

2019

# Exploring How Managers Increase Employee Performance Within Organizational Supply Chains

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Angela B. Freeman

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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2019

Abstract

Exploring How Managers Increase Employee Performance Within Organizational Supply  
Chains

by

Angela B. Freeman

MS, University of Maryland University College, 2010

BS, University of Maryland University College, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2019

## Abstract

Leaders and the strategies they employ to enhance employee performance are essential to retaining an organization's competitive advantage. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the strategies used by supply chain management managers to improve employee performance in the workplace. The conceptual framework for this study combined elements from Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation, Adams's equity theory of motivation and leadership, and transformational leadership theories. Participants were selected via the purposeful sampling of 6 successful supply chain managers in the District of Columbia's metropolitan area. Data were obtained using semistructured face-to-face interviews, interview notes, transcripts, and a thorough review and analysis of organizational documents. Data were analyzed using Yin's 5-step approach to data analysis. Four themes were identified: strategies associated with enhancing employee performance with an emphasis on training, barriers that prevented leadership from achieving performance improvement objectives, tools leaders used to measure employee performance and the leadership style of the manager with an emphasis on the use of the participative leadership style. The findings of this study may contribute to social change by providing supply chain managers with resources required to enhance overall employee performance in the workplace, which in turn may lead to increased overall organizational productivity, helping to ensure the prosperity of the organizational leaders, employees, their families, the surrounding communities, and the local economy.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this work in its entirety to God Almighty, whom without I would not have had the strength nor the resources to complete this journey. I would also like to thank my family; Gabrelle, my daughter, the driving force behind my every accomplishment. Having you truly made me a better person. My mother, Katie who taught me to never to give up and encouraged me to chase my dreams, although it meant sacrificing her own. Dana M. Beal, my academic partner in crime throughout this journey. My niece, Lakisha, who remains the best belated birthday gift I ever received. My brothers Aubrey and Anthony, for keeping me on the straight and narrow as well as giving me constant spiritual guidance by reminding me to pray even in my darkest hours. My second spiritual mother Pastor Harris, who taught me how to bend to the will of God. My father John, brother Angelo, cousin Phyllis and my Uncle Adolf Kennedy may you rest in peace knowing that your dream lives in on in me. Joseph M Belger, my first academic mentor, gone too soon but not forgotten. Lastly, Max, my ever-loyal canine companion who has been by the side or my lap throughout this entire process.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The primary significance of a supply chain is to support profitability while helping the organization meet the needs of the customer (Melnyk, Narasimhan, & DeCampos, 2014; Heckmann, Comes, & Nickel, 2015). A supply chain's success or failure can determine the company's ability to remain competitive in the current market (Farahani, Rezapour, Drezner, & Fallah, 2014). More critical to the success of a supply chain are the organization's leaders and the methods that they use to motivate the employees to perform (Anitha, 2014; Caillier, 2014). Supply chain leaders bear the responsibility of improving and maintaining the organizational supply chain's competitive advantage (Farahani et al., 2014). The lack of strong leadership that provides the guidance required to promote the proper organizational culture and obtain executive, as well as employee buy-in, may result in business failure (Hassan, 2014). Therefore, it is incumbent upon the organization to find leaders that can ensure the creation of a culture of acceptance that fosters executive as well as employee buy-in on organizational processes and practices (Smith, Peters, & Caldwell, 2016).

Trend analysis indicates that future industry and market competitions will no longer be company versus company but supply chain versus supply chain (Farahani et al., 2014). As a means of remaining competitive and increasing future employee performance in the workplace, some organizational leaders have increased their employee education and development training budgets (Adzoa, 2015; Aravamudham & Krishnaveni, 2015; Bersin, 2014). While this increase in effort afforded leaders some measure of improvement, training alone was not sufficient to encourage and sustain the

outcomes desired by leadership (Arghode & Wang, 2016; da Cunha, Stedefeldt, & de Rosso, 2014;).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies used by supply chain management (SCM) leaders to improve employee performance in workplaces in the Washington, DC, Metro area. Section 1 of this study includes (a) foundation of the study, (b) background of the problem, (c) the problem statement, (d) purpose statement, (e) research methodology and design, (f) the research question, (g) conceptual framework, and (h) an extensive literature review.

### **Background of the Problem**

Human capital is critical to a sustaining an organization's competitive advantage as well as overall prosperity (Inuwa, 2017; Sigmund, Kvintova, Hanus, Bartkova, & Hobza, 2014). Equally as crucial to retaining competitive organizational advantages as well as and maintaining enhanced employee performance is leadership (Danisman, Tosuntas, & Karadag, 2015; Nasomboon, 2014; Sigmund et al., 2014). When endeavoring to retain their competitive edge, organizational leaders must seek and retain leaders who possess the capacity to effectively manage and motivate employees (Hassan, 2014; Lee, Udin, & Hassan, 2014). Organizations that fail in securing competent leadership will find it hard to increase or enhance overall employee performance (Lilian, 2014).

In this study, I explored the strategies used by supply chain leadership to increase employee performance in the workplace. In the late 2000s, organizational leaders began to emphasize managerial practices aimed at increasing supply chain effectiveness while

simultaneously enhancing overall employee performance (Lee et al., 2014; Yasir, Imran, Irshad, Mohamad, & Khan, 2016). Their primary strategies included (a) positive employee engagement (Kazimoto, 2016); (b) leadership development (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014); (c) creation of positive workplace culture, including but not limited to training (Mohd Said, Jahya, Mazlan, Ali, Rapidah, Yusof & Sakina, 2016); (d) employee recognition; and (e) monetary and nonmonetary based awards (Neckermann, Cueni, & Frey, 2014).

Skill sets employed by supply chain managers in highly competitive organizations center on the production of a sufficient oversight capability through data outputs of operational activities (Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, 2013; Lee et al., 2014). Moreover, these organizations exhibiting these skills and strategies experienced higher customer and stakeholder satisfaction ratings as well as increased profit margins (Huo, Zhao, & Lai, 2014; Lee et al., 2014). There are indicators that the materialization of these results was due to enhanced employee performance derived from having the right leadership in place, with the ability to employ the proper strategies needed to increase performance (Caillier, 2014; Lee et al., 2014).

### **Problem Statement**

In 2012, organizations increased their employee learning and development budgets by 15% to over \$70 billion to address employee skill deficiencies and capacity gaps (Aravamudham & Krishnaveni, 2015; Bersin, 2014). During 2017, organizations in the United States spent an average of \$1,075 per employee in learning and development (2017 Training Industry Report, 2017). While business leaders achieved some measure of

improvement, the training of workers alone has proven insufficient to ensure and sustain favorable outcomes (Arghode & Wang, 2016; da Cunha et al., 2014). The general business problem was that ineffective employee performance reduces operational funds and impacts profit sustainability (Sparrow & Cooper, 2014). The specific business problem for this study was that some SCM leaders lack strategies to improve employee performance in the workplace.

### **Purpose Statement**

The goal of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies used by SCM leaders to improve employee performance in the workplace. The study's target population consisted of business leaders in the SCM field in an organization within the District of Columbia Metro area. Six supply chain leaders participated in semistructured, face-to-face interviews to share their strategies with the intent to improve employee performance. The completion of this study has the potential to create social change in both managerial and business practices by providing supply chain managers as well as general managers with research data and strategies designed to increase and sustain employee performance.

### **Nature of the Study**

Utilization of a qualitative case study research method was deemed suitable for this research study due to the process's overall flexibility and humanistic approach. Qualitative case study methods, in conjunction with data from bounded real-world settings of focused phenomena, affords the researcher the chance to gain an understanding of the related process, the context, interpretations, and their meanings



through inductive reasoning (Soltani, Ahmed, Liao, & Anosike, 2014). Neither the quantitative nor mixed method research approaches were viewed as appropriate due to their inflexibility, which have the potential to hinder the opportunity for needed human interaction and participation.

Quantitative research methods concern themselves with empirical results and building theory at the beginning of a study by developing hypotheses for testing (Yin, 2016). Quantitative research methods lack human interaction, and the exclusive use of numerical data gives the appearance that the researcher lacks emotion (Soltani et al., 2014). Although mixed methodologies combine quantitative and qualitative research methodology principals, the internal processes cause a higher level of research complexity, therefore resulting in a less in-depth understanding of the overall research issue (Pluye & Hong, 2014). Furthermore, the complexity of the design can make it challenging to develop a clear and concise picture from the research findings and phenomena ( Uprichard & Dawney, 2019).

Researchers employ various research designs when using qualitative research, including narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, and case study (Yin, 2014). I considered a case study design as more appropriate for this study because it allowed me to answer how and why the behavior occurred while retaining minimal control of participant behavior (Baškarada, 2014). Furthermore, use of the case study design, unlike the other research designs, allows the researcher to gain a detailed and detailed investigation of the topic based on the collective relative experiences of a group or an individual over a specified timeframe (Yin, 2014).

### **Research Question**

The research question served as the primary framework for the study. The overarching research question for this qualitative case study was: What strategies do SCM leaders use to improve performance in the workplace. Additionally, the research questions set the stage for the *how* and *why* of the study as well as driving decision-making choices and process (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Studies without adequately developed research questions are at risk of running adrift, rambling without direction, or even doing harm to participants or communities (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

### **Interview Questions**

Organizational business leaders regularly employ strategies to improve employee performance in the workplace, including employee-centered training, rewards, and recognition (Anitha, 2014; Nasomboon, 2014). Business leaders achieved some measure of improvement utilizing the methods outlined above. These methods alone have proven insufficient to ensure and sustain favorable outcomes in the workplace (Arghode & Wang, 2016; da Cunha, Stedefeldt, & de Rosso, 2014). The following questions (see Appendix) were used during the research study as a means of gaining a more in-depth understanding of strategies.

#### **General Demographic Questions**

1. What is your current leadership position in the company?
2. How many years of management experience do you currently possess?
3. How many years of management experience do you have in the supply chain management related field?

4. How many employees do you currently supervise?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What is the current work environment and culture in your organization as it pertains to employee performance and training?
2. What impact has employee job performance had on your organization's overall effectiveness?
3. What has been your personal experience with increasing employee performance within your organization?
4. What tools do you use to measure employee job performance?
5. What barriers have you encountered while improving employee performance?
6. What tools or strategies have you have used to increase and encourage employee job performance?
7. What do you consider your leadership style to be, and how has it impacted employee performance?
8. What factors contributed to the development of your effective leadership strategy?
9. What information can you share that was not already covered?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study combined elements from Adams equity theory of motivation (Adams, 1965), Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation (Vroom, 1995), and transformational leadership and trait leadership theories by Burns (1978) and Bass (as cited in Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). J.M. Burns originated the term

transformational leadership in 1978, with B. Bass expanding the term in 1985 (as cited in Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). The foundation of the transformational leadership's doctrines rests with the leader's ability to use specific skills to motivate employees and increase employee performance (Caillier, 2014; Deinert, Homan, Boer, Voelpel, & Gutermann, 2015).

Adams' (1965) equity theory of motivation centers on an individual's perceived fairness of rewards received for their efforts versus the rewards coworkers or peers received for the same or lesser efforts. Under the equity theory of motivation, employees who perceive themselves as being treated fairly are likely to remain motivated and productive (Osabiya, 2015). Adams (1965) further implied that individuals with a perception of being mistreated become dissatisfied and unmotivated at work. Similar to Adam's theory, Vroom's 1964 expectancy theory of motivation infers that individual behavior is predicated on actions that they believe are more favorable to them achieving their goals and objectives (Barba-Sanchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017). The tenants of Vroom's (1995) theory purpose that all employees receive their motivation and satisfaction from extrinsically or intrinsically based rewards. Vroom's (1995) theory further states that employee behaviors in the workplace are predicated upon three specific components: (a) expectancy, (b) valence, and (c) instrumentality (Barba-Sanchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017).

The conceptual models utilized were relevant to this study in the manner that each focuses on elements and factors associated with improving overall employee performance in organizations. Motivational theories, Adam's equity theory, and Vroom's expectancy

theory examine external and internal factors that can improve or hinder overall employee performance improvement strategies. Transformational leadership theories focus on leadership's role in utilizing those factors or strategies to improve employee performance.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Balanced scorecard:* Balanced scorecard (BSC) is a performance evaluation method used to assess an organization's overall sustainable performance (Rabbani, Zamani, Yazdani-Chamzini, & Zavadskas, 2014; Shafiee, Lotfi, & Saleh, 2014).

*Culture:* Culture is the shared core belief, values, and communication that an individual uses as guidance for their normal behavior and mindset (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Karanja, 2014)

*Efficacy:* Efficacy is the capacity a person possesses to produce a desired effect or outcome (Emich, 2014).

*Job satisfaction:* Job satisfaction is an emotionally based state derived from a pleasurable, positive appraisal or contentment one job performance by individuals (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014; Jehanzeb, Hamid, & Rasheed, 2015).

*Motivation:* Motivation is the psychological need to act in a manner to satisfy internal and external desires (Barg, Ruparathna, Mendis, & Hewage, 2014; Sigmund et al., 2014; Kinicki & Fugate, 2011).

*Organizational culture:* Organizational culture is the governing system for employee behavior consisting of shared and enforced values, beliefs, and communications by an organization (Karanja, 2014).

*Supply chain management (SCM)*: SCM is the administration and coordination of essential business activities in the supply chain (Waller & Fawcett, 2014).

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

All research has the potential to contain restrictions based on factors that reach beyond the researcher's control (Lips-Wiersman & Mills, 2014). These factors consist of the study's assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. This subsection includes those elements as they pertain to this research study.

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are facts that are relevant to the study that the researcher has little control over or cannot verify (Lips-Wiersman & Mills, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). For this case study, there were five primary underlying assumptions. The first assumption was that participants answered all interview questions honestly and without undue influence or fear of reprisal from organizational leadership. The second assumption was that participants possessed the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with improving employee performance. The third assumption was that participants would answer the interview questions based on their own experiences, therefore possibly providing bias-based responses. A fourth assumption was that the strategies and practices presented by the participants would be helpful in increasing overall employee performance in the organization. A final assumption centered on the data collection methodology being valid, reliable, and free from the burden of personal bias.

**Limitations**

Limitations reflect areas of the study that are beyond the researcher's control (Smith, 2015). The emphasis of this study centered upon strategies used by SCM leaders to improve employee performance in the workplace. Primary limitations of this research study existed with the geographical location in which it was conducted, and its potential to create bias responses due to the ingrained organizational culture and climate influences. The geographical location of the District of Columbia and its surrounding area presents the opportunity for political bias and motivations. The appearance of this bias gives way to the possibility of responses reflecting only the opinions of organizations in this select geographical location and hence may not be relevant to other organizations within the same area.

Additional limitations for this study existed in decisions I made as to whether to focus on a single industry for the study (see Kache, 2015). Limiting a study to participants from a single industry restricts the type of responses received and increases the potential for industry bias (Kache, 2015). Lastly, as I was the only data collector and interpreter for the study, there was potential for individual bias to manifest. The data analysis techniques and data collection methods associated with the study should have decreased the likelihood and effects of researcher bias.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations outline the boundaries of the research study developed based on the choices of the researcher, such as questions, methodologies, and selection of participants (Smith, 2015). Organizational business leaders consistently employ strategies geared

toward improving employee performance in the workplace (Anitha, 2014; Nasomboon, 2014). This research explored the strategies supply chain leaders use to improve employee performance. The scope of this study included managers and leaders of business in the Washington; DC, Metropolitan area in the supply chain field. Each manager or leader listed in the study currently possessed between 5 to 15 years' experience, as well as a demonstrated success in improving and sustaining employee performance in the named field. Omitted from this study were business managers and leaders from any other industry or field.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study explored strategies supply chain managers' employ to improve employee performance in the workplace. I conducted participant interviews with organizational supply chain managers in the District of Columbia Metro area. The results of this study will reduce knowledge gaps related to executive leadership business practices and skill sets required to implement effective organizational business practices. The target audience of supply chain managers can use the results of this study to aid in the development of organizational leadership best business practices required to implement and sustain enhanced performance measures. An additional potential impact on businesses is increased overall organizational performance, thereby resulting in overall increased organizational productivity while reducing job and overhead costs.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

Employee performance (Osabiya, 2015) and leadership (Guillen, Mayo, & Korotov, 2015) are critical components of a business's ability to remain competitive. A



business leader's inability to retain their competitive advantage directly results in a loss of customers, income, and even employees (Anitha, 2014; Nasomboon, 2014). A part of remaining competitive is ensuring that employees perform well as employees who do not perform well can impact an organization's ability to grow both internally and externally (Muschara, 2014). Nonefficient employees strain financial resources, making it impossible for the organization to hire or retain qualified and talented staff (Wiles, 2014). The remaining organizational employees become overburdened, thereby significantly decreasing current performance, organizational morale, and productivity (McGee & Johnson, 2015).

Business leaders seeking to improve employee performance do so through training or other motivational methods (Makhani, Akbaryan, & Cernak, 2015). These methods serve an excellent first step, but they are not enough. Improving employee performance is more than training the employee to perform better; it also involves motivating the employee to display behaviors that are conducive to the business's overall goals and objectives (Makhani et al., 2015). More so, it concerns having the right employee, at the right place, with the right attitude, and setting the correct tone (Emich, 2014; Kooij, 2015). Setting the proper tone in the workplace cements the organization's ability to recruit and retain top-notch employees (Emich, 2014). These efforts include the creation of performance expectations and a neutral climate that is free from harassment, bias, and discrimination (Emich, 2014).

## **Implications for Social Change**

The social significance of this study was that it would provide clarification of the strategies organizational supply chain leaders need to improve employee performance (Alfalla-Luque, Marin-Garcia, & Medina-Lopez, 2015). This study contributes to the field of study by reducing the knowledge gap related to executive leadership business practices and skill sets needed to maintain effective organizational business practices (Kotter, 2012). This study may contribute to organizational business practices by enabling organization leadership to develop knowledge of best business practices required to sustain enhanced performance measures implemented, thereby increasing overall organizational productivity while reducing job and overhead cost (Mohammed & Taib, 2016).

Furthermore, this study has the potential to provide supply chain leaders with the immediate resources required to enhance overall employee performance in the workplace, which in turn may lead to increased overall organizational productivity, ensuring the prosperity of the organizational leaders, employees, their families, the surrounding communities, and the local economy throughout time (Pulakos, Hanson, Arad, & Moye, 2015). More significantly, this study has the potential to change business practices to ones which enhance employee performance aids organizations in remaining competitive. Remaining competitive keeps the organization operational, therefore preventing socially economic risks such as the loss of customers, income, and even employees.

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

This literature review contains compilations of works concerning SCM leaders and the strategies that they utilize to improve employee performance in the workplace. The arrangement of the literature review consists of three overarching sections, each focusing on and clarifying the relationship between SCM and managerial performance improvement strategies. The first section of the literature review contains a comprehensive overview of the leadership theories outlined in the conceptual framework. These theories include transformational leadership theories (Herman & Chiu, 2015), Vroom's expectancy theory (Parijat & Bagga, 2014; Vroom, 1995), and Adams equity theory (Adams, 1965; Emich, 2014; Osabiya, 2015). The second section of this literature review contains general information concerning supply chain and SCM including definition (Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, 2013; Ellram & Cooper, 2014), origins (Zacharia, Sanders, & Fugate, 2014), and overall purpose (Melnik, Narasimhan et al., 2014; Heckmann et al., 2015). The inclusion of this information ensures that readers can gain a more in-depth understanding of the subject matter.

The third section of the literature review contains data from recent studies concerning performance improvement and emphasizes three distinct categories: (a) employee job performance (Anitha, 2014; Muschara, 2014); (b) factors impacting employee job performance, such as motivation (Abdurrahim & Welly, 2014; Fu, 2015), employee job satisfaction (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014; Jehanzeb et al., 2015), organizational culture and climate (Karanja, 2014; Scammon et al., 2014), and leadership approach (DuBrin, 2015; Northouse, 2015); and (c) leadership strategies that increase

employee performance including leadership development and training (Tahir, Yousafzai, Jam, & Hashim, 2014; Ayal, Isanawikrama, & Buana, 2018), employee rewards (Joshi, 2016), and enhanced employee engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

On-line research databases and local libraries included a platform for reviewing the existing body of knowledge regarding the topic literature for this study. The content of this literature review consists of various dissertations, books, and peer-reviewed journal articles using numerous keyword combinations. Examples of keyword combinations include *performance*, *employee performance management*, *employee performance improvement*, *employee performance enhancement*, *employee motivation*, *improvement barriers*, *employee satisfaction*, *workplace culture*, *performance management*, *leadership styles*, *transformational leadership*, *supply chain management*, *supply chain leadership*, and *supply chain performance*.

I used each of the keyword combinations in various internal and external Walden University electronic databases and websites including ABI/INFORM, Business Source Complete, Emerald, Academic Search Complete, Council of Supply Chain Management, Sage Journal, and Google Scholar. The search of the above entities resulted in more than 174 sources: 147 peer-reviewed journal articles, 27 nonpeer-reviewed sources, including books, and 150 contemporary sources. This literature review consists of 85% peer-reviewed articles published within 5 - years of the expected date of receiving Walden University's chief academic officer approval, which are the years 2014-2018.

## **Leadership and Process Theories**

The conceptual framework for this study includes motivational-based theories: Adams equity theory and Vroom's expectancy theory. The framework for this study also encompasses content associated with transformational leadership theories. I included each theory into this body of work because of their singular focus on the strategies and styles employed by leaders to inspire or motivate employees to positively change performance behaviors to meet the needs of the organization.

### **Adams Equity Theory**

Adams, equity theory of motivation combines social and cognitive-based theories, specifically the social exchange theory (Adams, 1965; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017). Like Vroom expectancy theory, Adams equity theory concentrates on personalized based factors that motivate individuals to perform (Adams, 1965). Adams equity theory examines the quest by individuals to achieve fairness and justice through various societal relationships and exchanges (Kinicki & Fugate, 2011). More specifically Adams theory examines human emotion as it relates to an individual's internal or external perception of fair treatment and justice towards them within an organizational workplace (Barg et al., 2014; Gameda & Tynijla, 2015). The concept of equity is essential to performance improvement as it impacts employee behavior, which is a determining factor in whether they increase or decrease their overall performance (Inuwa, 2017).

Adams (1965) defined equity merely as fair treatment as perceived by an individual. Employees base their perception of equity on the input and subsequent outcomes of others being equivalent to their own. The existence of equity relies upon the

perception of the individual, inferring that equity is present when individuals perceive that the rewards for their efforts either equals or outweighs those of similar efforts put forth by their peers (Adams, 1965; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017). Any return received for efforts that are perceived less than equal by the employee will cause feelings of inequity (Buzea, 2014). Employees experiencing positive perceptions or equity perform at a more enhanced level than an employee with negative perceptions or inequity (Inuwa, 2017). Additionally, if the existence of equity is perceived, job satisfaction is more likely to be realized by the employee as well (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014). Inequity is an individual perception that the proportion of their outcomes and inputs are unequal to that of others (Adams, 1965). Individuals experiencing the feeling of inequity are not productive and are likely to decrease their overall performance activities (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014).

