can create positive results. These skills are associated with the emotional leadership style (Galvin et al., 2014). Meyer (2014) suggested that communication and planning as common project leadership competencies. Planning or strategic planning is associated with the intellectual leadership style, and communication or engaging communication is associated with the managerial leadership style (Galvin et al., 2014). Berg and Karlsen emphasized soft skills or competencies for leaders and positive effects on project outcomes. Shao (2017)

suggested that project managers develop their power of influence. This competency is associated with the emotional leadership style.

The findings from Theme 2 aligned with the existing body of knowledge and the conceptual framework for this study. Galvin et al. (2014) associated empowering with the managerial leadership style (which is similar to the transactional leadership style). However, Bass and Avolio (1993) suggested empowering others as a trait of transformational leadership. Member checking did not yield any additional information for Theme 2. The review of the archival organizational documents demonstrated that tools are in place to support leadership competencies such as empowering and engaging communication to improve project outcome. Documents include “empowering or authorizing the project manager to a project or empowering employees with additional capabilities because of a project.” Project managers and team members can complete a self-audit/project checklist for each project to include project charter, project closure form, lessons learned, schedule, and project requirements. The lessons learned is one of the organization’s “mechanism to communicate acquired knowledge more effectively and ensure relevant information is factored into planning, work processes, and activities.” The steps for the organization’s lessons learned include the following: (a) defining the project, (b) collecting information, (c) verifying applicability, (d) storage, and (e) dissemination. To ensure the lessons learned are communicated in a consistent manner, the project managers and team members of the organization are required to use a template and post to an organizational project server that project managers and team members have access.

### Emergent Theme 3: Project Factors Affecting Project Outcomes

The participants provided additional factors they considered to affect project outcomes. Two of five (40%) participants suggested that communication was needed for positive project outcome. The other factors provided by the participants include the following: (a) sharing knowledge, (b) taking risks, and (c) assessing situations. Table 4 contains a summary of the factors provided by the participants.

Table 4

#### *Summary of Project Factors Affecting Project Outcomes*

	PM1	PM2	PM3	PM4	PM5
Communication		X		X	
Sharing knowledge		X			
Taking risks		X			
Assessing situations			X		

PM2 suggested that “projects fail when different aspects of the project are conveyed differently to different team members and are not in sync.” Communication or uniform communication is the one factor PM2 found that is most associated to the success or failure of a project. PM2 added, “Project managers’ effective communication can encourage cross-communication among their team members and generally increase effectiveness of the team as a whole.”

PM4 suggested that “communication is very important, especially from the beginning of the project. If everyone knows what they are doing, the project would be a success.” The other factors include sharing knowledge, accepting risks, and assessing the situation. PM2 suggested two of the factors that can affect project outcomes: (a) sharing

knowledge and (b) taking risks. PM2 suggested that in the IT world, technicians may have the tendency to hoard knowledge with the intent of maintaining job security. PM2 further advised that the best thing that a team member can do for positive IT project outcome is to share knowledge and do not withhold knowledge. On member checking, PM2 added that taking risks is the other factor that can affect project outcome. Project managers must take appropriate risks (as long as the risks do not damage anything, and any damage created can be reversed). Taking risks promotes creativity and innovation, which are encouraged in the IT world.

PM1 suggested taking risks but indirectly. PM1 proposed that project managers should always make decisions, even if they have only 80% or less of the solution. Project managers should be willing to take the risks if the wrong choices are made, but at least project managers should make the decisions. Risks are identifiable events that seriously affect the progress and outcomes of projects if they happen (Chileshe & Kikwasi, 2014; de Carvalho & Junior, 2015). Alignment of global risks and organizational leaders' strategy are included in project portfolio management (Maniak & Midler, 2014). The last factor the participants included for positive project outcomes was assessing situations. PM3 suggested that the key to project success is assessing situations at face value. Assessing situations include determining what the situations are at the particular stage of the projects and being able to adjust based on the directions of the team or projects. Understanding the projects, assessing the situation, and adjusting as projects progress are very important to project outcomes.

Ramos and Mota (2014) suggested that: (a) lack of communication was the main determinant of failure in IT projects and (b) communication was linked to how organizations' personnel interact and establish organizational culture. According to Tredgold (2014), projects fail for two reasons: (a) project teams doing the wrong job and (b) project teams doing the right job poorly. Leaders' primary goal should be to implement effective communication and providing objectives and goals to ensure the project team is doing the right job (Tredgold, 2014). Perkins (2014) suggested that one reason for ineffective communication is project managers keeping silent and withholding information in project settings (Perkins, 2014). Cervone (2014) proposed two strategies for improving project communications: (a) incorporate defined patterns of storytelling into communications and (b) communicating in defined patterns.

