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Employer Strategies for Improving Employee Work-Life Balance

Vernessa Lashawn Johnson-Hoffman
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Vernessa L. Hoffman

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Employer Strategies for Improving Employee Work–Life Balance

by

Vernessa L. Hoffman

MBA, Ashford University, 2011

BA, Strayer University, 2009

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

Senior leaders who fail to implement work–life balance strategies may experience

reduced profits and sustainability challenges. This single case study explored employers'

strategies for improving employee work–life balance. The population for the study

included 4 senior leaders of a hospice care agency in North Carolina who successfully

implemented employee work–life balance strategies. Data were collected from

semistructured interviews and from the review of company documents, website, and

social media pages. The conceptual framework for the study was the transformational

leadership theory. The trustworthiness of interpretations was supported by member

checking. Four themes emerged from inductive analysis of the data: a supportive work

environment promotes employee work–life balance, leadership trust is key to the success

of employee work–life balance, work–life balance programs minimize stress and improve

employee job satisfaction, and flexibility and remote work options increase employee

work–life balance. Implementing work–life balance strategies in an organization may

increase employee morale, employee productivity, and quality of work life. The

application of the findings of this study may contribute to positive social change by

providing insights for senior leaders on the implementation of strategies to achieve work–

life balance to increase workplace sustainability and meet the physiological and

psychological needs of employees as well as contribute positively to the communities

and the organizations served.

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Dedication

I dedicate my doctoral dissertation to God and my family. Through everything, God showed favor on me, providing me with the strength and perseverance to accomplish this task. Thank you and I give all praises to you! I dedicate this to my family, who were understanding to my needs even when the world was not, always being my cheerleaders and motivation to strive for more. For my ancestors, thank you.

Acknowledgments

I thank my Committee Chair, Dr. Carol-Anne Faint, for her continuous support and guidance throughout this doctoral study. Your patience and understanding are irreplaceable, and I am thankful to you always. I would like to thank my second committee members, Drs. Mary J. Weber, Diane M. Dusick, my university research reviewer, Dr. Rocky J. Dwyer, and my chief academic officer, Dr. Janice Garfield, who both provided me with valuable feedback and direction throughout my academic experience. Thank you.

I acknowledge and thank my husband, Ian P. Hoffman and my children (Ajhia, Aiden, Londyn, Gabrielle, Nyemah, Trinity, Saniya, and Legacy) for their consideration, understanding and support throughout the duration of my doctoral journey. Ian, thank you for the agape love you have shown me. I promise to reflect your love through my works. I love you so much! I also want to acknowledge my mother and queen, Ms. Hattie M. Johnson. You are the epitome of a phenomenal woman and I am honored to walk in your footsteps! To my sister, Mrs. Shureka L. Johnson, thank you for going behind my back and signing me up for college. Without you seeing the best in me, I would not be here today. To my cousin, Dr. Tammy Jameson, thank you for pushing me to strive for excellence. Thank you.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee work–life balance is a uniform need in business to reduce stress and increase organizational profitability, productivity, and competitiveness. However, many senior employees do not know employer leadership strategies to improve employee work–life balance. Employee performance can be negatively affected by a lack of organizational work–life balance strategies. Poor work–life balance can result in a loss of employees, which can have a long–term effect on organizational performance (Kraemer, Gouthier, & Heidenreich, 2016). Through the implementation of transformational leadership strategies, employers can offer a positive work environment that motivates and enhances employee performance (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). The objective of this study was to explore strategies senior employers can use to improve employee work–life balance.

Background of the Problem

Effective leadership strategies assist in employee work–life balance, and studies have indicated the emotional need for such balance (Banerjee & Perrucci, 2012). Employee satisfaction has been a major benefit to work–life balance, which has effectively contributed to work productivity within organizations that ensure that work–life balance is a paramount focus (Direnzo, Greenhaus & Weer, 2015). With proper work–like balance, employees tend to be more supportive of their organization, and flexible work options can lead to innovative thinking as a more comfortable environment can foster productivity (Direnzo et al., 2015). Researchers suggest employees and organizations both can benefit from work–life balance, but some organizations have yet

to learn how to properly institute a work–life balance program (Koch & Binnewies, 2015). Employees who work remotely may work more to show loyalty and voluntarily incur extra work, in an unequal exchange of balance, showing the negative associations with this style of work due to ineffective work–life balance policies and leadership strategies. Further research is needed to show how to obtain balance between work and family. The majority of researchers focusing on work–life balance have focused on overseas or specifically on women in the workforce, which does not provide a broad view of the limitations and benefits of a balanced remote work program (Jyothi, 2012). Most research is limited as it does not examine the emotional impacts and reasoning behind the selection of a traditional brick–and–mortar working environment.