Adams equity theory is a two-axis concept centering on the employee-employer exchange as it relates to input and outcome (Kinicki & Fugate, 2011; Pourgaz, Naruei, & Jenaabadi, 2015). Inputs include hours worked, education, skills, duties, knowledge, seniority, loyalty, and overall effort (Inuwa, 2017). Alternately employee perceived outcomes include pay, pay raises, positive feedback, benefits, reward, recognition, and job security (Inuwa, 2017). Also, as a means of comparing results and inputs associated with equity, an employee will use other employees they deem equal to themselves, called a reference group (Pourgaz et al., 2015; Inuwa, 2017). The employee's reference group can exist of coworkers, relatives, neighbors, or even be the person himself in another job or another social role (Inuwa, 2017).

Adams equity theory makes three assumptions concerning employee behavior (Olcum & Titrek, 2015; Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). The first assumption is that employees want a fair return for work contributions (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). The second assumption is that employees continuously compare themselves to their peers, both personally and professionally (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). The final assumption is that if an employee perceives themselves to be in unequal circumstances, they will adjust their behavior negatively (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Additionally, while inequities are an unconscious result of organizational leadership behavior, the ability to reduce is incumbent upon the organization (Buzea, 2014). Organizations could minimize the perception of inequity through capitalizing on the occupational status while reducing the value rating associated with work effort (Buzea, 2014).

The existence of equity or inequity generates three types: equity-based circumstances, equity, overpayment (positive) inequity, and underpayment (negative) inequity (Kinicki & Fugate, 2011). The first circumstance, equity, occurs when individual outcomes, as well as inputs, are perceived as being equal to that of the referenced employee (Inuwa, 2017). The second circumstance, overpayment (positive) inequity, occurs when an employee feels they receive more rewards than the referenced employee for the same work (Inuwa, 2017). The last circumstance, underpayment (negative) inequity, results from the employee feeling that they received fewer rewards than the referenced employee for the same work (Inuwa, 2017).

The presence, as well as the overall perception of equity or inequity within an organization by employees, is an essential factor (Kinicki & Fugate, 2011). The existence of negative and positive equity is detrimental to increase employee performance. Perceived equity or inequity causes employees to adjust their performance behavior until they feel abated (Inuwa, 2017). Performance decision and subsequent reactions to perceived equity or inequity by their organization would cause employee performance to diminish until the perceived inequity is resolved (Aidla, 2017). For example, overcompensation or positive equity creates a feeling of guilt as well as reduces the motivational employee levels (Aidla, 2017). The reduction in motivation results from a sense of not having to work hard for rewards. Alternatively, the experience of under compensation or negative equity results in low morale as well as reduced performance due to the feeling of being overworked for little or no reward (Aidla, 2017).

To improve understanding of individual and employee behavior within organizations leaders must address the consequences of employee need to resolve inequities or equity sensitivity through an examination of its relationship with Dark Triad Traits (Woodley & Allen, 2014). The characteristics of the Dark Triad includes Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism. The authors defined equity sensitivity as a latent personality trait derived from an employee perceived notion of their work effort (Woodley & Allen, 2014). The association with negative organizational behavior made the incorporation of the Dark Triad personality traits into the study ideal (Woodley & Allen, 2014).



Individuals who display Machiavellianism personalities are significantly manipulative and deceitful (Woodley & Allen, 2014). Individuals displaying Machiavellianism personality traits focuses heavily on personal gain and are apt to do anything to achieve their desired outcome (Woodley & Allen, 2014). The second trait psychopathy, as the name suggests, incorporates individuals with underlying personality disorders (Woodley & Allen, 2014). Employees displaying this trait are impulsive, greedy, and egocentric (Woodley & Allen, 2014). Additionally, employees possessing psychopathy traits are unable to empathize with the plight or feelings of others (Woodley & Allen, 2014).

Like psychopathy, the final trait narcissism is more prevalent in employees who have underlying personality disorders (Woodley & Allen, 2014). Employees with narcissistic traits display attitudes promoting their dominance, superiority, and an overwhelming sense of entitlement (Woodley & Allen, 2014). Additionally, employees possessing this trait tend to have an unrealistic or larger than life perception of their capability and accomplishments (Woodley & Allen, 2014). Lastly, employees who possess these traits are subject to severe equity sensitivity in the workplace due to more visible negative or non-social behavior (Woodley & Allen, 2014).

Like Vroom, Adams focused on efficacy and transpersonal efficacy. Transpersonal efficacy is the ability for one person to have confidence in another's capability to facilitate and execute a sequence of actions required to produce a specified outcome (Emich, 2014). Within an organization, transpersonal efficacy translates to an employee's belief that leadership is fair and just. (Emich & Wright, 2016). The

relationship between transpersonal effectiveness and performance varies based on the roles in the task-oriented environment (Emich, 2014). It has a beneficial impact on individual performance, primarily when positively and directly related to another person's ability (Emich, 2014). Transpersonal efficacy can impact the performance relationship negatively significantly should the roles become reversed (Emich & Wright, 2016).

The choice to include Adams equity theory into this body of work relies on the theories ability to addresses factors which directly impact employee performance behavior in the workplace, and its perception of fairness (Pacesila, 2014). The primary strength associated with Adams equity theory of motivation is its ability to predict the behavior of employees when confronted with inequity in the workplace (Aidla, 2017). Organizations subscribing to the principles of the equity theory encourage leaders to be ethical and to lead by example and to punish individuals who fail to adhere to rules (Aidla, 2017). Subscribers to the theory believe that the punishment of meager performing employees sends positive messages within a company (Aidla, 2017). The positive message intensifies the feeling of justice within the organization while increasing individual motivation and performance (Aidla, 2017). An additional strength of the equity theory is that it forces leaders to engage with employees by seeking feedback. As a result, the leaders appear humanistic, and the employees believe that they care (Kinicki & Fugate, 2011).

A primary limitation of Adams equity theory of motivation is a lack of independence from managerial bias (Adams, 1965). The Adams equity theory does not

account for the behavior trends of an employee experiencing an abundance of equity or how individual difference impacts the overall perception of equity (Adams, 1965; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017). The most significant weakness of the equity theory is its sole focus on material rewards and not additional external factors (Osabiya, 2015). The narrow objective of this theory makes it subject to becoming a short-term solution for motivating employees to increase performance (Adams, 1965; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017). Sometimes it is impossible to gain employee confidence, loyalty, and commitment regardless of the price. In using material rewards, leaders run the risk of demotivating employees (Osabiya, 2015).

The Adams equity theory examines the level of equity which one perceives and how it impacts their motivation to perform in an enhanced manner (Inuwa, 2017). It is important to note that equity does not always mean the equal treatment of employees or that they receive the same reward for the same action. The primary function of the equity theory is to guide leaders as assurance that they are on the correct path (Osabiya, 2015). Leaders must engage with the employee and examine their individual as well as group needs. The theory makes leaders more conscious of individual abilities and a member's output.

### **Vroom Expectancy Theory**

Vroom's expectancy theory has roots in 1964 works by Kurt Lewin and Edward Tolman concerning individual behavior (Vroom, 1995). Like Maslow's human motivation theory, Vroom's expectancy theory highlights the need for individuals to fulfill basic instinctive needs exclusive to and beneficial to themselves (Pacesila, 2014; Purvis,

Zagenczyk, & McCray, 2015). Additionally, Vroom's expectancy theory underscores the unconscious and conscious behavior of individuals associated with perceived favorable rewards or gains (Candela, Gutierrez, & Keating, 2015). Vroom's Theory has been expounded upon, expanded, and revised by various researchers. One of the most prevalent is Porter and Lawler's 1968 motivational model (Barg et al., 2014; Jansen & Samuel, 2014).

Porter and Lawler's 1968 motivational model (Barg et al., 2014; Jansen & Samuel, 2014), uses variables that have either intrinsic or extrinsic motivational value to the individual as a predictor of behavior. Leaders can use these variables to create work climates and cultures that fill the intrinsic and extrinsic needs of employees simultaneously (Barg et al., 2014; Jansen & Samuel, 2014). An example of this method is the creation of more stimulating jobs by an organization with more substantial intrinsic and extrinsic rewards such as pay, promotions, and lucrative employee fringe benefits. Employee behavior, negative or positive is a product of conscious or unconscious decisions based on alternatives that maximize benefits and decrease risks to the employee (Barg et al., 2014; Barba-Sanchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017). They are motivated to increase positive performance behavior when doing so enables them to acquire a more favorable outcome, such as increased organizational rewards or benefits, explicitly pay (Vroom, 1995).

Vroom's expectancy theory differs from other theories in the fact that it examines effort, performance and specific outcomes separately unlike other research which only focused on the association between internal needs and individual effort, (Parijat & Bagga,

2014). Specifically, Vroom's theory centers more around individual self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as the internal belief in one's own ability to accomplish the task (Emrich, 2014). Based upon Vroom's theory an employee, although possessing all the resources to perform, would still perform unsatisfactorily based on self-perception inadequacies and lower self-expectations (Shweiki et al., 2015; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017). The foundation of Vroom's theory rests upon the existence of specific variables referred to as VIE, which occurs during the motivational decision-making process (Vroom, 1995). These variables consist of (a) individual effort and performance or valence (V), (b) perceived rewards and or outcomes or instrumentality (I), and (c) personal objective set or expectancy (E) (Parijat & Bagga, 2014; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017).

The first of the three variables, of Vroom's theory, is valence. Valence is how desirable the reward is to the individual after the exerted effort (Vroom, 1995; DeSimone, 2015). The valence associated with the effort differs depending on the individual perspective; therefore, it can be altered to suit individual objectives (Vroom, 1995; DeSimone, 2015). The second variable, Instrumentality, is the difference between the action put forth and the possibility of the employee achieving the reward sought (Vroom, 1995; DeSimone, 2015). For example, if the employee believes that a specific behavior will produce a perceived outcome, no value is assigned to the outcome; motivation decreases and untimely ceases to exist to behave in that manner. Alternately, an employee assigns a high value to behavior or action, but here is a low probability of

achievement; then motivation will still decrease or cease to exist (Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017).

The final variable of Vroom's theory, and possibly the most significant, is expectancy (Vroom, 1995; DeSimone, 2015). Expectancy is the perceived reward that an employee anticipates in return for an effort (Vroom, 1995; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017). There are two forms of expectancy beliefs. There is an expectation that specific behaviors produce specific outcomes, and there is an individual's expectation to produce the outcome or efficacy singularly. Depending on the level of expectations associated with the actions, employee behavior ranges from positive to negative (Vroom, 1995; DeSimone, 2015). Expectancy uses the presumption that all behavior is related to one's self-estimation of worth and ability to achieve various goals (Parijat & Bagga, 2014; DeSimone, 2015). Based on this assumption, individuals who display confidence have higher expectations than persons with less confidence in their skills and abilities or ones who have previously failed at a particular task or role.

Vroom's expectancy theory is a core principle of my research. Vroom's expectancy theory's focus on individual choice as it pertains to increasing positive performance behavior makes it ideal for incorporation into this body of work (Fu, 2015). The most common among these remedies include rewards based on individualized personal goals and attributes perceived only as valuable to the employee. Vroom's theory also focuses on managerial motivational solutions to increase employee effort, and performance provides additional relevance (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). The tenants of Vroom's theory assist in the explanation of how to foster a positive relationship between

employees and the supply chain leadership. The theory provides clarity from a social aspect of how an organization remains sustainable by learning to view its employee's differences as assets, rather than as liabilities (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). Supply-side leadership that manages to utilize these diversity management skill sets will gain and retain the competitive advantage over organizations whose employees do not use these skills efficiently (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015).

An additional theory I examined but not incorporated into this research was Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory also examines motivational remedies. Maslow's theory asserts that individuals have a hierarchy of basic needs which motivates them. The five levels of the hierarchy need consist of five specific areas: (a) physiological, (b) love, (c) safety, (d) esteem and (e) self-actualization (Gorny, 2015). Similar to Vroom's theory, which focuses on factors that motivate individuals, Maslow's theory deals with individual instinctive needs. These requirements are indicative of all aspects of life and not central to employee job performance. Maslow's theory does not explicitly encourage employee-employer relationships. The theory emphasizes the needs of an individual (Gorny, 2015), which made it irrelevant to this research.

One of the primary strengths of Vroom's theory is its common sense and realistic approach to the subject matter (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). Vroom's theory provides a detailed explanation as it pertains to motivation through an examination of the link between employee efforts, work performance, employee motivation from an organizational perspective (Vroom, 1995). Researchers and managers implementing the

theory have found it to be more scientific than some other theories on motivation. For example, unlike theories by Maslow and Herzberg, expectancy theory recognizes the importance of various individual needs and motivations (Barba-Sanchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017). Vroom's expectancy theory provides a framework for thinking about how people make choices based on expectations. Also, the theory examines the independent difference each of the motivational factors (Barba-Sanchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017).

The expectancy theory's primary weakness is its omission that other factors external to self-interest can serve as a motivating factor to increase performance (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). The expectancy's theory of inability to account for the type of employee reaction could lead to organizations missing out on the use of an exceptional employee motivational tool. Vroom (1995) noted that the lack of consideration for goodwill-based behavior weakens the theory's ability to predict long-term employee behavior patterns. This inability to predict employee behavior patterns impacts the leadership's ability to plan or implement future strategies to increase performance (Parijat & Bagga, 2014).

An additional weakness of the expectancy theory is its assumption that all managers have equal or even access to employee instrumentality and valence factors. It is impossible for leaders to anticipate the needs of the employees or the value placed on the necessity of an employee without being told so. Lack of this information makes it hard for the leaders to anticipate how motivated an employee to increase performance or accomplish a task that has a favorable reward attached (Barba-Sanchez & Atienza-



Sahuquillo, 2017). Lastly, despite its rapid discussion concerning motivation, the expectancy theory fails to provide concrete elements of what motivates employees to perform (Shweiki et al., 2015). Critics still view expectancy theory as complex, with weak standards, making interpretation and validation during research difficult (Barba-Sanchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017). Critics not only refer to the theory as complicated and challenging to measure, but also as lacking consistent definition and operationalization of crucial variables such as performance, effort, and valance (Shweiki et al., 2015). Additional critics indicate that complexity makes it difficult for leaders to employ at times or validated during research efforts (Shweiki et al., 2015).

In summation, the expectancy theory of motivation provides a rational explanation for employee behavior and decision-making process. Reactions to specific variables are contingent on the emotions of each employee (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). Each employee is different, and therefore, somewhat unpredictable in their actions (Shweiki et al., 2015). Lastly, the theory's convoluted cognitive and sub-cognitive processes make striking a balance between the individual's reward and its overall cost to the organization problematic (Parijat & Bagga, 2014).

### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

Introduced in 1973, the transformational leadership theory, has become one of the most common theories in the understanding managerial, individual, group, and organizational effectiveness (Besieux, Baillien, Verbeke, & Euwema, 2015; Hernman & Chiu, 2015, Northouse, 2015). Transformational leaders utilize their abilities to assert influence, inspire, and to cause paradigm shifts (Caillier, 2014; Deinert et al., 2015).

Additionally, transformational leaders seek to instill a sense of higher purpose in their employees by encouraging employees to focus their attention on the long-term organizational goals collectively to achieve them (Anderson & Sun, 2017).

Transformational leadership is considered part of the new leadership paradigm that focuses on charm and charisma, as inspiration for how leaders influence followers (Northouse, 2015).

The transformational leadership style consists of four specific traits (Besieux et al., 2015; Holten & Brenner, 2015; Northouse, 2015). These traits include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration. The first trait of the transformational leadership model is an idealized influence (Besieux et al., 2015), which is also known as charisma. Idealized influence behaviors result in leaders being deeply admired by their followers (Northouse, 2015). Leaders with this trait tend to have a significant amount of influence and power over their subordinates. If used negatively by leaders, the idealized influence trait allows them to impugn subordinate perspectives (Besieux et al., 2015).

The second trait in the transformational leadership paradigm is inspirational motivation (Northouse, 2015). Leaders with the inspirational motivation trait can inspire followers to perform beyond ordinarily perceived expectation (Besieux et al., 2015; Holten & Brenner, 2015). Additionally, leaders who exhibit the second trait motivate followers by identifying specific goals that encourage group cohesion and optimism throughout the change process (Holten & Brenner, 2015).

The third trait of the transformational leadership model is intellectual stimulation (Northouse, 2015). Leaders exhibiting this trait tend to encourage their followers to challenge norms and to create new solutions to old problems (Holten & Brenner, 2015). Additionally, by encouraging their followers to think beyond the norm, the leader creates a vision for the follower of how they fit into the organization and its future missions and objectives (Besieux et al., 2015). For instance, businesses have shifted their operating paradigms to recruit employees who possess the capacity to think beyond the current thought process or exhibit proactive behavior personalities (Deichmann & Stam, 2015).

Proactive behavior as anticipatory actions is taken or displayed by an employee that alter or change their climate positively. The exhibition of proactive behavior is due to the leader's ability to clearly articulate the organization's vision. Subsequently inspiring the employees to behave positively, thereby promoting job autonomy and possibly increasing self-efficacy. The promotion of job autonomy and self-efficacy is critical because it empowers employees to seek alternative avenues to solve various matters in the workplace. This empowerment, in turn, allows the employee to take more ownership of the task, and its direct outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Transformational leadership has a positive correlation to proactive behavior in an employee. Businesses with high job autonomy tend to employ individuals who exhibit more dynamic behavior in the workplace. Oddly, in workers who demonstrate a higher level of proactive behavior, one finds the existence of a low degree of self-efficacy ((Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

The final aspect of the transformational leadership model is an individualized consideration (Northouse, 2015). Leaders using this trait act as a coach or a mentor for subordinates. It allows the leader to govern rewards and recognition for the desired behavior. These actions enhance each team members' self-worth and inspire employees to accomplish organizational objectives as well as to achieve personal growth (Holten & Brenner, 2015). An example of this trait is the transformational leader's ability to create the perception that one cares about an employee on multiple levels. The creation of this perception generates an emotional link between the leader and the subordinate that translates into the creation of a sense of purpose, direction and meaning for the employee's work (Garcia-Morales et al., 2012). This behavior created by the emotional link developed between the employee and leader is often likened to organizational citizenship. The leader can use this sense of citizenship to obtain employee buy-in for a change and to aid in the creation of a positive organizational climate (Besieux et al., 2015). The existence of positive organizational climates allows leaders to obtain goals effortlessly, increase job satisfaction and to gain organizational commitment to creating win/win scenarios (Bass, 1990; Besieux et al., 2015).

Incorporation of the transformational leadership theory into this body of work is relevant to this study because it centers upon the leader's ability to it emphasizes teamwork, ethics, and a commitment to singular organizational goals and objectives. Transformational leadership centers itself upon the employee-leader relationship and the development of mutual trust. Lastly, leaders employing the transformational leadership style can ensure employees to achieve enhanced levels of performance (Caillier, 2014;

Deinert et al., 2015). Additional theories considered for this research include transactional leadership. Transactional leadership theories focus on strategies used by SCM leaders to improve employee performance in workplaces.

Transactional leaders have a narrow scope of interest and are task and process oriented (Bass, 1990; Odumeru & Ognonna, 2013). Additionally, transactional leaders employ passive/aggressive leadership approach, similar to Laissez-Faire. Leaders with transactional leadership qualities breed stable professional relationships, but this study focuses on transformational qualities. Additionally, transactional leadership is solely dependent upon the interaction between leaders and followers and allows no room for independent thinking (Deinert et al., 2015).

Transformational leadership has one primary weakness; it is emotionally based and lacks proper checks and balances that will keep possibly abusive leaders in control. Transformational leaders are dynamic leaders and thereby possess the ability to motivate employees by appealing to their emotions (Odumeru & Ognonna, 2013), in turn giving the leader a powerful influence over an employee. Influence becomes detrimental when placed in the hands of leaders possessing negative tendencies that thrive on power; it can be lethal (Bratnicka, 2015). The level of detriment increases when employees have immense trust in the leader, a deep level of respect, or an unhealthy idolization of the leader.

### **Application to the Applied Business Problem**

In this qualitative single case study, I examined strategies SCM leaders employ to improve employee performance in the workplace. Employee performance (Osabiya,

2015) and leadership (Guillen et al., 2015) are critical to a business ability to remain competitive. Unpredictable business climates, coupled with intense market competition, are forcing organizational supply chains to improve their performance to meet customer demands (Muda, Rafiki, & Harahap, 2014). Supply chain leaders who seek to increase employee performance often turn to methods such as training (Makhani et al., 2015). Although utilizing training is a great first step, it merely achieves a negligible amount of employee performance improvement. Emich (2014) noted that improvement arises only from the administration of a balance of education, leadership, and the creation of the proper workplace tone. Leaders possessing and employing the appropriate mixture of circumstances increase supply chain performance through the creation of performance expectations, neutral climates, free of harassment, bias, and discrimination, well as a sound process and strategies (Emich, 2014).

### **Supply Chain Management**

Supply chains keep the world functioning by linking people to places, goods, and services. Supply chains can exist within any organization in any form. Genuinely effective, SCM is a combination of strategically planned sequences designed to connect to the overall mission of the organization (Melnyk, Narasimhan, et al., 2014). The management of supply chains plays a significant role in an organization's overall efficiency and effectiveness (Ellram and Cooper, 2014). Farahani et al., (2014) and Waller and Fawcett (2014) referred to supply chain managers as conductors, whose primary mission is to synchronize organizational cohesively, production, marketing, and finance functions with the needs of supply chain partners. SCM terminology was first

used in 1982 in a Financial Times article by Booz Allen consultant Keith Oliver (Melnyk, Narasimhan, et al., 2014; Zacharia et al., 2014). Ellram and Cooper (2014) noted that early academic literature referred to SCM as a process for managing organizational assets, inventory, and resources. Additionally, the term was also seen as a means to define the link between logistics, internal, and external organizational functions (Ellram & Cooper, 2014).

In 1990 changes in the supply chain industry resulted in the explanation of the term *supply chain* as a means of differentiating SCM new functions from traditional methodologies used to manage materials and information. Because of changes, definitional bias has developed that lead to the constant interchangeability of SCM terminology with various other terms (Zacharia et al., 2014). The interchangeability or non-definitional consensus of the phrase is a response to the industries and academia inability to develop synthesized definition inclusive of all defining elements, as well as using in part or whole the definition of the terms (Corominas, 2013). Additional implication further suggests that a secondary source for lack of definitional consensus is the ongoing disagreement over whether SCM is a management philosophy, management process or functions carried out by organizational management (Zacharia et al., 2014). The perspective that is primarily relevant to this study is that SCM is a function. The point of view that SCM is a function infers that SCM is task oriented with all fiduciary responsibilities resting with management (Ellram & Cooper, 2014). These responsibilities include stakeholder accountability, marketing, as well as the day-to-day oversight of all operations, including the management of personnel.