Archival organizational documents consist of the overall project management plans, which included the communication plan, risk management plan, transition plan, and change management plan. With the use of project managers' risk management plans, project managers had the ability to take and manage risks. Risks with each risk management plan were minimized with the use of standardized risk management procedures, tools and practices, and strategies to close the risks. The communication plan, transition plan, and change management plan were other tools in place to minimize taking risks and strengthen communication and sharing knowledge. Many factors can enhance or impede the performance of project management teams to include communication or the lack therefore.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

Global economy is approximately 40% project-based (Miterev et al., 2017). Approximately 63% of all projects end up failing (Liu & Deng, 2015). Leadership is an essential and important factor in good project management (Munyeki & Were, 2017). Clarke (2012a) suggested that leadership in project management has not received the attention it deserves. The findings of this study included specific leadership styles and competencies possessed to improve project outcomes. Ironically, I identified no one specific leadership style that was prevalent for improving project outcome. All leadership styles were used to improve project success but depending on the situation. The essential factor is for the project manager to know when to use what leadership style during the project cycle. I identified empowering or empowerment as the most prevalent competency used by the participating successful project managers to improve project outcome. Sharing knowledge, taking risks, and assessing situations were factors that emerged from the results of the study as factors that positively affect project outcomes.

Senior management should provide three levels of training and resources for development of project managers: (a) hard skills of project managers, such as project management tools, techniques, and practices; (b) soft skills of project managers, such as leadership, leadership style, leadership competencies, and leadership traits; and (c) aids to guide project managers on when to use the hard and soft skills. Gillet and Vandenberghe (2014) suggested to build leadership development programs to help managers to develop enhanced leadership practices. Enhanced leadership practices can assist project managers

to better influence project team and improve project outcome. Leadership development efforts can improve organizational effectiveness (McCleskey, 2014).

Project managers manage IT projects to fulfill mission requirements, improve services, and reduce costs for the organization (Sirisomboonsuk, Gu, Cao, & Burns, 2018). IT projects are driven by the organization's mission requirements. Mission requirements are driven by resources, availability of new technologies, and the organization's functional areas. The findings of this study may provide senior management and project managers with the leadership style and competencies to use in the specific context to increase positive project outcome. The effectiveness of a project can depend on the project manager's leadership skills. A project may not likely complete positively without a competent project leader. Knowing the leadership skills and competencies that are likely to facilitate delivering projects with positive outcomes can aid managers when hiring and selecting project managers. Hiring the right project managers with both strong hard (technical) skills and soft (nontechnical) skills can increase percentages of project success considerably.

The findings from this study can enable an organization to implement knowledge management practices as a tool to document the leadership styles and competencies and factors most likely to provide positive project outcomes. Also, project managers can use personal knowledge management tools to use as checklists to develop the skills as leaders and develop project teams (Khamaksorn, 2016). Empowering or empowerment was the most mentioned leadership competency in the findings of this study. Senior management



can build an organizational culture in which project leaders empower team members to improve project outcomes.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for social change of this study were engrained in exploring the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes. IT projects can be used as the means to achieve organizations's strategic goals such as (a) increasing innovation, (b) increasing market share, and (c) maintaining competitive advantage (Berman & Marshall, 2014). Consequently, the use of specific leadership styles and competencies can also improve an organization's ability to achieve its strategic goals regarding long-term sustainability. Long-term sustainability can lead to positive social change as organizations with long-term sustainability can lead to a more stable economic environment. A more stable economic environment can lead to stability in employment and increase in positive socioeconomic impacts for employees and surrounding committees.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The intent of this study was to answer the overarching research question: What specific leadership styles and competencies do IT project managers possess to improve project outcomes? From the results, no one leadership specific leadership style was found to positively affect project outcomes. The participants used all three leadership styles to positively affect project outcome. The participants used the empowerment competency to positively affect project outcome. Sharing knowledge, taking risks, and

assessing the situation were other factors the participants of this study provided to positively affect project outcome.

After the approval of this study, through ProQuest, I can provide the findings of this study to the participants, senior management of the organization, and the Army Research Protections Office. This study can be of interest to organizations and project teams within the United States, as well as in other countries. By publishing this study, I can inform project-based organizations, project management offices, and human resources offices about the findings regarding leadership styles and competencies and their effects on project outcomes.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study had two limitations or weaknesses. The first limitation is the findings may be applicable only to U.S.-based IT projects and project managers. Future researchers should consider expanding the research to projects and project managers outside of the IT industry. Future researchers should also consider expanding the geographical region into other countries. The second limitation is the use of styles and competencies related to leadership. The use of leadership styles and competencies may exclude styles and competencies project managers need and not related to leadership. This study included three leadership styles managerial, emotional, and intellectual. Future researchers should also consider studying situational leadership style to provide better insight on what situation and when project managers should use a leadership style and competency to positively affect project outcomes.

## Reflections

When I initially started this study, I had such zeal to absorb all knowledge that comes from conducting a research study. At the conclusion of this study, I find myself exhausted, but content. During the course of the study, I came across a couple of obstacles: (a) I had to change the research design from a phenomenological study to a case study, and (b) because I decided to choose participants of an organization within the Department of the Army, the overall IRB process took much longer than I had expected. I was required to obtain approval from both the Department of the Army IRB and Walden University IRB. Having had to change the research design caused some discouragement, but now I have more in-depth knowledge of both designs. Also, I believe changing the research design saved me time.