Since its first utterance 30 years ago, the scope of SCM has been expanded to various definitions, areas, functions, and activities. These activities include primary elements of the supply chain such as sourcing, procurement, management information systems (MIS) and logistics across organizations (Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, 2013; Zacharia et al., 2014). Supply chains represent collections of parties and networks involved indirectly or directly in completing a customer's order for goods or services from start to finish (Heckmann et al., 2015; Huo et al., 2014). The necessity for organizations to remain competitive in local and global markets resulted in an amplified interest in Supply Chain (SC) and SCM discipline as well as its complete theory and practices (Carter, Rogers, & Choi, 2015). Networks within the supply chain enable the successful completion of its primary goal, the smooth transition of goods and services (Carter et al., 2015). These networks are so delicate that failure is imminent if any portion of the link or network ceases to function adequately, jeopardizing the effectiveness of the organizational supply chain (Carter et al., 2015).

SCM's ultimate goal is to improve the tenant of the overall supply chain field, therefore, managers must remain ever vigilant and responsive to the constant demands of customers to adjust the supply chain to align with changing markets and economic environments, and various strategies that impact the overall supply chain ability to function (Farahani et al., 2014). To ensure adequate performance and overall success, supply chain managers must strike a balance between both organizational, customer, and employee needs at all levels (Farahani et al., 2014).



## **Performance Improvement**

The creation and sustainment of an efficient and effective supply chain require organizations to address and resolve a vast amount of challenges. These challenges include inventory development, technology reliance, and retaining organizational relationships. To sustain a competitive edge in the current market, business leaders must remain flexible and continuously seek measures to improve overall supply chain performance (Wu, Chuang, & Hsu, 2014). No challenge has more impact on an organization's ability to remain relevant in the market, than that of employee performance, especially performance improvement (Lonial & Carter, 2015).

## **Employee Job Performance**

Employees are one of the most critical assets an organization possesses (Hafezz & Akbar, 2015). Organizational performance is a direct outcome of organizational progress (Valmohammadi & Roshanzamir, 2015) as well as a direct reflection of the achievement of its employees (Osabiya, 2015). Within a supply chain, organizational leaders equate success or failure with various organizational performance factors such as cost and customer responsiveness (Liu, Ke, Kee Wei, & Hua, 2013). Organizations employ various means to measure the factor, the most common being tangible factors such as profits, sales volume, asset turnover, and inventory turnover. Within the supply chain, the primary function of leadership is to ensure that employees perform at a standard that ensures success and profit. Employee job performance centers around individual or group accomplishments, and outcomes, negative or positive derived from work (Anitha, 2014). Employee job performance is dependent upon and measured by internal

organizational elements such as duties, roles, responsibilities, human capabilities, and overall success of the organizations (Muschara, 2014).

A primary tool leaders employ to measure performance include external and personal elements such as motivation, the level of commitment, and overall satisfaction (Lilian, 2014). Employee performance management and measurement work in tandem to ensure the efficient operation of an organization, as well as the retainment of competent employees (Anitha, 2014). There are various facets on which organizational leaders evaluate employee performance, most of which are tangible. The most common tangible indicators include Cost reduction, profits, sales volume, asset turnover, equity turnover, and inventory turnover.

Performance management is the achievement of organizational goals and objectives, while performance measurement measures how well the employees reach those goals (Decramer et al., 2013). Performance management practices increase employee job performance by linking organizational goals, objectives, and potential performance outcomes to external and internal factors associated with the employee, when implemented efficiently (Anitha, 2014). Additionally, effective performance management and measurement practices create employee awareness as well as allow for the development of synergy within the organization. When an employee is more aware of their place within the organization, they are more inclined to enhance their performance (Decramer et al., 2013).

To achieve adequate employee performance within the supply chain leaders must perform a variety of managerial functions. The duties include conducting semi-annual

and annual performance appraisals, implementing employee training and development programs as needs, as well as making competent decisions concerning which employees to promote, reassign, or terminate (Anitha, 2014). Effective employee performance management consists of planning, monitoring, develop, rating, and rewarding (OPM-Workforce Compensation and Performance Service, 2011). Cascio (2014) concurred with this assertion and was able to combine as well as narrow down all the required elements of employee performance management to three fundamental factors, employee-employer communication, feedback, and employee development. The communication and feedback are the most critical of the factors (Cascio, 2014) and the initiation of communication by the leader assists the employee in gaining an understanding of organizational expectations.

Communication also supports the leader in generating discussions with the employee, whereas timely feedback concerning positive or negative performance occurs. Messages with appropriate feedback assist the employee in developing goals that will allow them to reach their maximum development potential. Employees who perform within expectations are rewarded accordingly, while employees are not within standards are given additional training until they meet expectations (OPM Workforce Compensation and Performance Service, 2011). Employees after a period of review who consistently do not meet expectations were reassigned or terminated (Cascio, 2014; OPM Workforce Compensation and Performance Service, 2011).

## **Factors Impacting Employee Performance**

Numerous factors can affect employee performance. The MARS model of individual behavior and performance outlines four primary factors which impact individual behavior and performance (Abdurrahim & Welly, 2014). These factors include motivation, ability, role perceptions, and situational factors or M.A.R.S (Abdurrahim & Welly, 2014). When motivating employees to increase and strengthen, performance managers must understand and seek to address the factors that impact performance (Jansen & Samuel, 2014). Additionally, leaders must also adopt and gain a clear understanding of the efforts implemented that can sustain the increased performance of employees. This section focuses on only a few of these factors; motivation, employee job satisfaction, organizational culture, and environment, as well as leadership approach.

### **Motivation**

A key concern for organizational supply chain leaders seeking higher performance at an enhanced rate is employee motivation (Hau, Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2013). Motivation represents the individual's drive to proceed with an action based on self-satisfying needs (Abdurrahim & Welly, 2014; Muda et al., 2014). Organizational leaders seeking to motivate employees must consider external and internal factors before developing strategic plans such as the work-life balance and the number of tasks provided to an employee versus the time allotted to complete them (McGee & Johnson, 2015). Organizations have employed various traditional and on traditional methods to increase employee motivation to include trendy game utilization. Technology-based business use gamification methods as a mean to motivate employees to take on new and innovated

challenges being presented at various stages of their career by management (Bedard, 2015). For example, some business leaders are using gamification elements such as point scoring, multi-player interaction, progress bars, leaderboards, positive feedback, and rewards for the best performance or play to increase performance. The existence of these features is useful as they keep employees. Employees who are adequately engaged are motivated to seek and create new opportunities for themselves, as well as the organization. Thus, employees are more satisfied and perform more efficiently (Bedard, 2015).

When seeking to increase performance, leaders must tailor their efforts to align with these individual's needs to create the motivation necessary for task completion (Jansen & Samuel, 2014). Motivation consists of numerous conscious or unconscious choices introduced to the employee in exchange for a favorable outcome (Akhtar, Aziz, Hussain, Ali, & Salman, 2014; Fu, 2015). Effects of conscious vs. unconscious motivation indicate that to achieve organizational goals; leaders must be the employee's primary source of conscious motivation (Pillay & Cardenas, 2015). The presence of unconscious influence has the potential to induce negative motivational factors in an employee, such as fear, anxiety, and goal confusion (Pillay & Cardenas, 2015). If unrecognized these behaviors, will fester and cause discord within the organization. To fix this issue, a leader must give attention to the unconscious language as well as the alert signals they send to employees. Leaders must situationally treat all incidents, applying remedies based on the individual. An additional fix to the impact of unconscious

influence is the hiring of coaches or consultants that specialize in reducing the consequences associated with unconscious influence (Pillay & Cardenas, 2015).

A popular belief linked to employee motivation is that extrinsic or intrinsic needs drive behaviors. Intrinsic motivation is the performance effort displayed by the employee based on the fulfillment of intangible or personal goals or objectives (Hau et al.; 2013). Intrinsic motivation consists of (a) sense of efficacy, (b) personal example, (c) interest in the field, (d) personal satisfaction derived from the activity itself, (e) sense of organizational oneness, and (f) the need to increase academic wealth (Pacesila, 2014). Employees motivated intrinsically achieve satisfaction through performing work they deem interesting (Jansen & Samuel, 2014). The nature of intrinsically motivated employees is self-satisfying through work based on enjoyment. Hence, they tend to be involved in their jobs and exert more effort and seek goal attainment more than those less extrinsically motivated (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014). Intrinsic motivation creates positive behavior and emotions within individuals, based upon positive experiences associated with performing the same or similar tasks. Also, the existence of extrinsic motivational factors negatively impacts intrinsic motivation and associated positive behavior (Jiming & Xinijan, 2013).

Extrinsic motivation is the performance afforded by an employee with the intent of fulfilling material or physical based needs (Jansen & Samuel, 2014). Employees motivated by extrinsic means tend to focus on items such as money, power, or status (Jansen & Samuel, 2014). As it pertains to employee performance, extrinsically motivated employees seek visibly, tangible rewards such as pay raises, promotions, as

well as additional perks such as bigger workspaces. The ability to motivate employees based on their extrinsic desires is an excellent tool to increase employee performance. These tools consist of an employee's wages, benefits, and job security (Jansen & Samuel, 2014). The use of extrinsic motivational tactics has the potential to create unhealthy and counterproductive competition practices that can undermine organizational goals to improve overall collaborative behavior (Jansen & Samuel, 2014). The influence exerted by extrinsic motivational factors is not wholly negative. Extrinsic motivation elements elicit positive behaviors in employees, such as employee commitment, organizational, and job satisfaction that link to low employee turnover (Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014).

### **Employee Job Satisfaction**

Employee job satisfaction is based on the simple construct of the individual employee attitude or feeling towards their job performance and work (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014). Simply stated, employees with a positive or favorable attitude towards their job performance are considered satisfied with their jobs (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014). Alternately, an employee who possesses a negative perception is not. An employee's job satisfaction level is dependent on six specific factors. The first factor is an accomplishment. Accomplishment refers to the level at which the employee can pursue and achieve both professional and personal goals. Acknowledgment is the second factor; it corresponds to the relationship between the pay received versus the task performed. The work is the third factor which refers to the level of excitement experienced by the employee in accomplishing a task, gaining new knowledge, and obtaining a higher degree of responsibility. Engagement is the fourth factor, and it refers to the extent that a leader

provides feedback and overall support. Engagement consists of the employee's ability to participate gainfully with co-workers. The fifth factor is advancement. Advancement references the opportunities available for the employee to advance to a higher position. The last factor is development, and it refers to the possibilities provided to train internally or externally for self-improvement (Maharani & Troena, 2013).

Employee job satisfaction is a critical element of a successful organization (Khan et al., 2013; Jehanzeb et al., 2015) and maintaining it improves performance thereby adding to the bottom line through increased productivity and sales. Although despite its importance, organizations tend to place employee satisfaction as a low priority (Wong & Laschinger, 2013). The arduous task leadership faces fostering a climate where job satisfaction flourishes. Employees who achieve job satisfaction are more liable to remain committed to the organization, have long-term employment, become more invested in future organizational endeavors and are less likely to commit unethical acts (Khan et al., 2013; Ahmad, Iqbal, Javed, & Hamad, 2014). Satisfied employees tend to be good employees, who perform well, and subsequently can achieve assigned duties with higher efficiency (Yasir et al., 2016). When utilizing employee satisfaction to increase performance leaders must keep in mind that increased performance may not always be the outcome and that the performance of existing high performer could be diminished as well (Kazimoto, 2016).

### **Organizational Culture and Climate**

An additional set of factors which impacts employee performance as well as its overall enhancement is the organizational culture and climate. (Karanja, 2014; Scammon



et al., 2014). Originating in 1930, organizational climate is the meaning in which employees attach to collective shared experiences, events, practices, and policies from the workplace (Glisson, 2015; Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013). Also, the organizational climate is the shared meaning they attach to expected employee behaviors that are rewarded or supported by leadership (Ehrhart & Aarons, 2014). Leaders can enhance employee performance significantly by creating and seeking to maintain a fulfilling workplace climate (Joshi, 2016). Setting the correct tone or climate in the workplace allows organizations to recruit, and retain the top-notch employee, as well as motivate employees to perform in an enhanced manner (Emich, 2014; Parijat & Bagga, 2014). The type of climate within an organization depends upon and is set by its leadership. Leaders can shape organizational climates through the creation norms and practices, enforcement of codes of conduct, or by modeling approved behavior to the employee (Dinh et al., 2014; Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013).

Glisson (2015) indicates that there are three specific dimensions of organizational climates engagement, functionality, and stress. The first dimension, engagement centers around the perception employees have regarding their work-related accomplishments. Employees who feel that their work is meaningful, and contributes to the overall positive synergy of the organization, tend to be more gainfully engaged in their workplace, seek out additional measures by which to help the organization's growth. The second dimension, functional, was based on how much employees feel coworkers and organizational leadership support them. Employees can obtain functionality through the clear and concise communication of workplace policies, procedures, and responsibilities.

Furthermore, employees who are highly functional within an organization exhibit higher degrees of peer cohesion. The final dimension, stress encompasses work behaviors and actions that create stressful climates for employees. Stressful climates arise from employees being overworked, low work-life balance opportunities, feelings of inequity, and unfair treatment from superiors and co-workers (Glisson, 2015).

Equally as important as climate, is organizational culture. Organizational culture, not to be confused with climate, is the governing system for employee behavior consisting of shared and enforced values, beliefs, dress, behavior, and communications by an organization developed over time (Karanja, 2014; Zhu & Engels 2014). The development and continuation of organizational culture are depended upon interaction among employees for the pure intent of accomplishing company-wide goals and objectives (Valmohammadi & Roshanzamir, 2015). Works by Fusch, Fusch, Booker, and Fusch (2016) inferred that workplace cultures and subcultures where the employee feels valued have a higher sense of self-satisfaction, and thereby a better attitude towards their job and are less likely to resist change in a negative manner. Alternately, organizations, where no value and validation techniques are employed, tend to have an employee who more resistant to organizational growth, less satisfied with their job, as well as overall performance.

Zhu and Engels (2014) and Belias and Koustelios, (2014), organizational culture is identifiable through the existence of three distinct elements; noticeable artifacts espoused values and basic underlying assumptions. The first element, visible artifacts, refer to material-based items and elements that have cultural significance to the

employees. Observable artifacts can consist of organizational based products, goals, and objectives, as well as beliefs, behaviors, stories, special ceremonies, and taboos. The second element, espoused values, concerns itself with the professed and existing culture of an organization's members. These values serve as moral compasses for employees, which enable them to interpret signals, events, and issues that guide behavior effortlessly. Belias and Koustelios (2014) indicated that while these actions or behaviors may not or may be indicative of the employee's individual beliefs because organizational leadership endorses them, employees deem them as acceptable. The final element was implied assumptions. Implied assumptions refer to personal interpretative schemes used by employees to understand various circumstances and develop a foundation to act collectively in a group.

Glisson (2015) further stated that organizations with the highest employee performance outcomes are organizations who have low employee turnover, coupled with positive attitudes towards the organization. Subsequently, Glisson (2015) noted that these are the organizations who have climates and cultures which encourage high levels of employee engagement and functionally, but low levels of employee stress. Supply-side leaders who seek to recruit and retain high-level performing employees must strive to foster cultures and climates that promote internally as well as external motivational well-being (Karanja, 2014; Scammon et al., 2014). Promoting a nurturing culture and climate leads to the fulfillment of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for the employee, thus, increasing job performance and the overall job satisfaction rates (Jansen & Samuel, 2014)

## **Leadership Approach**

The final and most prevalent factor impacting employee performance within an organizational supply chain is leadership (Odumeru & Ognonna, 2013). Leadership is a process in whereas one person can influence another individual or group to achieve singular or shared common goals and objectives (Danisman et al., 2015; Northouse, 2015). Leadership differs from management in their overall focus. Management concerns itself with short-term goals and objectives such as hiring employees to fill a specific position. Alternately leaders concentrate on long-range objectives such as profitability, market placement, increasing output as well as increase and sustaining employee organizational performance (Northouse, 2015).

Leaders can derive their authority to lead from six specific sources of power, coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, referent, and informational. While some leaders use a combination of the six sources, the majority derive their power from legitimate authority (Pierro, Raven, Amato, & Belanger, 2013). Regardless of which authority employed a critical goal of organizational leaders is to set the overall tone for the organization. The setting of the organizational tone impacts organizational behavior and process, employee perception, as well as the core values of the organizations (Joshi, 2016). For instance, leaders perceived as unfeeling foster toxic and non-productive climate with unmotivated employees. Consequently, leaders who possess personas of caring, foster an environment where information is free-flowing, morale is high, and the worker is more productive because they feel valued. A connection exists between

leadership ability, increased employee satisfaction, and performance (Akhtar et al., 2014; Wong & Laschinger, 2013).

It is critical to the overall success of the organization to ensure that the right leader is in place with the right capabilities. Part of having the right capabilities is employing the proper leadership style or approach. Leadership style or approach is the manner or behavior in which the leaders choose to lead and give direction to subordinates (DuBrin, 2015; Northouse, 2015). The approach or style of leadership employed is a determining factor in the organization's ability to obtain set goals and objectives such as learning and performance (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Olorube, 2015). Furthermore, leadership style or approach if appropriately used, can serve as a valuable tool to enhance employee relationships, organizational environment, and performance (Kara, Uysal, Sirgy, & Lee, 2013).

Recent studies concerning leadership styles and approaches link overall employee satisfaction and self-esteem to internal influences such as organizational environment leadership approaches and personal relationships. Employees are more satisfied with leaders whom they perceive as caring or supportive than with leaders who are uncaring or non-supportive (Puni, Ofei, & Okoe, 2014). The presence of what employees deem as positive leaders reduce overall workplace stress, therefore allowing the employee to perform in an enhanced manner. Alternately the existence of negative or non-supportive leaders reduce productivity and increase absenteeism and the turnover to the organization can be quite high (Hamidifar, 2015).

Leadership styles paradigms consist of varied approaches that center upon performance-related outcomes resulting from leader and employee interaction. Leadership styles such as autocratic and authoritarian due to their rigidity give the perception of being positive for the organization and its employees due to their ability to increase performance and productivity, while they are the opposite (Hamidifar, 2015). Autocratic and authoritarian leadership paradigms center around the performance of employees, not the employees themselves with all decisions resting with the leader. The foundation of autocratic and authoritarian leadership powerbase lies with the concept that all employees are incapable of functioning without direct supervision or continuously being told what to do (Hamidifar, 2015). A factor that is further amplified by the increased productivity these two styles generate.

Lastly, the use of this leadership style is dependent upon the leader's ability to retain control, provide close supervision, and manipulate employees through distorted communication practices and fear tactics. As a result, employees develop negative attitudes towards organizational leadership, thereby leading to an overall decrease in employee morale, creativity, and subsequently decreased performance (Hamidifar, 2015). Alternately democratic and participative leadership styles due to their less rigid standards seem contrary to the organization and its employees, but in turn, are positive. Democratic and participative leadership styles are ideal due to their willing inclusion of employee contribution to make decisions. These leadership styles increase employee morale, which, in turn, permanently increase overall productivity (Hamidifar, 2015).

Until 1945, theorists centered upon two specific leadership approaches or styles: transactional and transformational leadership (Puni et al., 2014). Consequently, in 1947, the need to incorporate two additional styles of leadership, Employee Centered (EC), and Production Centered (PC) leadership grew (Puni et al., 2014). Employee Centered (EC) leadership style concentrates upon employee goals, and the satisfaction employees derive from obtaining these aims. Theorists and practitioners using EC seek productive policies and practices to admonish employees exhibiting unapproved organizational behavior. Alternately, PC based leadership accentuate employee performance output. Consequently, the concentration of PC based leadership lies more with supervisory responsibilities such as maintaining productivity, making responsibilities such as planning and developing organizational objectives latent (Puni et al., 2014).

### **Leadership Strategies Which Increase Employee Performance**

Effective leadership is the driving force of a successful business (Vroom, 1965). Northouse (2015) referred to leadership as a process in which an individual or individuals can encourage a group of persons to achieve common organizational goals. It is essential that leaders understand, develop, communicate, and implement organizational visions. The employee perceptions of leadership influence overall motivational behaviors.

### **Leadership Development and Training**

A strategy employed by supply-side leadership to motivate employees to increase performance is training and development. Training and development concerns itself with the acquisition of understanding, know-how, techniques, and practices (Tahir et al., 2014; Ayal et al., 2018). When appropriately employed by leadership, training, and

development is an essential tool for ensuring employee effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace (Kumar & Siddika, 2017). Conversely, leadership development is the development of skills sets aimed at dealing with a group of individuals and is dependent upon three elements: (a) cognitive skills, (b) socio-emotional skills, and (c) behavioral skills (Day et al., 2014). The 2008 IBM Global Human Capital Study indicated that a lack of effective leadership is a significant work-related issue. The effects are impeding the performance of many supply chain organizations (Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013). These problems stem from a lack of leadership development opportunities (Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013). Leadership development is critical because it increases overall employee effectiveness and employee satisfaction organization-wide (Tinkham, 2013).

Leadership development increases the employer-employee bond by giving the leader the specific skill set required to relate to employees positively. Successful leadership programs, once incorporated into an organizational learning culture, will foster change that empowers the organization to grow (Tinkham, 2013). Leadership development has a direct impact on employee development. An organization's willingness to invest in an employee future through training creates a feeling of perceived security, which increases the employee's perception of their value to the company. Increased value creates a higher level of satisfaction, which increases commitment to enhancing organizational performance and profits (Kumar & Siddika, 2017). Well-implemented training and development program and practices are not only beneficial for the employee but they also the overall welfare of the organization



## **Employee Rewards**

Employee job satisfaction centers around employees feeling valued by the organization. A common strategy employed by leaders to generate this sense of value is the administering of rewards. Employee rewards are tangible or intangible items given by the organization in recognition of service, effort, or achievement (Joshi, 2016). Four types of rewards exist extrinsic and intrinsic, or tangible and intangible. Extrinsic rewards are tangible rewards such as financial, materially, and socially based (Uzonna, 2013). While intrinsic rewards such as recognition, are intangible and provides a psychological benefit upon the obtainment of a goal (Kinicki & Fugate, 2011). All rewards, whether financial or non-financial, serve as a critical factor in creating job satisfaction and motivating employees to perform at an enhanced level.

Leaders are instrumental in reward management, explicitly, tangible rewards (Joshi, 2016). Financial rewards are the preferred reward method, but to sustain productive behaviors, leaders must create an awarding system that encompasses all the means at their disposal. The most relevant reward strategies in today business environment are the total reward strategy (Hofmans, DeGieter, & Pepermans, 2013). The foundation of the total reward concept rests upon the theory that there is more to rewarding people than doling out money. Leaders subscribing to this theory administer employee rewards using a collection of interrelated factors, which integrate organizational business strategies as well as HR strategies to achieve internal consistency (Joshi, 2016). The implementation of the total rewards concept in organizational reward programs creates a climate conducive to enhancing productivity where employee feel

valued (Joshi, 2016). The singular use of financial incentives can be counterproductive to employee performance and behavior (Hofmans et al., 2013). The employee that received the monetary award will, in time fail to see the value and therefore decrease their performance efforts (Hofmans et al., 2013).

### **Enhanced Employee Engagement**

Creating a culture of engagement is vital to enhancing employee performance (Nasomboon, 2014; Smith et al., 2016). A worldwide study indicated that only a small percentage of employees, 13% remain fully engaged at their workplace, with a more significant percentage 87% being actively or inactively disengaged (Ahmed, Phulpoto, Umrani, & Abbas, 2015). Employee engagement is the overall obligation and participation that an employee displays towards their organization (Anitha, 2014; Smith et al., 2016) and is a state of mind that runs concurrently with the investment of individualized energy in the climate (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Employee engagement is characterized by the employee presence while in the workplace, the fulfillment of their responsibility to the organization, and their relationship with the organization and its leadership (Kazimoto, 2016).

Employee engagement involves a total self-investment and centers around job-related performance, as well as the willingness of the employee to commit physically, cognitively, and emotionally to one's job (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Kazimoto, 2016). Engaged employees tend to have more significant levels of motivation, which is transferable to increased amounts of responsibility (Anitha, 2014). Additionally, the thoroughly engaged employee develops an emotional connection to their organization

(Rana, Ardichvili, & Tkchenko, 2014). When fostered by leadership, engaged employees can increase an organizations ability to retain or gain a competitive advantage, thereby experiencing significantly higher profits, shareholder returns, productivity, and customer service (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

### **Transition**

In Section 1 of this doctoral study, I discussed the preliminary elements of the study including the foundation of the study, problem and purpose statements, the research question, the conceptual framework, operational terms, the significance of the study, as well as synthesized review of the relevant literature. I also explored the relative views and theories associated with methods leaders employ to improve or enhance employee performance in the workplace. The upcoming portion of this study, Section 2, discusses the core elements of the research study to include the role of the researcher, associated research design methods, population, and sampling justification. Also, in Section 2, I expounded on ethical considerations, data collection instruments, analysis, and various organizational techniques in tandem with their role in creating study validity and reliability. Section 3 of this study includes interview data, organizational provided information, and overall findings in conjunction with the researcher's interpretations, analysis, and presentation of the central themes. All study findings are related to the conceptual framework and current literature after data analysis to include the (a) study conclusions, (b) application to professional practice, (c) implications for social change, and (d) personal recommendations.

## Section 2: The Project

Leadership is the backbone of a well-run organization (Awadh & Alyahya, 2013). If an organization lacks strong leaders who possess and can employ the precise leadership styles required to promote a motivated culture, the business will fail (Hassan, 2014). More critical to the success of supply chains are its leaders and the methods that they use to motivate the employees to perform (Anitha, 2014; Caillier, 2014).

This section presents a review of the central elements of this research study in a comprehensive manner. The central foundation of this section of the research study consists of the following subsections: the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, and the participants. Additionally, this section of the research study also encompasses elements of the study, such as the research method and design, the population and sampling, the ethical research, and the data collection methods. Finally, the section contains subsections on data analysis, reliability, and validity of the study that include a discussion of the methods used to collect, analyze, and validate the reliability of the research data.

### **Purpose Statement**

The goal of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies used by SCM leaders to improve employee performance in the workplace. The study target population consisted of business leaders in the SCM field in an organization within the District of Columbia Metro area. Six supply chain leaders participated in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews to share their strategies with the intent to improve employee performance. The study findings have the potential to create social change in both managerial and

business practices by providing supply chain managers as well as general managers with research data and strategies designed to increase and sustain employee performance.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The principal purpose of qualitative research is to collect, analyze, and interpret data on everyday phenomena occurring in its natural environment (Grossoehme, 2015; Yin, 2015). As the researcher, I undertook various roles throughout this study. Among these roles was the primary data collection instrument (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The data collection process for this study consisted primarily of semi-structured face-to-face interviews using open-ended questions with individuals from the SCM field who have successfully employed strategies that improved employee performance in workplaces in the District of Columbia Metropolitan area.

The foundation of my relationship to this subject matter consists of my 20 plus years of managerial and leadership experience derived from combined military and civilian experience in the field of employee and SCM, operations and organizational culture transformation. Areas of specialized personal experiences include procurement, human resources management, customer service, and policy and procedures. My skill sets were invaluable in my exploration, understanding, and interpretation of issues in this study. Additionally, my experiences provided me with the knowledge used during the interview process to engage participants gainfully and thereby facilitate a genuine sharing of mutual experiences concerning employee motivation.

A secondary role of the researcher is to ensure and enforce ethical standards. The Belmont Report protocol functions as a guide for ethical standards by researchers during

the commission of their study (Miracle, 2016; National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The Belmont Report protocol emphasizes three primary principles for ethical research: the respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Miracle, 2016; National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). I ensured this study conformed to the principles outlined in the Belmont Report protocol by respecting each participant's autonomous decision-making process. Furthermore, I assured that each study participant provided informed consent of participation through written verification, thereby ensuring all data provided was without coercion or promise of financial gain. Also, as the researcher, it was my responsibility to ensure that all information was obtained lawfully and did not violate or compromise the participants' rights. Also, I took care to ensure that the identities of all participants remained anonymous and confidential through the redaction of names and organizational content. Lastly, it was also my duty to ensure that the commission of each interview occurred in a secure, private environment in which the participant felt free of stress or discomfort.

A final role of the researcher is to present work that is free from personal bias and preconceived conceptions (Hurt & McLaughlin, 2012). I had a duty to preside as a nonpartisan intermediary over the data collected (see Kyvik, 2013) as the ability to remain nonpartisan prevents the research from being tainted by existing predispositions, assumptions, and personal beliefs (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). As the researcher, I took extensive measures to mitigate potential concerns of bias. One measure was the arbitrary selection of participants for the study in which no previous relationship existed

between them and myself (Elo et al., 2014). Another essential measure employed was maintaining a professional relationship and refraining from involvement with the participants beyond the confines of the research study. By keeping the relationship strictly professional eliminated potential interference or latent influence on my part of the participant's responses to my interview questions.

The collection and gathering of sound data are essential to a thriving research study. The researcher must ensure they have a well-developed interview protocol that allows for an in-depth investigation into the research topic (Yazan, 2015). The interview protocol for this study was predicated on the rules associated with qualitative case study designs. Interview protocols are essential to ensuring participants and the data they provide remain protected (Yin, 2014). The interview protocol for this study (see Appendix) consisted of (a) obtaining permission to commence with the participant interview, (b) the creation of research questions that are reflective of the subject matter, and (c) implementation of procedures that encourage member checking through follow-up participant interviews.

### **Participants**

The goal of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies used by SCM leaders to improve employee performance in the workplace. The participants consisted of six supply chain managers in the District of Columbia's Metropolitan area. Cleary, Horsfall, and Hayter (2014) indicated that the participant selection process should be clear, concise, and align with research study questions. When selecting participants for this research study, I searched for information-rich individuals who were not only

knowledgeable concerning the subject matter but who also had the potential to add value to the field of study (Guest, 2014; Tong, Winkelmayer, & Craig, 2014). The primary criterion for participation was that the participants be 18 years of age or older at the time of the interview, and possess a willingness to share their workplace strategies during the interview. A secondary criterion for participation was that participants possess between 5 to 10 years of managerial experience, with at least 2- years in a managerial position within the target organization. The final criterion for participation was that participant not only possessed SCM experience but also had a proven track record of successfully enhancing employee performance within the previous 2 to 3 years.

I sought formal access to participants utilizing the target organizations training and organizational development department via e-mail upon receipt of final approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The target organization's training and organizational development department provided formal authorization as well as access to a list of 45 employees who met the described participation criteria. Of the participants on the list, 12 individuals met all the requirements. I sent an e-mail to each of the 12 individuals inviting them to participate in the study. Of the 12 individuals who received an invitation, eight responded and confirmed an interest in participating in the research study. The eight individuals who responded were sent additional communications requesting their availability for interviews. Only six of the original eight confirmed their availability as well as a continued willingness to participate in the study. At that point, I set a date and time for them to be interviewed according to their schedules. All



confirmed participants were sent consent forms to be signed and returned before the commission of the interview.

The value of data obtained in qualitative case studies is dependent on the openness and honesty of the participants, which is predicated on the overall relationship the researcher develops with the participants (Kral, 2014). Researchers must establish and maintain a trusting relationship between themselves and the participants, specifically through information sharing when possible (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). All participants were provided correspondence containing detailed information concerning the study, its purpose, and the overall value of the supply chain field. This factor was necessary as the regular conveyance of pertinent information throughout the study in a verbal form as well as in writing was essential to the development of a rapport of trust between study participants and organizational leadership specifically following the interview (see Oltmann, 2016). My deliberate distribution of information to participants served as a means of building a foundation of trust between myself and the participant (Oltmann, 2016). Furthermore, I assured all participants that the data obtained will remain confidential, stored in a location inaccessible to the public for 5-years. Destruction of all study documentation will commence upon the completion of the 5-year time frame.

### **Research Method and Design**

In this research, I sought to explore and obtain knowledge concerning strategies employed by SCM leaders to improve employee performance in the workplace. Selection of the proper research and design method was essential not only to ensure adequate alignment of the study but also that the research question was answered fully

(Yin, 2014). The research method I selected for this study was qualitative, and the design method was a case study. Qualitative case studies are ideal for this type of research process as they serve as the empirical research of data from human-based real-life situations, which in turn facilitates the investigation of a focused phenomenon (Soltani et al., 2014; Yazan, 2015).

Consequently, the design's overall flexibility and humanistic approach made the qualitative case study method and design suitable for this research study (see Shuttleworth, 2008). Additionally, the use of qualitative case study methods for this study enabled me as the researcher to explore the strategies employed by SCM leaders to improve employee performance in the workplace in a more in-depth manner. Lastly, the use of qualitative case study method and design in connection with data from real-world bounded settings of focused phenomenon allows researchers to gain an understanding of the related process, context, interpretation, and meaning through inductive reasoning (Soltani et al., 2014).

### **Research Method**

There are three types of research methods employed in business research, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Hoe & Hoare, 2012; Sandelowski, 2014; Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, & Green, 2012). The specific research method I employed for this study was qualitative. Use of a qualitative method is appropriate when the researcher seeks to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participant's ability to function in real-world scenarios in everyday life ordeals and human engagement (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Yin, 2016).

I found the qualitative method to be ideal for this research because the method afforded me the opportunity to answer specific questions in a vast field of topics (see Yin, 2016). Answering the research question in its entirety is essential because it ensures that the data obtained is always useful, relevant to the study, and creates some form of enrichment in the field of study (Yin, 2014). For the data to be effective, it must be more than simple yes or no hypotheses employed in quantitative research but must include clear and concise responses (Corley, 2012). Lastly, the use of qualitative methods is ideal because it is time efficient, requires a minimized sample population, and allows for the unique human interaction experience, which is a component necessary for research (Shuttleworth, 2008) such as mine.

I considered both quantitative and mixed methods for use in this study. After further examination of the methods, I deemed them inappropriate for this research study. Quantitative and qualitative research methods differ in various manners, philosophical assumptions, types of research strategies employed, and the specific research methods used in the study (Wisdom et al., 2012). Quantitative research methods explain social interactions, trends, and phenomenon through results from numeric data (Hoe & Hoare, 2012). I found that quantitative methods rely too heavily on the numerical data obtained to not only decipher fact from fiction but trace research patterns, a stark contrast to qualitative methods (Shuttleworth, 2008). In examining quantitative methods further, I discovered that they also rely solely on the singular interpretation of the researcher, and therefore should only serve as a guide, not a base for research findings. (Hoe & Hoare, 2012). Lastly, quantitative methods are employed when researchers need to quantify

attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and to simplify results from a larger sample population (Sandelowski, 2014).

Mixed methods research combines both quantitative and qualitative research principles concurrently or sequentially to understand a specific or shared phenomenon of (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013), which could have made it ideal for use in this research; however, the use of mixed methods is often confusing and tends to generate conflicting data (Zohrabi, 2013). Mixed methods enable the researcher to address confirmation and exploratory research questions simultaneously, provide stronger inferences than a single method or worldview, and provide more significant opportunities for an assortment of divergent and complementary views (Venkatesh et al., 2013). The mixed-methods research was deemed inappropriate for this research due to its use of numeric data to test hypotheses about specific variables versus using the real-life experiences of participants.

All alternative methods examined failed to provide me with the ability to gain in-depth insight into the unique experiences of participants or increase human involvement or participation as the qualitative method (see Zohrabi, 2013). Furthermore, the alternative methods presented a hindrance to the completion of the study based on the time requirements (Shuttleworth, 2008). The alternate methods did not become the primary method for this study because they did not provide the flexibility to engage in a semi-structured conversation with the interviewee (Yin, 2014).

## **Research Design**

The research design serves as the primary blueprint for all research and acts as a guideline for ensuring the research answers the initial research question (Yin, 2014). The commission of this research requires the selection of a design that aligns with the research question, worldview, and individual skill sets (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The design of the study aids in the understanding of the overall philosophical foundation, which enables the researcher in making the appropriate decisions as it pertains to the development and implementation of findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research encompasses five conventional designs; case study, grounded theory, narrative, phenomenology, and ethnography (Tong et al.,2014; Guetterman, 2015). While each design had various characteristics that would be useful for this study, I selected a case study as the research design for this study.

Utilization of case studies was a feasible alternative to other research design methods because of the capacity to address the complexity and contextual conditions of the subject (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). I found the case study design more appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to answer, how and why, the behavior occurs while retaining minimal control of participant behavior. Unlike the other research designs, a case study design allowed me to obtain a more in-depth and detailed investigation of the topic, based on group or individual interviews over time (Baškarada, 2014; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). Use of any other research design method would prevent this (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). A drawback to a case study evaluation is that it relegates the researcher to descriptive and exploratory objectives, thereby forcing the researcher to

be more precise when interpreting outcomes and providing detail explanation of its origin (Wahyuni, 2012). An additional drawback I discovered in utilizing the case study method is that despite its overall popularity as a research tool, it is still significantly misunderstood by academia (Baškarada, 2014).

While I found the case study method to be ideal for this research, two additional designs showed potential for use; narrative and phenomenological. The first of the two was a Narrative research design, which centers around the telling of stories of the individual participant life events and experience (Tong et al., 2014). Additionally, data required for narrative research methods are collected in a fashion similar to that of the case study through interviews, letters, documentation, photographs, and other items relevant to the telling of the participant's story (Yin, 2014). The nature of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of specific experiences; therefore, collective life experiences or stories that may or may not be factually accurate; the narrative research design was not appropriate. Phenomenological research is like case study design in that it centers around the understanding of the unique lived experience of individuals via exploration of the actual phenomenon and its overall meaning from varied perspectives (Tong et al., 2014).

Data saturation includes the building of rich data within the process of inquiry (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015a; Morse, 2015c). Data saturation is said to occur when research fails to produce new information or consistently creates data redundancies, thereby diminishing the possibility of new information (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2016). I sought to ensure data saturation in my design through the

utilization of methodologies that encouraged planning of the researcher study in the forefront, such as the *information power* methodology (Cleary et al., 2014; Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2015). Utilization of the *information power* methodology was grounded in my ability to develop during the initial stages of my research five elements; (a) study aim, (b) sample specificity, (c) use of an established theory, (d) quality of dialogue, and (e) analysis strategy (Malterud et al., 2015).

Employing Malterud's (2015) information power methodology and corresponding principals encouraged me to not only narrow my study's scope but ensure that all my participants and their experiences were specific to the requirements of my research. Narrowing my scope was essential because it forced only to utilize established theories supported by established works and authors for the study's theoretical foundation. Additionally, the narrowing my research scope or focus as well as participant requirement led to the development of sound research participant questions which with the purpose and problem statement of the research (Cleary et al., 2014). Actions which in-turn lead to my ability to utilize a decreased participant sample size, which enhanced my ability to reach adequate saturation levels. Also, a subsequent outcome attending to these details in the forefront was that I was able to more objective in my research decisions, thereby making them more reliable, subjective, and defensible.

### **Population and Sampling**

This qualitative case study explored strategies used by SCM leaders to improve employee performance in the workplace. The target population for this qualitative case study consisted of supply chain managers in the District of Columbia's Metropolitan. In

conducting this qualitative case research study, I employed a purposeful sampling methodology. Utilization of a purposeful sampling methodology was ideal because it enables me to select information-rich participants whose experiences and knowledge bases were in line with my overall business problem (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016; Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbin, 2015). The ability to select these information-rich participants was critical to the success of my research as it allows me to obtain information that yielded insight, and value as well as in-depth understanding of managerial practices as it pertains to improving employee performance (Benoot et al., 2016; Broody, 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). Furthermore, utilization of a purposeful sampling allowed me to collect extensive information from participants as well as represent a more accurate interpretation of the data obtained in their findings (Elo et al., 2014; Tong et al., 2014). An additional reason for my utilization of the purposeful sampling methodology is that it enhances my ability to reach saturation as well as rapidly identify relevant research themes at a more rapid pace (Boddy, 2016; Elo et al., 2014).

For this research study, the purposeful sample size was deemed to be six participants. Selecting the appropriate sample size for a qualitative research study is critical as it impacts the researcher's ability to achieve saturation (Boddy, 2016; Hennink, 2016). Fusch and Ness (2015) indicated that sample size selection should be based on what size provides them the best opportunity to achieve saturation. Various resources exist concerning the ideal sample size for qualitative research studies, all fluid in their ideals (Boddy, 2016; Guetterman, 2015). Guetterman (2015) described the ideal sample



size as 25-30 participants, while Boddy (2016) believed to be a minimum of four participants. The fluidity of the ideal sample size, I sought to find a more rigid methodology for use. Furthermore, while inevitable, the parameters of data saturation change depending on whether it is a qualitative or quantitatively based study, therefore making data saturation as an indication of research's possible overall quality could be improper (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Saunders et al., 2018). In deciding the sample size for this research study, I discovered and utilized the *information power* methodology (Malterud et al., 2015).

As mentioned in a previous section utilization of the information power principals allows me to determine the adequate sample size for a research study predicated on five elements: (a) study aim, (b) sample specificity, (c) use of an established theory, (d) quality of dialogue, and (e) analysis strategy (Malterud et al., 2015). To ensure utilization of the least amount participants, and that my actions were indeed defensible, I planned and utilize tools to evaluate the require sample size during the initial planning of the research study by reviewing impactful elements. More specifically for this section, the assurance that participant interview questions were crafted in a manner that fostered, robust dialogue as well as established a trusting relationship.

I found the principals associated with the *information power* methodology ideal for this research. Primarily due to its rigidness of the information power methodology enabled me to determine my research study sample size based upon the quality and quantity of the information provided by my participants, as well as their robust levels of knowledge and experience concerning the subject matter, not fluctuating conventional

methods (Malterud et al. 2015). The more information-rich the participant is as it pertains to the subject matter, the fewer participants were required for the overall sample size. The overall knowledge and experience of my participants in the SCM field made them information- rich. Thereby allowing for the utilize of a smaller participant sample size of six. Furthermore, the use of a smaller number of participants added to my ability to capture data received from the viewpoint of the participants (Boddy, 2016).

Data saturation is used in qualitative research studies as a method for alerting the research when to cease the collection of data (Saunders et al., 2018). Data saturation occurs when new data or information ceases to exist or become redundant (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018). I enhanced my opportunity for data saturation by being more flexible as well as genuine in their research approaches and sample sizes assuring that they only use data required to answer their research questions (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Saunders et al., 2018). Another method employed to ensure data saturation was the utilization of a smaller participant sample pool of six. Although the utilization of a smaller participant pool is not an indicator of pure data saturation, it does enhance its occurrence.

Perpetual participant interviews were conducted until it was apparent that no new data or themes are possible. Lastly, during my thematic analysis process and review, I utilized interview transcripts from the semistructured interviews, organizational documentation, and my research notes, I begin to apply the thematical process to my research. In doing so, I read and re-read all data to familiarize myself with the data presented. I repeated this process until continuous saturation was reached, and the

possible emergence of new data was nonexistent. My data became completed saturated when continued methods of data collection became counterproductive and failed to produce new themes, data, or information.

To obtain a sample population that are ethnically and culturally diverse in their overall backgrounds, I developed a specific criterion for participants. The primary criterion for participation is that the participants be 18 years of age at the time of the interview and be willing to share their workplace strategies during the interview. A secondary criterion for participation is that participants possess between 5 to 10 years of managerial experience, with a minimum of two years of that experience in a managerial position within the target organization. The utilization of this particular time span for managerial experiences allowed me to obtain from participants at various stages in their career and life experience. The final criterion for participation is a participant not only possessed SCM experience but a proven track record of successfully enhancing employee performance within the previous 2 to 3 years.

The interview environment is an essential element in the success of my data collection process (Dempsey, Dowling, Larkin, & Murphy, 2016; Doody & Noonan, 2013). Resources depict the ideal environment for participant interviews is one that is safe and comfortable for the participant, private and free from external interruption and interference, and of the participant choosing. I conducted participants interviews in the offices of the participants at a time of their choosing. Allowing the participants to choose the location, placed them in an environment where they felt in control, thereby making them feel safe and comfortable and able to provide data free from bias at their leisure and

ease. Furthermore, allowing the participants to utilize their office spaces as the interview environment assured that the interview would be private and free from unwarranted external interruptions and interference. (Dempsey et al., 2016; Doody & Noonan, 2013).

### **Ethical Research**

Khan (2014) implied that research should not be conducted if it has the potential to cause harm or undue risk to the participant. Stevens (2013) further noted that preserving the dignity, rights, safety, and well-being of my research participants was paramount. I participated in the National Institute of Health, Office of Extramural Research a web-based training course *Protecting Human Research Participants*. Participation in this course afforded me the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the ethical obligation to myself, the participants, as well as the overall research standards and process. Receipt of my certificate of completion from NIH served as verification of my knowledge as well as a willingness to honor these ethical obligations. I submitted my research proposal and protocol to the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. Submission of my documents for approval allowed me to minimize various potential risks and harm to my study participants, while also protecting their inherent rights (Kotsis & Chung, 2014). Upon determining my proposal and protocol to be academic and ethically appropriate, I was approved by the IRB to begin my data collection process. My IRB approval number is 02-06-17-0460894.

Ethically sound research necessitates that voluntary and informed consent be received from participants before the commission of research (Lentz, Kennett, Perlmutter, & Forrest, 2016). Utilization of informed consent forms reduce potentially

adverse physiological, psychological, and emotional consequences for participants as well as minimize the ethical and moral obstacles of the researcher (Kirillov, Tanatova, Vinichenko, & Makushkin, 2015; Grady, 2015). The signed consent form serves as formalized written confirmation of the participant's overall willingness to participate and provide data for the research study. (Kirillov et al. 2015; Grady, 2015). Receipt of informed consent was critical to the success of my research study as participants were forbidden to provide data, discuss in-depth details of the study or schedule an interview time without a consent form signed by both all parties.