At the start of the program, I had such a passion for project management, so I knew my study would be something related to project management. I also felt the study would involve something within the IT industry since I have worked in the industry for almost two decades. Consequently, the research process was less frustrating despite the couple of obstacles. After completing the literature review and proposal, I concluded that I saw sufficient discussion of project management, but not sufficient discussion regarding the leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess for success. The participants provided significant amount of information that not only addressed the leadership styles and competencies, but rich information regarding leadership in project management.

## **Conclusion**

From this study, my conclusion is that not one specific leadership style project managers possess can improve IT project outcome. Project managers can use all three leadership styles depending upon the situation. Leadership in project management includes multiple techniques to adapt to any situation (Galvin et al., 2014). Effective leadership depends upon the ability of leaders to change their styles, behaviors, and traits to suit situations (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Zulch (2014) suggested that project managers adapt a leadership style according to the specific situation. As far as the competency, empowering the project team can positively affect project outcome. Project managers are only as good as their project teams.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

### **Background Information:**

The primary focus in this case study is to explore specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve project IT outcomes. Leadership competencies identify what leaders do and engaging style of leadership identifies how leaders act. What IT project managers do and how IT project managers act can involve multiple facets of leadership competencies and engaging styles of leadership, but the focus of this study involves three leadership styles and the competencies associated with each:

*Managerial leadership style* is task oriented and involves project managers completing tasks. The competencies associated with the managerial leadership style are the following: (a) engaging communication (effectively communicating procedures and vision to team members), (b) empowering (encouraging team members and using resources to broaden members' work vision), (c) developing (making efforts to help team members to progress), and (d) achieving (decision-making based on core business needs and likelihood of success).

*Intellectual leadership style* involves intelligence and problem-solving abilities of the project manager. The competencies associated with the intellectual leadership style are the following: (a) critical analysis, (b) judgment, (c) vision imagination, and (d) strategic planning.

*Emotional leadership style* involves project managers' feelings and the feelings of their teams. The competencies associated with the emotional leadership style are the

following: (a) self-awareness, (b) emotional resilience, (c) intuitiveness, (d) interpersonal sensitivity, (e) influence, (f) motivation, and (g) conscientiousness.

1. Describe whether you used managerial, intellectual, and or emotional leadership style to affect project outcomes. Why?
2. From the leadership style you selected in Question 1, describe one or more competencies associated with the managerial, intellectual, or emotional leadership style that you used to affect project outcomes. Describe at least one specific situation, your behavior, and the result(s).
3. From the leadership style you selected in Question 1, which competency best fit what you used to affect project outcomes. Why?
4. Please provide additional information that you think may be relevant for this research.

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

**Interviewing Title:** Exploring the specific leadership styles and competencies that project managers possess to improve IT project outcomes.

1. I provide the participants with the informed consent form. After receipt of the participants' transmitted consent form with "I consent," I schedule an interview using semistructured, open-ended interview questions (see Appendix A).
2. I confirm consent and provide a copy of the consent form to the participant.
3. I begin each interview with a greeting using the script (see Appendix C).
4. Prior to proceeding with the interview questions, I ask the participants for permission to begin the audiotaping of the interview.
5. I proceed with asking each participant the four interview questions (see Appendix A).
6. I note the location, time, and date of the interview.
7. I code the participants using pseudonyms to indicate when the participants complete the interview questions. For example, in the pseudonym 00109102017, 001 indicates the sequence when the participant completes the interview questions, 09 indicates the month when the participant completes the interview questions, 10 indicates the day when the participant completes the interview questions, and 2017 indicate the year when the participant completes the interview questions.
8. I give each participant ample time to answer each question completely.

9. I follow up after the interview to ensure I depict an accurate representation of participants' responses (member checking).
10. I ask follow-up questions and debrief each participant after interviewing to allow participants to make comments, ask questions, and add information that I miss during the interview.
11. I thank the participants for their time and cooperation in answering the questions and schedule an appointment for follow-up interviews to facilitate data saturation.
12. I repeat steps 1-10 for the follow-ups.

### Appendix C: Greeting Script

I want to start out by saying thank you and providing your consent to participate in this study. I understand your time is valuable and appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule and allowing me to conduct this interview. This interview will have about four questions designed to provide subjective insight about two things: (a) specific leadership styles and competencies project managers possess and (b) determine how and what leadership styles and competencies may affect IT project outcomes.

I fully expect that this interview will last approximately 90 minutes. At any time during this interview, feel free to ask me to repeat any questions. Any information you provide within the recorded interview will be confidential and coded. I will not use your information for any purposes outside of this project. In addition, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports.

Before I begin, do I have your permission to record and begin this interview?