The informed consent process for this research study consisted of me sending selected participants via email an *Invitation to Participate* to elicit their participation. Upon receipt of written confirmation of their intent to participate, informed consent forms were sent via email to be signed and returned to me before the scheduling of interview data and times or the commission of the study. Once I received the participants signed informed consent, the forms were signed by me, scanned and sent digitally to participants via email for their records (see Appendix B). Each consent form provides participants with information concerning their rights, general information about the research study, withdrawal procedures, duration, and his or her general responsibilities, as well as serves as proof of the participant competency and willingness to participate in the study (Wiles, 2013; Grady, 2015).

Participation in this research study was voluntary, under the participant's own free will and without the benefit of incentives, as recommended by Grady (2015) and Saurabh, Prateek, and Jagedeesh (2015). The process for removal from the study was

to contact me via the email address listed in the participant informed consent form. Upon receipt of the request, all documents or notes about the participant are removed from their place of storage and shredded. I employed Confidentiality Agreements as a means of creating a joint agreement of assurance and confidentiality between the participant and I. The existence of the confidentiality agreements in place made the participants feel more relaxed, and thereby more comfortable in discussing elements of the subject matter.

I redacted all identifying information from the research documents to ensure participant and organizational privacy. Further actions to ensure participant privacy and confidentiality included the removal of all names and replacing them with alphanumeric pseudonyms, such as SCM 1, SCM 2, and so forth. Additionally, I replaced the company name or any reference to the company name with the word *organization*. As a final precaution, I removed all information referencing or linking or organization to the research study. The information removed included but was not limited to individual names, gender, race, and various social and professional affiliations. Lastly, all information collected is safeguarded for 5 years in a fire-resistant container with a secure combination code.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

As the primary data collection instrument for this qualitative research study, I was obligated to observe all ethical standards and guidelines, as discussed by Jamshed (2014), Khan (2014), and Yin (2015). Furthermore, it is incumbent to articulate the participant experiences accurately and without external and internal bias (Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall,

2014). The data collection process selected for this study consisted primarily of semistructured face-to-face interviews at locations determined by the participants, as recommended by Alshenqeeti (2014), Jamshed (2014), and Dempsey et al. (2016). Subsequent methods employed in my data collection process include the collection of field observation notes from direct observations of participants during the interview process and interview conversations recorded on a digital audio recording device. Also, participants, as well as organizational training personnel, provided me with supplemental organizational information to include; organization documentation; HR manuals, archival records, performance reviews, personnel records, internal reports, budgets, and direct observations of participants during the interview process.

I found the utilization of semistructured face-to-face interviews in my data collection process as ideal for this study because of their overall flexibility and ability to foster increased direct interaction between myself and the participants within a defined boundary. Correspondingly, utilization of the semistructured face-to-face interviews process allowed me to capture first-hand voice, tone, and gestures of the participants that otherwise could not be documented on paper. Also, in using the semistructured face-to-face interview process, I was able to obtain in-depth insight into the routine and problematic experiences presented by participants. Lastly, utilizing semistructured face-to-face interviews technique to obtain data for my research study increased my overall ability to collect more reliable participant data in a structured and consistent manner.

The development of a well-organized interview protocol is essential to the success of a research study (Yin, 2014). Research protocols not only serve as the primary guide

for the researcher in collecting quality data from participants, the number of participants required for the study as well as the achievement of data saturation (Ishak & Bakar, 2014; Yin, 2014; Harriss & Atkinson, 2015 ). Utilization of an interview protocol was ideal specifically in a case study research because it increased the overall reliability of my study (Yin, 2014). The interview protocol framework for this research study was developed in line with guidance outlined in works by Castillo-Montoya (2016) and content suggested Yin (2014) which consists of (a) accounts detailing the research case study overview, outline of participant interview procedures, and associated research study information (b) 13 open-ended interview questions, (c) the member checking process and interview wrap-up (see Appendix).

I utilized my interview protocol throughout my interview process. Although interview protocols are rigid, I created an interview protocol with enough flexibility to adjust to the situation that could arise during the interviews. Also, its usage allowed me to identify avenues for follow-up questions rapidly. I employed a digital audio recording device during the interview process as an additional means of enhancing the overall reliability and validity of my research study. Utilization of a digital audio recording device allowed me to capture data provided my participants accurately, as well as the option to replay the participant responses for transcribing as described by Morse (2015b) and Jamshed (2014) as needed for clarification.

Upon completion of the interview process and transcription of the data, I began the member checking process. Utilization of the member checking process is vital in validating and maintaining the study data quality as well as increasing overall



study validity (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). My member checking process consisted of obtaining participant feedback on my interpretation of their responses.

Additionally, member checking allowed my participants to check the transcribed data for content accuracy as to address and dispel possible fallacies.

As part of my member checking process, each participant received via email an electronic copy of their transcribed interview, as well as a recorded audio digital copy of their interview. Providing the data to the participants has a secondary purpose of allowing the person a chance to withdraw from the study before the categorization and coding of the information (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Upon completion of their review, follow-up meetings were scheduled for the incorporation of participant feedback and changes if needed as well as additional member checking.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The trustworthiness of a researcher's data collection methods lends unwavering support to the researcher's ability to ensure the study's reliability as well as creditability (Elo et al., 2014). Utilization of the appropriate data collection method is essential. The data collection technique utilized for this qualitative case study was semistructured face-to-face interviews utilizing open-ended questions. I elicited data from participants concerning their experiences for this research study using thirteen preselected IRB approved open-end interview questions centered upon strategies supply chain managers employ to improve performance in the workplace (Appendix). To avoid confusion, I segregated the interview questions into two distinct segments, demographic and general.

The first segment, entitled demographic contained questions aimed at obtaining general demographic information about the participants such as position within the organization, number of employees supervised, and length of experience as a manager outside and within the SCM field. The second segment contained questions designed to obtain more in-depth information about the participant experience, improving employee performance to include tools employed, barriers, and leadership styles used.

Upon obtaining approval from Walden's IRB, I was given access by the target organization to a list of 45 potential candidates for the study based upon an assessment of qualifications. Once I received the potential candidate list, I reviewed all candidates to determine if they genuinely meet the desired criteria for the research study. Of the participants on the list, 12 individuals met all the requirements. An email was sent to individuals who met the criterion for participation, inviting them to participate. Emails sent to potential participants contained information the study that includes the process, the expectations, as well as the informed consent document. Of the 12 individuals who received an invitation, eight responded and confirmed an interest in participating in the research study. Of the eight individuals who responded were sent additional communications requesting their availability for interviews. Six of the original eight confirmed their availability to be interviewed; I resent the two respondents an additional email to verify their interest. The six confirmed participants were sent consent forms to be signed and returned before the commission of the interview. Upon receipt of the signed consent forms, a date and time for the interviews to take place were scheduled.

Over a 5-week time span, I conducted semistructured face-to-face participant interviews. All participant interviews were at the locations designated by the participants and lasted from 45 minutes to a 1-hour. At the commission of each interview, I explained to the participants their rights concerning the research study, as well as my ethical obligations to them. I further confirmed the rights and obligation of the participants through the employment of signed consent forms and confidentiality agreements between myself and the participants. During the interviews, with the consent of the participants, data was recorded both in written form as well as with the utilization of a digital audio recording device. Documentation of interviews utilizing a digital audio recording instrument provided me with the option to replay the participant responses for accurate and reliable transcribing, as recommended by Morse (2015b) and Jamshed (2014). Furthermore, utilization of a digital audio recording device also aided me with my data analysis process as it allowed me to maintain the link between responses and participants, therefore, increasing the validity of the transcribed data as discussed by Yin (2014).

During the participant interviews, I took care to watch for individual physical and emotional cues from responding participants and made notes of them as well. As need, I sought additional clarification and more in-depth meaning of data provided by employing probes as a means to encourage additional detailed participants' explanations of responses. After each interview, follow-up emails were sent participants, thanking them for their overall participation and appraising them of the next steps and actions in the process. Lastly, all participants were also provided electronic copies of their signed consent forms and confidentiality agreement.

After the completion of the participant interviews, I transcribed all and organized for member checking, as recommended by Fiske and Hauser (2014). During the member checking phase, participants were provided with electronic copies of their transcript to review for accuracy, as well as digital audio copies of the recording from their interview. Upon completion of their review, follow-up meetings were scheduled for the incorporation of participant feedback, changes if needed as well as additional member checking. Once I completed the member checking process, I began the methodological triangulation of the data. Methodological triangulation includes entails the exploration of a specific topic through data collection for a varied source of individuals to gain in-depth knowledge (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Methodological triangulation, as used in this study, aided the research in identifying relevant emerging themes, as well as overall data assessment and interpretation. My process for methodological triangulation included through an exploration of tangible sources of information that includes digital audio recording devices, and field notes. Additionally, I incorporated data from follow-up participant interviews and member checking into my triangulation methodology to determine the values of the responses. Furthermore, for triangulation purpose I used the supplemental documentation provided by the organizational training personnel to include; organization documentation; HR manuals, archival records, performance reviews, personnel records, internal reports, budgets, and direct observations of

participants during the interview process. The methodological triangulation of this documentation allowed me to enhance the overall validation and rigor of my study.

Utilization of a semistructured face to face interview technique possessed a vast amount of advantages for use in my case study research. One specific advantage I found useful that made the face-to-face semistructured interview technique ideal for my study was its ability to allow the facilitation of continued interaction between the participant and researcher, as noted by McIntosh and Morse (2015) and Marshall and Rossman (2016). Another advantage of utilizing face-to-face semistructured interview techniques is that it allowed me to pose practical questions that will adequately address the overarching research question (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In using the face-to-face semistructured interview technique, I was able to obtain relevant as well as accurate information from the participants while simultaneously gaining a unique perspective on the participant's individual experiences. A final advantage of using face-to-face semistructured interviews is that it increased my ability to put the participant at ease or dispel discomfort caused by the process, as well as provide a more ethical foundation for the commission of the study. Alternatively, I found the primary perceived disadvantage of using face-to-face semi-structured interviews is that they are face-to-face and, therefore, may cause participants to provide a narrow scope of information due to fear of retaliation by the senior leadership of the organization.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Continued due diligence to data organization is critical when employing a case study research design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The first step in the data organization

process in the transcription of data. O’Keeffe et al. (2016) noted that the verbatim transcription of interviews immediately after the completion of the data collection process. Transcription of the data took approximately 30 to 60 days to transcribe. Data transcription time was extensive due to the need to capture and relay the data as accurately as possible concerning their experiences with improving overall employee performance in the workplace. Also, the lengthy transcription process facilitated my ability to allow the natural emergence and development of themes. Also, the extended transcription time frame provided me with the opportunity to obtain a more in-depth understanding and familiarity with the data, thus allowing for better preparation for examination and coding of data (Daniel, 2016). Once I sufficiently transcribed all data, participants were provided with electronic copies of their transcript to review for accuracy. Upon completion of their review, follow-up meetings were scheduled for the incorporation of participant feedback, changes if needed as well as member checking. The immediate completion of the transcription process allowed for the reduction and or elimination of potential bias introduced through selective data extraction (O’Keeffe et al.; 2016).

Data and supporting documentation from my case research study was organized utilizing Adobe Acrobat, Microsoft Word, and Excel-based files, as well as audio recording in Apple Voice Recorder on my computer under a secure password and pin. Research data saved to Microsoft Word-based files included content such as transcribed interviews, field notes from direct observation of participants, as well as notes written by me concerning information ascertained from company documents. The Adobe Acrobat

files contained data such as organization documentation; HR manuals, archival records, performance reviews, personnel records, internal reports, and budgets. Other supporting documentation saved in Adobe consisted of the signed informed consent agreement, signed confidentiality agreements, as well as permission and authorization letters. Ensuring the proper organization of data allowed me to answer the overarching research question as well as achieve data saturation in an expedited manner. Furthermore, maintaining my research data, including transcribed interviews and recording in electronically form, assisted me in analyzing my data more efficiently as well as easy retrieval as needed.

To ensure accuracy and proper alignment of data as well as security, the names of participants names were replaced with alphanumeric pseudonyms, such as SCM 1, SCM 2, and so forth. Additionally, I replaced the participating company's name or any reference to it with the word *organization*. As a final precaution, I removed all information referencing or linking or organization to the research study. The information removed included but was not limited to individual names, gender, race, and various social and professional affiliations. Upon the completion and publication of the research study all data will be removed from the desktop computer and store all collected data on a password-protected USB external hard drive for a minimum of 5 years and destroyed via shredder after 5 years. Lastly, all digital and hard copies of the research data including transcriptions, letters of agreement and cooperation, and consent forms were stored alphabetically in a locked file cabinet for destruction after 5 years as described by Yin (2014).

## **Data Analysis**

Upon completion of my participant interview transcriptions and gathering of company archival documents, I began the formal analyzation process. The analysis of research data and its overall interpretation are two essential components of the research process (Yazan, 2015). The data analysis strategy for this research design was methodological triangulation. I selected methodological triangulation because it strengthens the validity by providing multi-layered accounts of participant experiences as well as enhance the occurrence of data saturation. My process for analyzing research data included; transcription, familiarization with the data and interview material, coding of data, development and application charting of data, and interpretation as noted by (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). Preparation for formal analyzation of my data consisted of Yin 5 step process. Yin (2015) 5 step process consists of (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding (See Table 1) In addition to Yin's 5 step process, inductive thematical methodology as well as NVivo 11© software for theme verification.



Table 1

*Phases of Yin's 5 Step Analysis Versus Case Study Research Technique*

Step	Explanation	Case study research technique utilized
1	Compiling	Manual transcription, incorporation, importation, and arrangement of data transcripts, as well as associated documents.
2	Disassembling	Manual codification of nodes
3	Reassembling	Field observation notes and memos used for clarification of SCM experiences
4	Interpreting	Deduction of primary and sub-theme, provided by participants via interviews, observation
5	Concluding	Interpretation of data and recommendations for the advancement of management studies

The analyzation process began with the compilation of all data derived from participant interviews, observation notes, recordings, member checking as well as company documentation. After all the data was compiled, I transferred the data into its separate Microsoft Word document. The data was then disassembled and segregated into specific categories based on each participant responses and their associative data. I reassembled the data and began manually analyzed, highlighting common themes. A thematical approach was used employed to interpret the data. Using the transcripts from the semistructured interviews, organizational documentation, and my research notes, I begin to apply the thematical process to my research.

Thematical methodologies allow researchers to identify the development of specific patterns or themes (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). I found the thematical analysis process more suitable for evaluating and interpreting participant data because of its ability to be used with various frameworks, thus making as well as making the linking of participant response to one another less problematic, as noted by Javadi and Zarea

(2016). My thematic methodology process consisted of reading and re-reading all data as to familiarize myself with the data presented. I repeated this process until continuous saturation was reached, and the possible emergence of new data was nonexistent. Using commonalities discovered through conversations and written data provided by the participants as well as myself, I begin to shape my themes. While data obtained from participant transcripts, notes and company documents alone were enough for me to develop manually four substantial themes, I felt my research themes, further confirmation of the validity of the thematically derived themes was required.

I obtained additional verification by reemploying Yin 5 step process using the NVivo 11© analysis software. The use of coding and data retrieval applications like NVivo 11© increases the researcher's accuracy in transcribing the data collected throughout the interview process by reducing the time required to sort through vast quantities of research data (Browning, 2015). Furthermore, they aid researchers by using predetermined tags as reference points to search data to find common terms, themes, related words, texts and phrases in the transcriptions based on similar usage (Fatkin & Lansdown, 2015). I loaded the compiled data from the transcribed notes of the semistructured individual interviews, into NVivo 11© software.

Using the NVivo 11© enables one to begin categorizing themes, references, other sources, and various elements associated with my topic (Paulus, Woods, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015). In NVivo 11©, I used classical content analysis to count and code themes. Once all reoccurring elements are identified, the extraction of these items will begin via clustering. Clustering is the uncoordinated classification of patterns into groups

(Aghabozorgi, Shirktorshidi, & Wah, 2015). The use of clustering allows the researcher to evaluate emerged and overlapping themes and statements, which could tend to reveal elements with similar meanings (Aghabozorgi et al., 2015). Upon completion of clustering, triangulation begin.

Triangulation, in general, is the use of a mixture of research methodologies to develop various perspectives to obtain confirmation of findings (Leuffen, Shikano, & Walter, 2013). The specific method used in this research, methodological triangulation, relied upon the multiplicity of sources from the same study to validate data, as discussed by Hussein (2015). The specific methodological triangulation method for this study consists of multiple data collection methods including but not limited to direct observation during the audio-recording of the participant's semistructured interviews as well as handwritten notes are used in conjunction with personal observation of the participants. As I stated in the Data Organization Technique section, although semistructured interviews are the primary source of data collection for the study, I use a digital audio recorder to capture conversations during the interviews of the study participants. Additionally, organizational documentation such as performance reviews, personnel records, internal reports, and budgets was employed as a means of obtaining supplemental information as well as credibility.

I sought to assure reliability and validity throughout my the analysis process by the researchers diligently focusing on keeping the overall process of aligning with the study's design and overall research question. My focus remained on the central themes and compared with literature-based themes based on emerging data, both new and old,

that are relevant to the overall content of the research. The interpretation of data utilizing the NVivo 11© analysis software revealed themes either identical or highly like the ones discovered using the thematic approach, therefore providing support for themes exposed during the manual analysis process as it relates to strategies used by SCM leaders to improve employee performance in the workplace.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Researchers during the commission of qualitative studies must assure they remain in accord with the overall goal of the research, hence ensuring reliability and validity (Gunawan, 2015). There are four criteria used to judge trustworthiness and quality of research studies: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Elo et al., 2014; Wahyuni, 2012). As the primary data collector, I alone bore the responsibility of analyzing data and reporting the finding of this in a manner that increases creditability, and reliability of the overall academic foundation of the topic, as recommended by Kyvik (2013) and Merriam and Tisdell (2015).

Ensuring the reliability and validity of a study is critical to the legitimization of findings and results (Noble & Smith, 2015; Yin, 2013). Reliability and validity serve as enhancing components in research and the accuracy of the assessment and evaluation of research work. Reliability is the consistency of the findings by various researchers who used the same design, protocol, or procedures (Yin, 2015). Additionally, reliability encompasses accounting for personal, and research bias that may potentially influence the overall study findings and outcome (Noble & Smith, 2015). Similarly, validity is the

precision with which the study findings accurately reflect the data collected (Noble & Smith, 2015).

### **Reliability**

Assessing the reliability of study findings necessitates that researchers make decisions concerning overall study integrity and soundness (Noble & Smith, 2015). I assured the overall reliability of this study by developing and utilizing sound interview protocols, concise open-ended semistructured face to face interviewing technique, and data analysis protocols. Additional methods employed to increase reliability throughout the study consisted of taking notes, using a digital audio recording device to capture all elements of the interview, and listening to all factors detailed in our verbal exchange as discussed by Jamshed (2014). As an additional means of increasing and ensuring study reliability, I performed member checking techniques, which allowed me to ensure the transcription of the collected data was accurate. All study participants were provided access to copies of their interview questions as well as their answers to confirm the content, an option to make changes to their responses or to quit the study. Participant feedback was essential to my overall process as it aided me in obtaining clarity on new insights as well as more in-depth into the process because of reading the transcription.

The most common manner of establishing reliability in a qualitative research study is through establishing dependability (Yin, 2015). I was able to achieve dependability through the astute documentation of my data collection and content analysis process, as well as maintaining consistency in all associated processes. Additionally, an enhancement to overall dependability for my study was derived from the

utilization of a well-developed interview protocol during the interview process (see Appendix). Venkatesh et al. (2013) noted that dependability is hard to measure without the use of member checking and triangulation.

I performed member checking, the solicitation of participant feedback to ensure the transcription of the collected data was accurate as an additional means of increasing and ensuring study reliability. In allowing research participants access to their interview data to include copies of their interview questions as well as their answers enabled me to obtain confirmation of accurate content and data consistency. Lastly, I employed NVivo 11©software as a secondary means of analyzing and verifying emergent themes brought forth during my original thematical analyzation process. Utilization of a dual analysis process proved to a sufficient means of coding and analyzing data collected throughout the process, as thereby increased the overall reliability of the study.

### **Validity**

As the researcher, it was my responsibility to establish validity. Establishing validity for this qualitative case research study centered upon the utilization of three elements as outlined by Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013): (a) credibility, (b) transferability and (c) confirmability. Credibility is the overall degree in which participants can trust or believe the findings (Tong et al., 2014). In assuring study credibility, I sought to create a match between the perceived realities of participants, their subsequent realities of the researcher, as well as the accuracy of data to reflect the observed social phenomena. Two methods that can be used by the researcher to enhance study credibility are member checking and methodological triangulation.

I utilized the member checking process to increase the overall accuracy and credibility of the collected data thru participant validation. I gather data from participants using semistructured open-end interview questions. Additionally, I recorded the interview session utilizing a digital recording device, as recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2016). All products of the interview once collected were placed into a reviewable package, for transcript review by the participants. Utilization of this process afforded one the opportunity to verify the response provided by the participants and make corrections as needed, thus reducing potential errors while increasing overall study validity (Zitomer & Goodwin, 2014). As an additional means of ensuring study creditability, I employed triangulation methodologies by analyzing content from participants, research notes, and subsequent articles on the subject matter. I also reviewed company documents as a means to obtain supplemental creditability and validity. Furthermore, to ensure the smooth application of the methodological process, I was mindful of contrived set-aside beliefs on the issue and will correlate outcomes to mitigate bias.

Enhancing the transferability of this research study required me to collect rich and descriptive data. Therefore, allowing sound judgments concerning the context and application of the study in an alternate setting to be made (Tong et al., 2014). Also, I addressed the need for transferability through the clarification of research bias based on personal experience with the phenomenon, ensuring data saturation, and outlining wrong and discrepant information. Transferability is always left up to the reader to decide (Elo et al., 2014). Furthermore, I ensured that the principles and criteria used to select participants and detail the participants' primary characteristics, were well developed thus

guarantee the transferability of the results can be assessed for correctness as noted by Elo et al. (2014).

Confirmability of this research study content was assured through the validation of data through independent sources concerning the accuracy, relevance, and overall meaning of collected data (Kheswa & Dayi, 2014). My confirmability process includes the employment of methodological triangulation in conjunction with audits, as recommended by Kheswa & Dayi (2014). Another means in which I addressed the confirmability of this study was through the creation of a robust and detailed audit trail. Additionally, I utilized research records research notes outlining study progress and data collection as the foundation of an audit trail, as discussed by Burda, VandenAkker, VanderHorst, Lemmens, and Knottnerus (2016).

A constant challenge throughout this study is the continued assurance of data saturation. A specific challenge encountered when conducting qualitative research studies is the constant assurance of data saturation. Data saturation by its very definition ensures replicated data results until no new information or themes arise, which in turn verifies and ensures comprehension and completeness (Elo et al., 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015). I ensured saturation in this study through the continuous collection of data until no new data was available. Additionally, I utilized written notes to track the cessation of the emergence of new experience and themes. A subsequent outcome of utilization of the *information power* methodology is the enhanced occurrence of saturation as well as the development of a clear and concise description of how and when saturation was achieved. A common misnomer concerning data saturation that its occurrence means that the



researcher has heard all, and therefore, no new data exist (Morse, 2015a). This assumption is incorrect, thereby using this criterion alone will lead to the research data being inadequate and shallow (Morse, 2015a).

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 included an overview of the overall study and its primary contents, such as study design and various associated processes. Additionally, in Section 2 I provided an in-depth detail of study information concerning the (a) research method, (b) study design, (c) population sample, and (d) data collection techniques, and their interaction which the enhancement of the studies reliability and validity. The next portion of this study, Section 3 includes interview data, organizational provided information, and overall findings in conjunction with the researcher's interpretations, analysis, and presentation of the central themes after data analysis. Additionally, Section 3 includes discussion concerning the study's (a) application to professional practice, (b) implications for social change, (c) and (d) reflections.

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

In the final section of this research study, I outline the findings resulting from my data collection process, member checking, and company documentation, which included employee records, reviews, newsletters, archival data, and website data. I begin Section 3 with an introduction that encompasses the purpose statement, problem statement, and the research question. I present findings from the qualitative case study research a discussion concerning the overall results, the emergent themes, the application of those themes to professional practice, and the implications for social change. I include discussions concerning the recommendations for action and further research and my reflections. I finalize my presentation of this section with a summation of my research study.

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies used by SCM leaders to improve employee performance in the workplace. This section encompasses written analysis and discussions concerning findings obtained from post IRB approved semistructured face-to-face interviews conducted with six SCM leaders. Data analysis and member checking and triangulation of participant responses with organizational documentation resulted in the emergence of four significant themes: (a) strategies for employee performance improvement, (b) perceived barriers and individual managerial experiences, (c) tools for measuring employee performance, and (d) adopted leadership style. The first theme consisted of strategies for employee performance improvement and emphasized training as an essential requirement for increasing

employee performance. Motivation and simple rewards are identified as critical strategies used by managers to increase performance.

The second theme, perceived barriers, and individual managerial experiences revealed the role that labor unions play in preventing the supply chain managers from achieving performance improvement objectives. Additionally, managerial experiences that have impacted the managers and how they interact with employees throughout their careers were derived from this theme as well. Although it is possible that the participants' responses represented a bias, the consistency in the responses is convincing. The third theme, tools for measuring employee performance, emphasized techniques such as the BSC, performance investigations, and counseling for appraising the performance of employees. The final theme, adopted leadership style, highlighted the participative leadership style as being favored by most of the supply chain managers and relates directly to the transformational theories discussed in the literature review.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question for this qualitative case study was: What strategies do SCM leaders use to improve employee performance in the workplace? A qualitative research methodology with a case study design was ideal for this research. The utilization of a qualitative methodology allowed me to gain access to, analyze, and interpret the information provided by the participants accurately and truthfully, as well as protect participant points of view. Furthermore, the use of the case study design imparted the ability to develop a stable researcher-participant bond without developing a potential bias. These factors are essential to reducing participant anxiety, therefore resulting in

more accurate and in-depth responses to the interview questions (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

I obtained data from participants utilizing 13 preapproved open-ended interview questions (see Appendix). To avoid confusion, I segregated the interview questions into two distinct segments, demographic and general. In the first segment, demographic questions, I aimed at obtaining general demographic information about the participants such as position within the organization, the number of employees supervised, and length of experience as a manager outside and in the SCM field. The second segment contained questions designed to obtain more in-depth information and responses about the participant experience of improving employee performance, which included tools employed, barriers, and leadership styles used.

Upon receipt of final approval from Walden's IRB (# 02-06-17-0460894), the target organization's training and organizational development department provided me with a list of 45 employees who met my participation criteria. Of the participants on the list, 12 individuals met all the requirements. I sent e-mails to each of the 12 individuals inviting them to participate in the study. Of the 12 individuals who received an invitation, eight responded to confirm their interest in participating in the research study. The eight individuals who responded were sent additional communications requesting their availability for interviews. Six of the original eight confirmed their availability to be interviewed, at which point I set a date and time for them to be interviewed according to their schedule. I re-sent the two respondents an additional e-mail to verify their interest. The six confirmed participants were sent

consent forms to be signed and returned before the commission of the interview. The signed consent form serves as formalized written confirmation of the participant's overall willingness to participate and provide data for the research study (Table 2).

Table 2

*Potential and Actual Participant Data*

Potential participants	Number participant responding	% of participants responding
# Participants who met all requirements <i>*based on a pool of 45*</i>	12	27%
#Participants sent email	12	100%
# Participants responded with interest in participating	8	67%
# Participants who participated	6	75%

I conducted the semistructured face-to-face interviews at the locations designated by the participants. Each semistructured face-to-face participant interview lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour. At the opening of each interview, I explained to the participants their rights concerning the research study as well as my ethical obligations to them. I further confirmed these rights and obligations with signed consent forms and confidentiality agreements between myself and the participants. During the interviews, I took observation notes, as well as employed the use of a recording device. Also, I took care to watch for individual physical and emotional cues from responding participants and made notes of them as well. After each interview, I sent follow-up e-mails to participants, thanking them for their overall participation, and appraising them of the next steps and actions in the process.

Additionally, participants were also provided electronic copies of their signed consent forms and confidentiality agreement.

Transcription of the data took approximately 30 to 60 days. Data transcription time was extensive due to the need to capture and relay the data as accurately as possible concerning the participants' experiences with improving overall employee performance in the workplace. Also, the lengthy transcription process facilitated the natural emergence and development of themes. Additionally, the extended transcription time frame afforded me the opportunity to obtain a more in-depth understanding and familiarity with the data, allowing for better preparation for examination and coding of data (see Daniel, 2016). Once I sufficiently transcribed all data, participants were provided with electronic copies of their transcript to review for accuracy. Upon completion of their review, follow-up meetings were scheduled for the incorporation of participant feedback changes, if needed, as well as member checking.

As means of validating data and enhancing the overall rigor of my study, I utilized data from interview notes as well as company documentation such as employee performance records as a means of methodically triangulating data received from participants. All six of the participants agreed that my interpretation of the data they provided was accurate as interpreted. To ensure participant confidentiality, participant names were replaced with alphanumeric pseudonyms, such as SCM 1, SCM 2, and so forth. Additionally, I replaced the company name or any reference to the company name with the word *organization*. As a final precaution, I removed all

information referencing or linking or organization to the research study. The information removed included but was not limited to individual names, gender, race, and various social and professional affiliations.

Upon completion of my participant interview transcriptions and gathering of company archival documents, I began the formal analysis process. Preparation of data for formal qualitative analysis and coding involved the utilization of Yin's 5-step process (2015). Table 1 outlines the link between Yin's 5-step analysis process and case study research technique employed. In addition to Yin's 5-step process, I used an inductive thematic methodology, as well as NVivo 11©software for theme verification.

The analysis process began with the compilation of all data derived from participant interviews, observation notes, recordings, member checking, and company documentation. Once all the data was compiled, I then transferred the data into separate Microsoft Word documents. The data was then disassembled and segregated into specific categories based on each participant's responses and their associative data. I reassembled the data and manually analyzed, highlighting common themes. I used a thematic approach to interpret the data. Using the transcripts from the semistructured interviews, organizational documentation, and my research notes, I begin to apply the thematic process to my research. In doing so, I read and reread all data to familiarize myself with the data presented. I repeated this process until continuous saturation was reached, and no new data emerged. Using commonalities discovered through conversations and written data provided by the participants as well as myself, I begin to shape my themes. Four significant themes emerged from my manual analysis.

While data obtained from participant transcripts, notes, and company documents alone were sufficient for me to develop my research themes; further confirmation of the validity of the thematically derived themes was required. As a means of obtaining additional verification, I reemployed Yin's 5-step process using the NVivo 11© analysis software. I loaded the compiled data from the transcribed notes of the semistructured individual interviews into NVivo 11© software. Using the NVivo 11©, I was able to begin categorizing themes, references, and sources. In NVivo 11© used classical content analysis to count and code themes. The interpretation data utilizing the NVivo 11© analysis software revealed themes either identical or highly similar to the ones discovered using the thematic approach, therefore providing support for themes exposed during the manual analysis process.

Documents, notes, and transcripts derived from the interview process in conjunction with the utilization of both thematic analysis as well as the NVivo 11© analysis software gave rise to four primary themes: (a) strategies for employee performance improvement, (b) perceived barriers and individual supply chain managerial experiences, (c) tools for measuring employee performance, and (d) adopted leadership style. The primary themes are outlined in Table 3. Each primary theme gave way to the emergence of various subthemes, which are indicated in Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.



Table 3

*Nodes Related to Primary Emergent Themes*

Primary Themes	Sources	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Strategies for Employee Performance Improvement	6	18	20%
Perceived Barriers and Individual Supply Chain Managerial Experiences	6	35	38%
Tools for Measuring Employee Performance	6	15	16%
Adopted Leadership Style	6	23	25%
Total		91	100%

*Note:* *n* = frequency.

### **Emergent Theme 1: Strategies for Employee Performance Improvement**

The first category for exploration centers upon the strategies managers uses to improve employee performance. Throughout their career, managers gain a host of tools in which they can utilize to improve employee performance. An essential key to exploring this category is understanding the prevailing organizational culture in which managers and employees are required to operate within is imperative. The participant interview process, in conjunction with organizational newsletters, budgetary language, and member checking, revealed several underlying themes. The results of the exploration revealed four sub-themes, employee motivation, employee empowerment, and training and development (Table 4).

Table 4

Sub Nodes Related to Emergent Theme 1: Strategies for Employee Performance Improvement

Subthemes	Sources	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Employee training and development practices	6	22	45%
Employee motivation	6	12	24%
Employee empowerment	6	15	31%
Total		49	100%

*Note:* *n* = frequency.

Throughout the interview process, several participants voiced their disapproval of current organizational training and development practices. Additionally, participants collectively expressed that not enough emphasis is given to organizational training and development practices, thereby making the programs inadequate and unproductive for employees as well as the managers. For instance, one participant stated, "The current culture does not put a value on employee performance or training. Therefore there is little to no money put into training by the organization."

Furthermore, various participants hinted that the lack of a proper training environment had restricted the level of quality performance that employees can deliver. Additionally, another participant stated, "There is no formal training the only training is online, web-based. Also, the majority of the training employees receive is usually done on the job by another employee doing the same or about the same job as the trainee." This factor is a critical take away because it links the possible success or failure of overall performance improvement measures to organizational cultures or tone. Furthermore, it alludes to the concept that organizational cultures failure to establish adequate training practices can inhibit growth and adversely affect employee performance. It can be

determined that training is an essential element for imparting the necessary skills needed by employees for their professional development, growth, and improvement, as suggested by Little (2014) and Adoza (2018). It must be emphasized that training can only be truly successful if the organizational cultures and sub-cultures permit it (Belias & Koustelios, 2014).

Mohd Said et al., (2016), in their study on the effect of training on employee performance, demonstrate their strong favor towards training, through highlighting that job efficiency and performance effectiveness are skills to be learned by employees. Comprehensive and well-designed training programs can improve skills that are needed to put in high levels of performance. The beliefs of the managers participating in this study were in sync with suggestions of Mohd Said et al., (2016). Various managers in this study expressed their belief that training is necessary to ensure high employee performance and agreed that the lack of proper training programs is detrimental to the overall mission of the organization. Participants of this research study collectively stated that training, as a strategy, for enhancing the quality of employee performance, is unlikely to lead to the expected positive results if the organizational culture fails to support training programs at the top echelons.

Study participants expressed not only expressed their lack of faith in, but their concerns about the previous leadership's failure to support employee training development practices. In contrast, the same participants expressed their faith in the ability of a new organizational leader to make the changes needed to increase employee training development practices. The experiences of the participants were confirmed

through member checking performed, utilizing documentation found on the organization's current website. In member checking information provided by participants, I found that the experiences of the participants synchronized with information obtained from the organization's website confirming a renewed commitment to improving training within the organization.

Current documentation on the organization's website lists the primary mission of organizational leadership is to increase service reliability through innovative and more efficient approaches. Enhancing employee training programs is one approach to achieve the goal and the oversight for organizational training is managed thru the talent manager in tandem with the office of the general manager (GM) and chief executive officer (CEO). Information on the organization's website defines the utilization of training programs as a tangible and meaningful way to achieve the overall strategic mission of the organization the development of employees.

Training alone is not a sufficient requirement for ensuring high quality of employee performance, the existence of other factors such as empowerment and motivation are just as critical to the improvement of for employee performance. Written works by (Mohd Said et al., 2016) further suggested that while training helps employees to improve their skills and perform their jobs with higher efficiency and productivity, to achieve ultimate effectiveness, it is essential that the employees be motivated to learn in the first place. Participants of this study emphasized in their responses that motivation is one of the most critical factors that contribute to overall performance improvement. The type of motivation required depends upon the employee, their overall feeling about the

organization as well as themselves (Akhtar, Aziz, Hussain, Ali, & Salman, 2014).

Motivation acts as an independent driving force that compels each employee to deliver a high quality of performance. As one participant stated, "On average, every employee comes to work because they are motivated by something such as money or job loss.

Therefore, if the employee believes that their job is secure, so there is No motivation."

One strategy that managers use to motivate employees to improve their performance is the satisfaction of both extrinsic and intrinsic based needs. Jansen and Samuel (2014) highlighted the importance of satisfying the overall needs of employees as a sufficient and essential motivational tool. Jiming and Xinijan (2013) further contended that the satisfying of employee needs, specifically extrinsic needs as a means of motivation has a positive relationship with employee behavior and performance. Jiming and Xinijan (2013) stated that these rewards do not always have to be material based, but can be simple favors like early time off and holidays can boost the motivation of employees.

Notably, one participant stated,

I realized what really motivates an employee and get him on your team is money and time off. Granted we have a tight budget, so there isn't a whole lot of money to give out. Time off works. If you have them leave an hour early, that is worth a lot to an employee, more than the money. For example, on a Friday evening, I know it is slow. I call the storerooms; all ten of them says, "Hey, it is Friday." It is 8:30. The employees are supposed to get off at 10. I tell them they can shut it

down at 9:00. Everybody is happy. They come back to work next Monday very happy. Little things like that go a long way.”

Another participant explained that the use of simple motivational factors like refreshments and group luncheons helped employees take a more considerable interest in their jobs and which help to boost their morale. The participant states,

Personally, the rewards I have given personally. It is my funds. I go to Safeway; I get 12, 24 donuts. On a Friday, I bring it; I put it out there. Give them a case of soda. That is one of the rewards I have used several times at this location and other locations. Sometimes we go to Famous Dave's, order the big family tray, everybody eat, on me.

The above practices are in line with the information presented in works by Jansen and Samuel (2014) in Section 2 of the literature review. Jansen and Samuel (2012) indicated that through the distribution of benefits and rewards, leaders could increase overall employee satisfaction, thereby causing them to feel an increased sense of ownership with the company, which may lead to increased motivation for delivering the best level of performance for their respective organizations. Furthermore, organizational initiatives that are viewed as sympathetic to the employees cause the employee to feel indebted to the organization, which results in employees making more significant efforts to contribute to the growth of the organization. Vroom (1995) further noted that when employees are felt valued by providing them with benefits and taking care of their needs, it prompts the employees to be more satisfied with their job and in return the favor in the form of a better quality of performance. Thereby using utilizing measures such as

benefits and rewards to keep the employees motivated is an effective strategy for improving the quality of performance, as well as creating a healthy work environment or organizational culture.

Employees motivated intrinsically are motivated to perform tasks based on internal reward systems and desires. The lack of external scale of measurement motivating employee extrinsically is a little more complicated than motivating employee intrinsically. Sitzmann and Weinhardt (2015) further contended that employees motivated intrinsically are self-motivated to take initiatives to improve their performance through means such as enrolling in training. Intrinsically motivated employees believe that in achieving additional education and training enables them to provide their best performance and help their organization grow, which is their reward. As one participant stated,

Training results in an improvement in the workplace, but it depends on the person. It just depends on that person's state of mind and where they are and if they are motivated within themselves because they must have that get up and go about themselves to want to learn.

Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation play a significant role in enhancing employee performance overall. Regardless of what tool is employed the presence of healthy organizational culture is the best tool as it provides employees with an atmosphere that keeps them motivated and engaged to provide the best quality of performances. As one participant cautioned, "The real thing that I think that increases that strategy, is the

promotions, is money. Dollars is what really a major incentive that people really work for.”

Study participants expressed desires for more intrinsic and extrinsic motivational tools to improve employee performance. Also, participants stated that they were unable to increase the utilization of such tools due to lack of financial as well as emotional based support from organizational leadership. Participants further stated that they hoped with the influx and integration of new leadership into the organization, that support for managers would increase as well as resources. This information was confirmed through member checking using data found in employee newsletters as well as the organization’s 2018 and 2019 proposed budgets showed leaderships strong inclination towards this type of change.

The organization’s 2018 budget additional funding has been allocated by to aid managers in the utilization of fringe benefits to employees, thereby increasing their reliance upon fringe benefits as a means to encourage enhanced employee performance. Notably, in 2018 the organization recorded having a fringe benefit budget close to 425 million, with an estimated increase in funds of 6 million increase scheduled for 2019. Furthermore, organizational leadership agreed that the utilization of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational tools are ideal for retaining current employees as well as potential future employees. Leadership also utilized training a tool to increase intrinsic and extrinsic when recruiting new employees for their organization. Additional data located on the organizational career recruitment website sites the overall training philosophy as one dedicated to continuous training which maintains the overall skillsets as well as the



competitiveness. Furthermore, the website boasted the following training related advantages to being employed by the organization. Those advantages are tuition and training expense reimbursement discount programs, comprehensive training programs as well as guaranteed career growth

Another factor identified by some participants was that of empowerment. Smith et al., (2016) viewed empowerment is positively related to improved employee performance because it increases overall employee involvement in the organizational decision-making and operation process. Furthermore, the empowerment of employees eliminates overall feelings of helplessness by allowing the employees to gain a sense of independence in choices about their environment and culture (Li, Lui, Han, & Zhang, 2016; Smith et al., 2016). One participant indicated that the introduction of elements such as respect and trust into their employees-manager relationships gave employees an overwhelming sense of empowerment thereby resulting in positive effects regarding performance improvement in the personal experience of this manager. In the view of this participant, manager, having a basic faith in employees, and letting them do their work in the manner they deem fit is enough to produce high quality of performances. In the words of this participant,

The best way I have found to increase effectiveness is to show respect and trust in my employees and let them do the job they were hired for. By giving this level of trust and accountability, I have seen these teams get results that were thought to be near impossible.

The approach, of showing warmth and trust, exercised personally by the participant, is reinforced in research by Bolino, Long, and Turnley (2016). Bolino et al. (2016) found that compassion and trust are more efficient than intimidation in encouraging employees to work hard to please their managers than the competence and skill level of the manager. Additionally, Bolino et al. (2016) found that leaders who seek to earn the affection and respect of employee before exerting more stringent tactics have the capability of increasing performance without generating negative blowback from the employees.

Choi, Goh, Adam, and Tan, (2016), in their study, examine transformational leadership, employee ownership, job satisfaction and sense of belonging can play in creating motivation for delivering good job performances. The researchers found a positive relationship, which backs the interview respondent quoted above. Allowing employees, the freedom to make decisions and suggestions to the upper management is an effective way of making employees feel that they are a part of the organization. In such an environment, the employees are likely to take more responsibility for their work and own their achievements as well as mistakes they might have made. Owning up to mistakes and taking positive lessons from these is vital for ensuring improvement among the employees.

Wong and Laschinger (2013), further claimed that when employees are given opportunities to participate in meetings, share their opinions as well as recommendations, and are valued for their thoughts, it promotes ownership. Thereby, allowing the employee to develop a personal interest in the success of their organization ownership and a sense of belonging to an organization are related to an employee's overall performance. As one

participant shared, many employees come to work just to perform their routine duties mechanically without taking a proper interest in doing the job in the best way possible.

I tell my employees, "when you are on this shift for eight hours, this is your storeroom, you own this shift, and I am backing you up 110% if you just follow the guidelines that I put in place. You have a certain amount of independent judgment that you could make, but there are some guidelines that you must follow. Once you follow those guidelines, I'd always back you up.

Taking measures for promoting a sense of belonging among employees can be a useful method, as pointed out by the participant quoted above and backed by researchers such as Choi et al. (2016), for leading the staff towards improved performance.

An essential aspect of employee empowerment is leadership. The empowerment of employees ultimately increases overall performance while allowing employees to hone their leadership skills. Barg et al. (2014) claimed that strong leadership ultimately leads to the development of influential leaders. In this way, a cycle is developed that ensures the grooming of new leaders in an organization. Hence, employees that are empowered by their leadership tend to develop leadership skills within themselves. A typical manner in which leaders seek to empower their employees is through a method known as empowering leadership or power-sharing (Li et al., 2016). Empowering leadership or power-sharing involves the assignment of permanent and temporary leadership roles to subordinate employees by their leader or manager.

Li et al. (2016), noted that leaders empower subordinates with leadership powers as well as responsibilities via a series of leadership behaviors designed to emphasize job

meaning. These actions in turn increase decision-making autonomy, and removing hindrances, thus improving employees' work-related intrinsic motivations. One participant, talking about strategies for improvement of employee performance, said, "[G]iving them leadership roles or empowering them to lead projects from beginning to end with coming to me on an administrative basis." The above participant comments suggested that assigning employees to leadership roles during projects is a useful technique for empowering them. Furthermore, the assignment of leadership roles as a token of their faith in certain subordinate employees, boosts their confidence in their abilities, thereby empowering employees.

A clear majority of the participants in this study expressed feeling a high level of commitment as well as empowerment from current organizational leadership and unanimously agreed that the utilization empowerment methods work best when it is encouraged from the top down. Participants further emphasized that upper management work diligently to create an environment where supervisors feel empowered to can make decisions without repercussion if the decision happens to be incorrect. In contrast, all the study participants in this disagreed and differed in their approach to empower employees but unanimously agreed that it is an excellent tool to increase employee motivation, and thereby performance.

Participants' assertions were confirmed through member checking conducted utilizing literature and documentation provided by the organization. The organization provided literature and documents such as HR policies, newsletters, as well as published newspaper articles clearly stated that the employees are encouraged to learn from their

mistakes and move forward with the new knowledge of what not to do. Of course, the caveat is that the incorrect decision does not jeopardize the company or the public. If imprudent decisions occur, discipline follows closely behind. The day to day choices always serves as a learning opportunity for leaders.

The first emergent theme is a product of stringent participant interviews, triangulated data, as well as member checking conducted using participant responses, and organizational provided data. Additionally, the findings associated with this first emergent theme link well to the conceptual framework developed initially in Section 2 of the research study. Furthermore, the findings are parallel with the overarching research question of the study, thereby aligning the literature and theoretical frameworks with the existing body of knowledge as well as the overall subject matter and framework specifically as it pertained to the importance of implementing strategies to improve and increase overall employee performance in the workplace.

### **Emergent Theme 2: Perceived Barriers and Individual Supply Chain Managerial Experiences**

All managers at one point in their career have experienced employee-based issues which diminished overall performance. These encounters, while unpleasant, are an essential tool for management in the development of their leadership skills sets, as they allow the managers to gain rich experiences as well as techniques in dealing with negative performance issues and circumstances. The second category for exploration in this research study focuses on perceived barriers and individual supply chain managerial experiences. To obtain data for this section, I queried research participants about

perceived barriers they have faced to improving employee performance as well as the issues they have experienced in managing their staff and their performance, and how they sought to address them. The results of the exploration revealed five significant sub-themes; negative union influence, training, employee recognition, and negative organizational cultural influences (Table 5).

Table 5

*Sub Nodes Related to Emergent Theme 2: Perceived Barriers and Individual Managerial Experiences*

<i>Subthemes</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Negative labor union influence	5	50	33%
Employee training	6	35	23%
Employee recognition	6	30	20%
Employee engagement	6	15	10%
Negative organizational cultural Practices	6	20	13%
Total		150	100%

*Note: n = frequency*

In emergent theme 1, participants expressed their disapproval of organizational training programs. This current emergent theme readdresses the concern for training is, however, with the participants placing more emphasis on the overall training of the employees and not the programs. One participant indicated that getting employees the correct training is a significant barrier to enhancing and maintaining employee performance. The participants stated,

[A]s a manager, I devote significant attention to the training and development of staff. However, it is often a challenge to schedule training sessions when there's a

huge workload, and in those situations when the amount of work is too high, managers usually feel training to be counterproductive.

Research study participants further emphasized that taking individual responsibility for conducting training sessions, helps them avoid the overburdening supervisors with additional tasks, as workloads can be a difficult barrier to overcome, as it can interfere with training schedule of the organization.

Another participant noted that a useful technique in ensuring that employees are appropriately trained is to pair less experienced employees with more experienced ones. This participant noted,

I do a lot of the scheduling, and if we can, you try to put people with the ones that know how to do it so that they could pick up something from them, and you just try to encourage people.

This simple practice of pairing experienced and inexperienced people together allows knowledge-sharing and effective training of skills. When employees are trained together, it also provides the staff with an opportunity to improve their professional relationships with their colleagues and enhance the quality of communication within the organization.

Another participant highlighted the importance of giving recognition to the employees and engaging them to be accountable for their work and performance. Allowing employees to take initiatives and responsibility for their work was cited by this participant as an effective method that leads to increases in the performance of employees. The participant noted,

I look at ways to recognize them individually, and ways to understand the lack of enthusiasm, what can we do to improve that. i.e., what I have done personally is that when I have been apprised of indirectly or directly issue.

There are several critical points mentioned by the participant in the above quote. First, the participant mentions how they address a lack of enthusiasm in employees by getting the suggestions of employees towards the problems they are facing at work. Second, the employee mentions how they attempt to figure out why a problem has occurred as soon as he is apprised of the problem. These simple initiatives can have a positive effect on the employees and help the members of an organization to collectively work towards the reduction of difficulties and barriers that exist in the way of quality performance (Arghode & Wang, 2016).

The same participant also stated that managers should attempt to apply different techniques to keep employees engaged. Citing a personal example, this participant stated, "I've taken the staff out to lunch away from the climate to have open dialogue and to have a working session outside of the workforce." Managers should plainly express their interest in solving the matters of the employees as well as addressing their concerns. Employees that witness such initiative action and genuine concern on the part of the managers gain encouragement and are more likely to dedicate themselves to producing high quality of performances (Barg et al., 2014). A reciprocal relationship thus develops between managers and employees, as managers try to care for the needs of the employees, with employees, in turn, trying to satisfy managers and supervisors with superior performance (Rai & Prakash, 2016). Discussing issues that employees may be



facing in an open environment promotes a healthy organizational culture, where communication and feedback are used as assets for eliminating persisting issues in the organization and improve overall performance. Cascio (2014) remarked that dialogue with employees is an effective method for identifying problems within an organization and making suitable adjustments for further improvement. Thus, the importance of open dialogue highlighted by the participant is backed by research as far as positive effects on employee performance are concerned.

The barriers that these managers have faced in their personal experience all include one similar crucial factor, lack of accountability. Several participants pointed out how labor unions act as obstacles to performance improvement of employees, as they make it much more difficult to hold employees accountable for poor performance. Without accountability, there is no interest or enthusiasm in the work they are doing, and employees are only interested in putting the required number of hours for a day's work, rather than ensuring high productivity or quality. “[B]arriers I've seen are that it really needs to be extremely enforced accountability because if you don't have accountability as I said when you start trying to implement recognition and performance awards, it has to be equitable.” Although a compassionate attitude that shows trust and respect for employees helps encourage employees to make an effort for good quality of performances, it is essential to have a proper system for accountability to discourage work inefficiency (York, 2018).

Several participants also viewed labor unions as a substantial obstacle to the quality of overall organizational performance. One participant pointed out how labor

unions have harmed the productivity and quality of performances in the organization. In the words of this participant,

[E]mployee job performance has decreased the organization's effectiveness. My job is to provide leadership and oversight to supervisors and employees, but I find myself so caught up in so much disciplinary actions and investigations because of poor performance and because of an employee who just don't want to do what they are supposed to do.

Another participant stated, "Because it's a unionized environment, you can't really force someone to get this task done." The same employee further stated,

However, yes, the job is being done, but is it being done, right? It wasn't. There were no set standards. There was no SOPs in place. There was no "this is what to do, how you do it when you do it.

This element is significant as an indicator of the existence of additional obstacles to increased performance include outdated employee contracts endorsed by the labor unions, lack of proper standards, as well as inability to implement performance measurement tools.

The participant response served as an indication that the existence of detrimental union presence creates no real incentives to improve their performance, as they are only interested in completing their task without paying heed to the quality with which they deliver their work. The above information was subsequently confirmed in statements by another participant who stated,

The agencies labor union has negotiated contracts with the organization to have no employee performance measures put into play for their employees. This creates a very negative environment for Supervisors and Managers. Not only can they not measure or document performance, but they themselves are also held to an impossible standard of managing labor union employee with no backing from the Authority. It is a no-win situation for Supervisors and Managers.

Another participant further stated,

There's no way to really measure union employees. Because no matter what you do, if they got a contract, they're going to get a raise. It doesn't matter if they're good or bad or a certain percentage of what they put out. It doesn't matter. They all will get the same thing.

Lastly, another participant noted that employees backed by labor labor labor labor unions, are protected from any demands that the employer may make regarding performance, “The only contract that the employees are required to uphold is that they have to show up for eight hours per day, without necessarily making good, productive use of this time as far as performance is concerned.” This statement serves as a further indication that labor unions present a significant barrier that prevents managers from taking initiatives to increase productivity and level of performance of the employees. As proof of the union impediment of productivity, one participant referenced to the organization’s inventory. The participant stated that “Inventory accuracy is probably below 50%, and that's horrible. The industry standard is usually about 98%-- 97%-98% and here we are at 50%.” This factor is significant because it not only shows that labor unions impede

improvement, but it also shows the lack of emphasis placed on positive incentives to employees for delivering high quality of performances.

Participants of this study continuously expressed their concern for the labor unions negative involvement. Moreover, they expressed their irritation at the organization's inability to prevent this negative interference in employee affairs. An overwhelming majority of the participants (90%) described the union as a barrier or hindrance to improving and or increasing employee performance. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of participants viewed the union as having a significant role in hindering manager's ability to sustain enhanced employee performance. The assertions concerning the perceived negative impact of the union were verified through the member checking process via documentation acquired from the organization's HR and the 2019 union collective bargaining agreement.

Documentation draft by organizational leadership demonstrated that the primary main problem was that the Union had had consistent leadership with a singular goal of gaining as much influence as possible. In some instances, union employees were promoted to management without shifting their thought processes accordingly. This differed from the organization, which has had high levels of transition in the first line, mid and upper levels of management. As a remedy, this matter, organizational leadership has hired new lawyers and employee relations with more significant responsibilities to combat a powerful union. This remedy had both a negative and a positive aspect. True the organization was obtaining sound employees who specialized in handling union

affairs and employee relations-based matters. However, alternately this led to the same issue of inconsistency in leadership and transitioning employees.

Another issue was that the collective bargaining agreement reflected the decisions of management with union leanings or the managers who were forced out and no longer cared about the organization. The negotiations favored the Union at every level and the management who still cared felt helpless as the CBA rules were countermoves for every management action. The employees felt that they worked for the union, which protected and preserved the most egregious offenders of the rules. Management decided to reduce costs by fielding fewer employees, thus reducing dues. They tackled the lack of performance management standards of the employees. For example, if a supervisor directed an employee to move a hammer from one table to another, the employee need only attempt to move the hammer to comply. They addressed the high absenteeism rate that increased overtime costs and threatened to break the budget every year.

Various participants indicated that the status quo held by managers, senior employees, and or legacy employees serves as another barrier to performance improvement. As one participant states, “They're here for life, cutting across three generations. They come here and stay 30 years before they retire. Their children will come, their children's children will come, while they're still here.” Another participant identified that managers, supervisors, and senior employees are often judged by their past performances, rather than on current performances. Supervisors and managers sometimes become complacent after achieving their higher rank and neglect their duties and quality of their own performance (Aidla, 2017). The interviewed participant said,

“The biggest barrier to improving employee performance is overcoming past performance by old supervisors or managers. People start to judge all supervisors and managers by previous experience.” Behavior of this nature creates an adverse environment within the organization as well as detrimentally impacts on the motivation of all employees (Allen, Peltokorpi, & Rubenstein, 2016). This factor is essential because it aligns itself with the type of culture that exists within this organization, and the impact in which it has on employee performance. One participant, when interviewed, stated, “The labor unions kind of set the tone for the culture, how everything is. It's basically union against management.” Employee behavior, whether negative or positive, is a direct representation of cultures and sub-cultures which exist within their organization.

The organizational websites boasted the perpetuation of diversity and individual inclusion regardless of regard to race, creed, color religion, national origin, sex, gender, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, and so forth. Despite these claims, various participants of this research study although displeased with the corporate culture within the organization, specifically as it pertained to status quo and nepotism had expectations that the incoming administration would seek to correct these issues. The participants acknowledged that correction of these issues would be challenging specifically that of nepotism, given that historically, the best way to enter the company was by knowing someone or being related to someone. Through the commission of member checking and data triangulation of published organizational documentation and newsletters, I discovered data indicating that the new leadership has made it known that nepotism is not

to be accepted through the development and enforcement of existing policies and procedures.

Additional member checking enabled further confirmation by me that leadership was working in conjunction with HR to develop more stringent policies and procedures for future implementation. While waiting for the implementation of the new policies and regulations as a stopgap measure to prevent employees from digressing the organization requires each employee to read existing policies as well as self-identify their existing familial relationships with other employees within the company annually. Furthermore, each employee must sign as an acknowledgment of understanding that they understand the policy and will be held to account for future violations. Based on its previous successes, the drop in the rate of nepotism was apparent. Dealing with the status quo, however, has proven to be a bit more challenging due to its covert existence.

Another matter that was confirmed through member checking, participant interviews and triangulation was that the adverse influence of labor unions coupled with harmful cultural practices which result in diminished employee motivation, lack of enforced accountability and lack of enthusiasm from previous top management had been singled-out as the significant barriers by the participants. Moreover, the personal experiences of the interviewed managers revealed specific practices that they have used successfully to improve overall employee performance. Giving respect and trust to the employees, establishing accountability, and delivering effective training programs are some essential practices that have been highlighted by the interviewed participants, drawing from their personal experiences.

The contents associated with the second emergent theme are the direct product of in-depth participant interviews, triangulated data, as well as member checking conducted using participant responses, and organizational provided data. The findings associated with this particular emergent theme link well to the conceptual framework developed initially in Section 2 of the research study. Furthermore, the findings are parallel with the overarching research question of the study, thereby aligning the literature and theoretical frameworks with the existing body of knowledge as well as the overall subject matter, and framework, specifically as it pertained to the importance of negative union influences, employee training, recognition, engagement and detrimental organizational cultural practices, and their impact upon increasing employee performance levels.

### **Emergent Theme 3: Tools for Measuring Employee Performance**

The participants were queried about the different tools they use for measuring and appraising the performance of their employees. Different techniques and methods were pointed out by each participant, based on their own experiences and preferences. The most prevalent techniques were the use of a BSC, regular employee appraisals, and records of employee counseling (Table 6).

Table 6

#### *Sub Nodes Related to Emergent Theme 3: Tools for Measuring Employee Performance*

Subthemes	Sources	n	Percentage
Used of balanced scorecard (BSC)	4	15	33%
Regular employee appraisals	6	10	22%
Record of employee counseling	6	20	44%
Total		45	100%

*Note: n = frequency.*



Khan, Abbasi, Waseem, Ayaz, and Ijaz, (2016) notes that employee performance can be measured through various means such as productivity, absenteeism, and overall employee satisfaction. One particularly useful method highlighted by one of the participants was the use of BSCs for performance appraisals and measurement of the employees. A BSC is a performance measurement system traditionally used at an organizational level (Rabbani et al., 2014; Shafiee et al., 2014). The BSC can be applied for appraising the individual performances of employees. Use of the BSC approach considers the actions, processes, outcomes, and behaviors that employees within an organization are engaged. The most significant aspect, however, of the BSC is that it focuses on the results of each employee's action and behavior that lead to regarding quality and productivity of performance (Northcott & Ma'amora Taulapapa, 2012). As the participant stated,

The best tool I have found is a balanced, co-developed, and shared scorecard. By setting the parameters for success and allowing people to work towards those goals, I have found people will work to exceed those goals once it becomes a part of the team's mission. People start having conversations about the goal. They start sharing ideas on how to achieve their goals.

The BSC sets clear goals and objectives that employees must meet to achieve a high level of performance. The setting of goals creates a clear direction for the employees, as argued by Awadh and Alyahya (2013), thereby allowing employees to plan their work performance and set their targets in alignment with the goals highlighted in the BSC. It is imperative that the performance goals of employees be aligned with the

organization's overall objectives. The closer the performance goals of each employee are coordinated with the organizational objectives, the more profitable it is for the organization to benefit from the use of BSC for performance improvement (Awadh & Alyahya, 2013).

Measuring employee behaviors and actions, without considering the actual impact that said behaviors have on the performance of the organization has no significant benefits. Hence, the BSC focuses on appraising the performance of employees while also making sure that the organizational objectives are being met because of these performances (Northcott & Ma'amora Taulapapa, 2012). As the participant noted, the BSC causes the employees to have conversations with each other about how they can achieve these goals and discuss plans for putting in high-quality performance leading to overall organizational growth. The upside of these factors is that the organization benefits from efforts taken by employees to boost their performances (Grigoroudis, Orfanoudaki, & Zopounidis, 2012). Thus, BSC serves as a quality tool for increasing the levels of employee performance.

A second participant relayed that their organization uses records made through counseling with employees. The participant stated, "We have a record of counseling to help bring them back into the fold. We have performance investigations to address performance issues or behavior issues." The performances of the employees and issues faced by employees that are introducing inefficiencies and quality concerns in their work are investigated through consultations. Such a method for performance management is difficult to assess for its effectiveness, as it not a systematically developed approach. The

emphasis on investigating the causes of poor performance was a positive sign that the management is concerned with addressing inefficiencies and making improvements to the performance of employees in this way.

One participant identified regular employee appraisals as a vital part of ensuring high quality and productivity in staff (Shweiki et al., 2015). This manager explained that they merely use motivation as the primary tool for increasing the performance of employees. The participant claimed

I communicate with them my goal, what I intend to achieve. That's the first level.

Then I try to motivate them. I do what is called moral persuasion. Make them feel part of what they do. Invest in what you do.

These tactics are simple and do not constitute a proper, strategic performance management system like the BSC. Motivation has been linked to higher employee performance, as contended by Cerasoli, Nicklin, and Ford (2014). As such, the importance attached to motivation by the manager has a sound basis and can be considered a valuable tool for employee performance improvement.

One manager emphasized the importance of quality of work rather than the amount of work in measuring overall employee performance. This participant further explained that it is more beneficial for an organization to have employees that perform quality work, even if the amount of work performed is not that high. The manager made the critical observation that

some employees come earlier than their time but procrastinate for most of the time without doing anything productive. On the other hand, some employees

arrive at the workplace late but nonetheless utilize their time efficiently, producing quality work for the organization.

Such employees are much more significant assets for an organization in the long-term. Focusing on the quality of employee performance rather than the quantity of work has been shown to impact employee morale in a positive manner, as it helps to create a culture where employees are rewarded for their skills and abilities, rather than how fast or for how long they work (Mohammed & Taib, 2016).

In performing my member checking process regarding participant concerns about negative union involvement, I encountered organizational documents and literature from the organization's TOOD and HR. The documents I obtained showed that the new management decided to implement measures which would allow them to regain control and increase employee performance and accountability despite union interference on the employee behalf. The first measure was the implementation of performance evaluations for all employees, not just managers. Due to union contracts and agreements, the implementation of this measure was not immediate. Organizational management created a three-year plan to transition into yearly performance evaluations for the union members that began with simple performance conversation in year one that was not measured. By year three, the conversations would be acclimatized into the organization, and the employees would have solid objectives to achieve.

The second measure was a little more immediate for organizational leadership and included the replacement of the previous absentee policy and the purchasing of a new attendance reporting system. The original employee absentee policy provided points for

every absence within a rolling 12-month period. Twenty-four points are led towards termination. The employees counted their points and, when they reached 22, they paused until the points dropped from the system only to restart their behaviors afterward. Unproductive employees remained in the system for years, forcing their coworkers to work harder, while management was unable to stop the behaviors. With the implementation of the reporting systems and policies, management felt empowered, knowing that upper management was willing to back them. The result was leading to a streamlined workforce of productive employees.

The contents linked to the third emergent theme were derived from various sources to include participant interviews, data triangulation, member checking conducted based on participant responses, and organizational provided data. Additionally, the findings associated with this first emergent theme link well to the conceptual framework developed initially in Section 2 of the research study. Furthermore, the findings are parallel with the overarching research question of the study, thereby aligning the literature and theoretical frameworks with the existing body of knowledge as well as the overall subject matter and framework specifically as it pertained to the importance of tools used by managers to measure employee performance as to increase their overall level of performance.

#### **Emergent Theme 4: Adopted Leadership Style**

The essential characteristics of a leader are the style in which they use to lead. Pacesila (2014) and Purvis, Zagenczyk, and McCray (2015) noted that leadership, which involves taking care of the basic needs of employees and goading them towards

continuous growth and improvement, are essential to set the conditions for performance improvement of employees. Moreover, the role of the leader is not limited merely to guiding the employees and getting work out of them, but also to ensure that they are highly engaged with the work they do. The managers interviewed for this research study all possessed different leadership traits, which were revealed during the interview. Many of the participants involved claimed to possess a participative leadership style, while others claimed to possess elements of an authoritarianism leadership style, with some claiming to possess both or other (Table 5). As one of the participants said,

I think at times, authoritative and participative. I think I'm the combination of both of those, because of it's something, I'll go to my staff, and I ask them, for their input and, "What's the best way you think we should do this?"

Table 7

*Sub Nodes Related to Emergent Theme 4: Adopted Leadership Style-Leadership Style of Manager*

Leadership style utilized	Sources	Percentage
Participative	2	33%
Authoritarian	1	17%
Dual Styles	2	33%
Other	1	17%
Total	6	100%

Participative leadership focuses on collective decision-making where peers, colleagues, superiors, and subordinates are involved. A participative leader aims to make the best possible decision in any situation by taking the input of employees at lower as well as upper levels of an organization (Northouse, 2015; Kim & Schachter, 2015). As one participant stated,

I think I am a participative[sic] leader. I work pretty well with teamwork; we all get together, and here's what we have to do. What you are suggesting, and everybody brings their information forward and say, "I think we should do it this way. I think we should do it that way." Of course, the final answer will be what I decide, but I like to get the buy-in from other employees.

Participative leadership has been associated with congenial organizational culture, as business decisions that are reached through a consensus are more likely to be positively viewed and acted upon by all members of an organization (Odumeru & Ogonna, 2013). Participative leadership is starkly contrasted to autocratic leadership, where the decision-making authority rests with only a single person. On the other hand, authoritarian decisions are likely to leave doubts among some of the employees as to the appropriateness of the decision. Apart from the fact that policies and strategies implemented through a consensus are more likely to be favorably received by employees, collectively made decisions are also likely to improve the quality of said decisions. As Pierro, Raven, Amato, and Belanger (2013) noted, individuals may overlook some factors, and aspects of the matter being decided which may be correctly identified and noted if there are various members involved in the decision-making process. In this way, organizations may benefit from a better quality of decisions by adopting a participative leadership style.

The participants were also quired about the factors that influenced their leadership style. The individual experiences and education were cited by most of the participants as the primary factor behind the development of their leadership styles (Table 8).

Table 8

*Sub Nodes Related to Emergent Theme 4: Adopted Leadership Style-Leadership Style Influences*

Leadership style influence	Source	n	Percentage
Education	4	4	33%
Family background	2	2	17%
Work experience	5	5	42%
Military	1	1	8%
Total		12	100%

*Note:* *n* = frequency.

One participant attributed their leadership style to “lots of reading, trying and failing.” Upbringing, education, work experience, and personality traits were highlighted by all the participants as factors which contributed to or influenced the development of their leadership style. One participant's stated,

Coming from a large family, I can't make a decision by myself. I want to go to one place, five others want to go somewhere else, and my mom says, "You are only going to go to one place, make a decision.

It can be ascertained that leadership style is likely a product of a combination of complex factors, and all the mentioned factors play a part to varying extents depending on an individual and their circumstances.

The findings of the study can be consistently linked and are supported by the conceptual framework and literature review developed in Section 2 of this dissertation. The tenets of Vroom's expectancy theory and its association with the motivation of employees, fueled by the satisfaction of intrinsic and extrinsic needs, are reflected in the responses of participants, particularly in relation to rewards and benefits that can be provided to employees for their motivation. Also, as one of the participants pointed out,



respect, trust, and equity are linked to employee satisfaction, which in turn serves to promote employee performance. These suggestions, which are in line with Adam's equity theory, highlight how equity in the workplace can lead to a satisfied workforce, that posses the proper motivation to produce their best quality of work for the organization. Finally, aspects of transformational leadership are reflected in participative leadership as well, as both leadership styles are applied to support employees, enable collective decision-making, and establish an organizational culture where high performance results naturally from the favorable environment created by a leader.

The doctrines outlined in Vroom's expectancy theory, Adams equity theory of motivation (Adams, 1965) as well as transformational leadership and trait leadership theories by Burns and Bass have an apparent association not only with employee motivation but individuals intrinsic and extrinsic needs and what fuels them, particularly about leadership and its influence on organizational effectiveness and employee performance (Wong & Laschinger, 2013). These results indicate that organizational leadership should be the primary goal as well as a critical requirement for overall organizational success. The effort by the organization to place emphasis on this goal was not only evident in increased training budget allocations, but also in their implementation of a leadership training and development program.

The effort put forth by the organization to support as well as train its current and future leaders was confirmed through the member checking process which utilized literature and pamphlets obtained from the organization's training and organizational development department. Documents obtained from the organization by me to confirm

the existence of an organizational training program explicitly designed to assist current, and aspiring leaders in the development of core leadership skillsets as well as style. The essential foundation of a successful organizational training program is based upon the skills sets in which the employees need to be successful within the organization as well as when elements the organization needs to be successful (Ayal et al., 2018). The program utilized by the organization is specifically designed to aid current and emergent leaders within the organization in the development of leadership skill sets and tools through the utilization of formalized training, coaching, mentoring and continuous learning opportunities.

The program is separated into three necessary levels, for first-line Supervisors, Directors, and Senior Executive leadership. The overall training program consists of assessments and interactive classroom training sessions. The learning foundation of the program centers upon core leadership competencies specifically aligned with the performance goals of the organization. Leadership competencies are leadership skill sets and behaviors that contribute to superior performance. The organization's competency model consists of three specific Anchors, Leading self, leading others and leading organizations; nine Leadership competencies: Problems Solving, Agility, Continual Learning, Business Acumen, Team Leadership, Conflict Resolution, Coalition Building, Strategic Thinking, and Political Savvy; and six Core Competencies, Safety, Integrity, Customer Service, Teamwork, Accountability, and Communications.

The organization utilization of the core competency-based training is purposeful. Utilization of the competency-based approach to leadership, organizations can better

identify and develop their next generation of leaders, thereby developing better leadership. Furthermore, use of the competency-based approaches allows the organization to aid leaders in the development of skills sets that are unique to their specific position or leadership level in the organization. Furthermore, it allows the organization to training its leaders to use one unified leadership style. In this case, members of the program are encouraged to develop leadership style skillsets that lean more towards the participative leadership mindset. Finally, the implementation and incorporation of successful organizational leadership development programs enable change to take place organization-wide, thereby allowing for growth (Adzoa, 2015; Ayal et al., 2018; Mohd Said et al., 2016).

The final emergent and its content were derived from data obtained during participant interviews, triangulation of material, as well as member checking, conducted using participant responses, organizational data. Additionally, the findings associated with this final emergent theme links well to the conceptual framework developed initially in section 2 of the research study. Furthermore, the findings are parallel with the overarching research question of the study, thereby aligning the literature and theoretical frameworks with the existing body of knowledge as well as the overall subject matter and framework specifically as it pertained to the specific leadership styles that are more likely to increase overall employee performance in the workplace.

In conclusion, Vroom's (1995), expectancy theory and its association with the motivation of employees as well as the intrinsic and extrinsic needs, (Barg et al., 2014) are reflected in the responses of participants, particularly in relation to rewards and

benefits that can be provided to employees for their motivation. Also, as one of the participants pointed out, respect, trust, and equity are linked to employee satisfaction, which in turn serves to promote employee performance. These suggestions are in line with Adam's equity theory, which highlights how equity in the workplace can lead to a satisfied workforce, having the motivation to produce their best quality of work for the organization. Finally, aspects of transformational leadership are reflected in participative leadership as well, as both leadership styles are applied to support employees, enable collective decision-making, and establish an organizational culture where high performance results naturally from the positive environment created by a leader.

The content of each emergent theme within this study was directly derived from materials obtained through participant interviews, data triangulation, and member checking conducted using participant responses, organizational data. Additionally, the findings of each emergent theme tied into the conceptual framework developed initially in Section 2 of the research study. Furthermore, the findings are parallel with the overarching research question of the study, thereby aligning the literature and theoretical frameworks with the existing body of knowledge as well as the overall subject matter and framework. Therefore, context each emergent theme within this study was relevant in explaining strategies implemented by SCM leaders, the impact that their methods are perceived to have on the performance of the organization, the barriers that managers face in improving employee performance, tools utilized to increase performance, as well as associated leadership styles

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

Performance management, whether related to supply chain, production, or other business functions, is a crucial aspect of organizational management. The findings in this study revealed several techniques commonly used by supply chain managers to increase the performance of their employees. One of the most commonly utilized strategies for improving employee performance is training. Training is essential for imparting the necessary skills to employees for improvement in performance (Tracey et al., 2015). Organizations can benefit from the efficient utilization of training (Mohd Said et al., 2016; Emich, 2014; Tracey et al., 2015). Supply chain managers may sometimes overestimate the value of training, as other relevant factors also need to be in place in addition to training for actual increases in performance management (Colombo & Stanca, 2014).

Some of the main factors that work alongside training, as pointed out during the interview and backed by the literature reviewed in this study, are motivation (Abdurrahim & Welly, 2014; Fu, 2015), empowerment (Wong & Laschinger, 2013), rewards (Joshi, 2016), and leadership (DuBrin, 2015; Northouse, 2015). There is evidence that successful organizations make use of all these factors for increasing performance of staff (Little 2014). The evidence further suggests that a combination of strong leadership (DuBrin, 2015; Northouse, 2015); congenial organizational culture (Emich 2014; Fernet, Austin, & Vallerand, 2012), and empowerment (Wong & Laschinger, 2013) naturally result in quality performances within an organization. The interview findings also revealed the same. This information suggests that organizations seeking to increase the level and

quality of performance can do so by establishing an amiable culture that encourages employees to offer their suggestions and be involved in important decisions within the organization. Furthermore, promoting a sense of ownership, accountability, and some participants identified responsibility as essential factors that empower employees to take an active interest in their performance and work hard to increase their productivity and efficiency.

The use of performance management tools, such as the BSC has been identified as a useful tool for clearly setting clear and concise performance objectives for the employees as well as organizations (Dudin & Frolova, 2015; Valmohammadi & Ahmadi, 2015). Through the utilization of BSC, supervisors and managers can measure and track the individual work performance of employees and determine how well-coordinated the efforts of any given employee are to the overall improvement in performances (Dudin & Frolova, 2015; Valmohammadi & Ahmadi, 2015). In this way, supply chain managers in organizations can take advantage of tools such as the BSC for performance appraisals that help to reveal which employees are delivering the best quality of work and which employees require significant improvements (Shafiee et al., 2014). Performance management tools are particularly relevant to any organization that wishes to make improvements to the existing level of performances being delivered by their staff (Melnik, Bititci, Platts, Tobias, & Andersen, 2014). Although BSC is usually used on an organizational level, the interview findings showed that it could be a useful tool for individual performance appraisals as well. Organizations should attempt to apply BSC,

as it is a simple method for conducting performance appraisals and does not have any considerable costs associated with it (Shafiee et al., 2014).

The interview findings illuminated some barriers that commonly prevent employee performance from reaching the desired levels. Lack of accountability and labor unions were identified by many of the participants as the major obstacles to performance improvements. Findings in this study imply that labor unions can make it much more difficult for managers to improve employee performance, as these employees can get by without taking any interest in their work or performing to organizational standards (Bradley, Kim, & Tian, 2016). Furthermore, improper representation of employees who are wrong in their behavior creates misaligned incentives among employees, thereby impeding positive performance and increased productivity (Bradley et al., 2016). Also, employers and managers are unable to take measures for compelling and motivating employees to deliver quality performances and refrain from idling and other unproductive workplace activities (Bradley et al., 2016). Thus, for organizations, labor unions are a significant challenge to encounter as far as workplace productivity is concerned (Bradley et al., 2016).

Leadership is another factor that is intimately linked to the level and quality of employee performance. Various leadership styles exist that managers across different industries and organizations exercise ( DuBrin, 2015; Northouse, 2015; Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014; Vroom, 1995;). The managers that were interviewed claimed to possess participative leadership traits, focusing on collective decision-making. The application of participative leadership in organizations can have positive implications on the

performance of employees as well as the overall growth of organizations (Maharani & Troena, 2013). The overall work culture is improved when every employee is empowered to be involved in meaningful business decisions and is encouraged to make suggestions to the upper management for addressing existing performance concerns and introducing possible improved systems, practices, and policies ( Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Joshi, 2016).

The overall findings expressed in the emergent themes are incredibly pertinent to supply chain managers, as the preceding discussion shows. Performance management is essential for ensuring continuous improvement in performance and eliminating existing sources of inefficiencies and reduced productivity (Anitha, 2014). It is in the interest of all organizations to adopt effective methods and practices for increasing performances throughout the organization and profit from these improvements as a result (Tahir et al., 2014). The discussion and findings directly apply to managers that are interested in keeping their employees motivated to perform well and, so that they can contribute to the growth of the organization. Performance management systems coupled with appropriate leadership styles can lead to significant performance increases among employees if the managers are duly devoted to the cause (Danisman et al., 2015; Melnyk, Bititci, et al., 2014; Pulakos et al., 2015). The factors of empowerment, ownership, leadership, and training as identified and discussed in this study are of great significance for supply chain managers as far as employee performance increases are concerned.



### **Implications for Social Change**

The significant implication of this study from the social point of view is that it has illuminated the practices, views, and personal experiences of supply chain managers while highlighting the issues and barriers that they face in performance management and the techniques they usually use to counter them. The importance of using proper performance management systems is evident, as it is related to improvements in performance, which helps organizations prosper and grow (Pulakos et al., 2015). There is evidence that sound employee performance leads to organizational success, organizations whom in turn, play a significant role in society (Pulakos et al., 2015). Furthermore, successful organizations are better able to achieve a high degree of customer satisfaction, which can create social changes regarding shifting cultural and economic trends as well as overall consumer behavior (Huo, Zhao, & Lai, 2014; Lee et al., 2014). In focusing on performance improvement, organizations can become more competitive in the market environment, which may have social consequences in the form of new products being developed, creating possible changes in patterns of supply and demand.

Competition is a positive occurrence among organizations, as it automatically tends to compel organizations to make improvements to their practices. In their attempt to surpass competitors, each organization begins to aim at achieving high levels of customer gratification, by offering quality products and services. The upshot of this competition is that the performance of organizations improves and owing to their enhanced ability to understand the needs of the community and consumers, they are able

to meet these needs in a productive way (Sparrow & Cooper, 2014). Furthermore, the result of this competition will be beneficial for society as companies strive to outdo each other, and in the process, develop new leadership styles and work management techniques that may transform the structure of markets and the kind of products in demand by the consumers (Sparrow & Cooper, 2014). Improvements in organizational performance are, therefore, beneficial for all areas of society as well as the economy (Pulakos et al., 2015). As such, the social implications of the findings arrived at in this study, if applied by organizations, are likely to be significant in the long-term.

The social implications of the findings obtained in this study can be profound and of greater significance. In fact, quality leadership, and systems that are designed to increase employee engagement and job satisfaction may benefit the economy by the increased financial performance of organizations. Improvements in organizational performance are of importance for all members of society, and the factors that are responsible for increasing the effectiveness of organizations must be ensured to create social change towards positive developments in the corporate world.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Supply chain managers must pay attention to addressing the training needs of employees. Managers must devote their attention and efforts to identifying and investigating performance issues that exist within the organization, as it was discussed in relation to one of the interviewed participants. A proven effective training strategy, as discussed, is to team experienced with inexperienced employees to promote communication between members as well as improve overall communication standards

within departments. Teaming employees, together with various levels of experiences and backgrounds, create a collaborative learning environment (Lee & Bonk, 2014). A collaborative learning environment can foster skills as each employee is able to play an essential part in sharing knowledge and experiences with peers and colleagues (Shahid & Azhar, 2013). To be genuinely useful, training must be coupled with other essential elements like motivation, employee job satisfaction empowerment, and strong leadership (Abdurrahim & Welly, 2014; DuBrin, 2015; Emich 2014; Fernet, Austin, & Vallerand, 2012; Fu, 2015; Joshi, 2016; Northouse, 2015; Wong & Laschinger, 2013). Managers should attempt to realize the importance of training and make a dedicated effort to providing it to all employees depending on their needs.

Labor unions, when used adversely by employees, are a significant obstacle to performance management, as it has repeatedly been pointed out by the interview participants. Organizations often find themselves in a strenuous situation when they are unable to make performance-related demands to their employees, as these employees have the support of labor unions (Distelhors, Hainmueller, & Locke, 2014). To remedy these matters, managers should seek to develop sound professional relationships with union representatives and communicate the desired level of performance they expect from employees (Distelhors et al., 2014). In cases where employees fail to meet the said expectations, the organization, not the union, should have the sole right to introduce such changes as necessary for improving the performance of employees, rather than continuing work with the same practices and methods that have been unable to produce reliable results (Distelhors et al., 2014; Porter & Kramer, 2019). Thus, managers should attempt

to have talks with labor unions and enter into agreements with them rather than building animosity against them without making any communication (Porter & Kramer, 2019). Both organizations and labor unions need to pay attention to these barriers so that they can work together for the improvement of organizations and all stakeholders concerned (Porter & Kramer, 2019). These findings should be disseminated through conferences where members from labor unions as well as organizations can learn the specific ways that labor unions prevent managers from creating conditions for improvement in employee performance and how these issues may be resolved.

Finally, managers should adopt appropriate leadership styles. There is a severe need for organizations to adopt participative leadership and to ensure job engagement, motivation, and engagement is provided to employees to urge them to be high performers (Kim & Schachter, 2015). As such, the adoption of these inclusive leadership styles encourages employee input, feedback, and suggestion of peers to determine the best possible decision considering all the parameters that are relevant to the situation or problem at hand (Rusliza & Fawzy, 2016). Alternatively, the existence of traditional autocratic leadership approaches creates as well as gives the appearance of a rigid environment where employees lack elements such as encouragement, rewards, and motivation (Burns, 2017). The supply chain is a complicated business operation requiring proportionately complex decisions (Shukula, Mishra, Jain, & Yadav, 2016). A single manager cannot be expected to make correct decisions in all business matters alone (Bandiera, Hansen, Prat, & Sadun, 2016). The input and views of peers, superiors, and subordinates should be considered before a decision is made so that the matter at hand

may be perceived from different angles thoroughly, with different aspects correctly identified.

Through consensus and collective input from employees, it is easier to understand the pros and cons of a complicated decision. Furthermore, leaders who employ participative, and democratic leadership styles are more concerned with addressing the issues that employees may be facing in organizations, enabling them to introduce the necessary changes needed to empower employees to deliver their best level of performance (Tinkham, 2013). Managers should carefully consider these findings considering that the type of leadership style that a manager applies within an organization is of extreme importance in all organizational respects (Rusliza & Fawzy, 2016). Organizations should educate talented aspiring potential leaders about the effectiveness of modern leadership approaches such as participative and transformational leadership, and the findings of this study may be used as evidence why these specific leadership styles are effective in promoting employee empowerment and motivation, which ultimately contribute to increased performance in employees.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings of this study warrant additional exploration of organizational leaders as it pertains to strategies used by SCM leaders to increase employee performance in the workplace. Researchers conducting future studies should seek to enhance the scope of the study as well as increase the precision of findings by adopting quantitative or mixed methodologies to identify relationships between relevant variables that can influence employee performance, such as motivation, job satisfaction, and rewards. Also, the

sample size may be improved upon, as this study was geographically confined to only a single area and industry. The transferability of the findings may, therefore, be enhanced by surveying a more extensive and more diverse population, with participants from different industries and geographical locations.

I further suggest that additional exploration is warranted on the impact in which the union has on the overall morale of organizations as well as the cost associated with its adverse use by employees to the organization's detriment. As it pertains to the union, further studies, need to be conducted to further examine the link between detrimental union usage and negative organizational cultures and sub-cultures. Further exploration is also warranted on how education, family background, and gender impact a leader's ability to increase employee performance in the workplace effectively. Furthermore, I would suggest that additional research is conducted that examines the impact of adverse leadership and managers as it pertains to employee retention, organizational sustainability, and probability.

Lastly, I suggest that additional research is conducted that examines the possible link between adverse leadership practices, wrongful terminations, and organizational lawsuits. In tandem with this examination, how organizational leadership can minimize the liability and risks associated with employee wrongful termination, and related actions should be reviewed. Wrongful termination can occur due to a combination of various variables to include, but not limited to, lack of training, poor leadership skills, and failure to obtain the proper involvement of legal counsel or their human resources personnel

(Walker, 2015). While the elimination of wrongful termination lawsuits in its entirety is an unrealistic objective, organizational leadership may seek to minimize its impact.

### **Reflections**

Preparing the DBA Capstone Study was a precious and enjoyable experience. There is a myriad of things that I was able to learn during performing research and writing this study. Although this is not my first dissertation, the depth of research and quality of the work demanded by a DBA study pushed me toward significant improvement as a researcher as well as a writer. In every stage of this study, there was something important to be learned, be it framing the research questions, describing the nature of the study, developing a problem statement, or conducting the literature review. This dissertation not only helped me enhance my research skills but also helped me to improve my academic writing, as the presentation and discussion are significant components of a quality dissertation.

The most informative part of this study, which I felt personally, was the process of conducting interviews. I adopted semistructured interviews to allow participants to delve deep into their professional experiences as supply chain managers and the problems they have faced over the years. The participants shared a wealth of crucial inside information which made for an invaluable learning experience. Initially, I was unsure if semistructured interviews would be appropriate for this study and whether I would be able to handle it properly. By the time I had completed the interviews, I felt my choice vindicated, as the interviews went much better than I had expected. I had always believed that semistructured interviews were an example of a weak research

methodology. I have now realized how wrong I was. For the research design, a case study such as the present dissertation, semistructured interviews are among the best kinds of research methods because they lead to profound insights into specific areas relevant to the study.

I strived to be as objective as possible throughout the whole study. I have always been a believer in democratic styles of leadership, and this, I believe, was the principal preconception that I had in mind when I started this dissertation. As such, it did not come as a surprise to me when most of the interviewed participants spoke forcefully in favor of participative leadership and described themselves in this way. The consistency of findings further strengthened my belief that participative leadership is the ideal kind of leadership that organizations can derive a benefit. Overall, this Walden DBA doctoral study was one of the most comprehensive and valuable learning experiences in my life, and the lessons that I have taken from this study are inevitably going to have a strong influence in my personal as well as professional life.

### **Summary of Conclusion**

This qualitative study was conducted primarily to identify the methods and techniques used by supply chain managers to improve employee performance. For this purpose, semistructured interviews were conducted with six supply chain managers, the aim of which was to determine the methods these managers have individually utilized, and their impact on organizational performance. The analysis of the interviews led to the development of four themes relevant to the overarching aim of this study. These themes are (a) strategies for performance improvement, (b) barriers and individual experiences



faced by supply chain managers, (c) tools for measuring employee performance, and (d) leadership style adopted by supply chain managers.

To conclude, the findings reveal that supply chain managers firmly believe in training, empowerment, sense of ownership, trust, respect, and accountability for creating a natural path toward employee performance improvement. Effective supply chain managers apply participative leadership within organizations to establish a climate where employees are listened to, respected, and provided a chance to be involved in critical business decisions. A reciprocal relationship is nurtured by favorable supply chain managers, where employees are empowered to take initiatives and make efforts for delivering their best performance in response to their manager's positive attitude and empathetic concern for the employees. These supply chain managers take an active interest in determining what kind of issues the employees are being troubled by in the performance of their work, receive input and suggestions from the workers themselves for how current issues might be resolved for superior efficiency, productivity, and quality of work. The findings, backed by research studies, make a strong case that performance improvement is a direct result of effective participative leadership coupled with proper training, reward systems, and employee motivation, which combine to drive constant improvements in the quality and productivity of employees within firms.

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## Appendix: Interview Protocol

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Study: Exploring How Managers increase Employee Performance Within  
Organizational Supply Chains

### **I. Preliminary Introduction**

My name is Angela Freeman. I am a graduate student at Walden University conducting my doctoral study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate Business Administration (DBA). This study will contribute to organizational business practices by reducing the knowledge gap related to executive leadership business practices and skill sets required to implement effective organizational business practices. Subsequently the completion of this study will also enable organizational leadership to develop knowledge of best business practices required to sustain enhanced performance measures implemented. Thereby resulting in overall increased organizational productivity while reducing cost and overhead.

### **II. Study Information and Data Collection Methodology**

Data will be collected from participants through semistructured interview questions. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour to complete. Interview questions will include a range of questions regarding your experiences concerning the strategies you have employed to increase employee performance. To ensure accurate documentation of

information, I will use a tape recorder throughout the interviews. Also, I will take notes as an additional means to ensure the accuracy of the information provided.

### III. Informed Consent Data and Overview

All Participation in this interview is voluntary. Participation in this research study required written consent. A consent form will be provided for you to sign, with the contents being explained to you in full detail. Once the consent form is signed, you will receive a copy and the original stored in a secure location, separate from your reported responses. If at any time during the interview you wish the use of the recorder or the interview to cease, please let me know. If at any time you need to stop or take a break, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time. Do you have any questions or concerns before this study begins? If there are no questions. The interview will begin.

### IV. Beginning the Participant Interview

Given that there are no further question, I will turn on my tape recorder and begin recording the interview. To fully capture all elements of the participant's responses, I will also be taking written notes. All participants will be introduced using an alias/coded identification, with the date and time of the interview being noted as well. Upon completion of this task, the participants will be asked the research questions.

### V. Research Questions:

The principal research question for this study is what strategies do supply chain

management leaders use to improve employee performance in the workplace. The following questions will be used to obtain answers.

#### Demographic Questions

1. What is your current leadership position in the company?
2. How many years of management experience do you currently possess?
3. How many years of management experience do you have in the supply chain management related field?
4. How many employees do you currently supervise?

#### Interview Questions

1. What is the current work environment and culture in your organization as it pertains to employee performance and training?
2. What impact has employee job performance had on your organization's overall effectiveness?
3. What has been your personal experience with increasing employee performance within your organization?
4. What tools do you use to measure employee job performance?
5. What barriers have you encountered while improving employee performance?
6. What tools or strategies have you have used to increase and encourage employee job performance?
7. What is your leadership style, and how has it impacted employee performance?

8. What factors contributed to the development of your effective leadership strategy?
9. What information can you share that was not already covered?

**VI. Ask Follow-up questions for clarification of data; only if necessary**

**VII. Interview Wrap -Up**

Thank you for your participation in this research study concerning strategies supply chain management leaders utilize to improve employee performance. Please note that all responses and communication are and will remain confidential. Your responses will be used only as it pertains to the parameters of this study and as needed to aid managers in gaining a better understanding of performance improvement topics. Specifically, employee job performance, factors impacting employee job performance, and leadership strategies for increasing performance. Please feel free to contact Walden University using the contacts listed on the consent form with any questions or concerns that you may have. Once again thank you for this opportunity.

**VIII. End of Protocol**