Problem Statement

Organizations that lack work–life balance programs have fewer engaged employees, which can hinder organizational effectiveness (Antoni, Baeton, Perkins, Shaw, & Vartiainen, 2017). Organizations are 86% less productive when leaders do not support work–life balance programs (Bloom, Liang, Roberts, & Ying, 2014). The general business problem is employees without work–life balance can negatively impact organizational success outcomes. The specific business problem is that some senior leaders lack strategies to improve employee work–life balance.

Purpose Statement

In this qualitative single case study, I explored strategies senior leaders use to improve employee work–life balance. The target population were four senior leaders of a hospice care agency in North Carolina who successfully improved employee work–life

balance. The implications for positive social change include the potential for organizational leaders to increase visibility for strategies and policies that support work–life balance, which may result in improved well–being for individuals and families, healthier communities, improved working environments and increased productivity for businesses.

Nature of the Study

I used the qualitative method for the study. The qualitative method explores a phenomenon in a natural setting (Johnson, 2014). Researchers use the qualitative method to conduct detailed explorations of phenomena in the natural flow of social life using open–ended questions (Choy, 2014). Researchers use the quantitative method to provide statistical information on which to base assumptions (Counsell & Harlow, 2017). The quantitative method involves testing hypotheses and analyzing independent and dependent variable relationships or differences using statistical methods (Antonakis, Bastardoz, Liu, & Schriesheim, 2014). The quantitative method was not appropriate as hypothesis testing and analysis of variables' relationships or differences was not necessary to address the research question. Researchers use the mixed methods approach as a systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a holistic picture and understand a phenomenon (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). Mixed methods was not appropriate as hypothesis testing and analysis of variables' relationships or differences was not necessary to address the research question.

Qualitative researchers choose various designs including case study, phenomenological design, the ethnographic design, and the narrative approach. I used

the case study design for this study. The case study design is used by researchers to explore a phenomenon within its real–life context (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) explained that a case study is bound in time and space; and the investigator in a case study must (a) ask relevant questions, (b) be a good listener, (c) show flexibility, (d) have a firm grasp of the subject topic, and (e) avoid bias. The case study design was appropriate for this study because I used interviews, related documentation, and artifacts to understand decision-making processes. The phenomenology design is the study of the meanings of participants' lived experiences to identify themes in personal accounts and perspectives (Lewis, 2015; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological design was not suitable for this research study because the intent was to explore the nature of strategies for employee work–life balance, which made a case–study more suitable (Lewis, 2015). The ethnographic design involves an emergent understanding of communities, settings, or groups through in–depth investigation of cultures, beliefs, and behaviors (Gelling, 2015). The ethnographic design was not appropriate as the ethnographic research explores participants' culture and beliefs. The narrative researcher focuses on how individuals attribute significance to their experiences through the stories they tell (Lewis, 2015). The narrative design was not appropriate as the intent of the study was not to explore how life experiences impact decisions, but to focus on decisions limited by space and time to identify and explore strategies for encouraging work–life balance.

Research Question

The overarching, central research question for this study was: What strategies do senior leaders use to improve employee work–life balance?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to improve work–life balance among your employees?

2. What strategies did you find worked best to improve work–life balance among your employees?

3. How did the employees respond to your different techniques to improve work–life balance?

4. What strategies were least effective in improving work–life balance?

5. What, if any, modifications did you apply to any strategy to improve the effectiveness of improved work–life balance among employees?

6. What additional information can you provide regarding increasing employee work–life balance?

7. How did you assess the effectiveness of your strategies to achieve the desired outcome of improved work–life balance?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research study was Burns's (1978) transformational leadership theory. Burns (1978) suggested a process where leaders and followers mutually engage in raising one another to advanced levels of morality and motivation. Implementing transformational leadership styles can have a positive effect on follower motivation (Burns, 1978). Bass (1985) further developed the transformational leadership theory by identifying four dimensions of transformational leadership. The constructs underlying the theory are (a) idealized influence, (b)

inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individual consideration. I chose the transformational leadership theory to serve as a foundation to understand leadership strategies senior leaders use to improve employee work–life balance.

Operational Definitions

Employee motivation: The extent in which employees put in effort to achieve the goals of the organization (Anitha, 2014).

Employee turnover: The voluntary abandonment of an organizational position (Cohen, Blake, & Goodman, 2016).

Job stress: The harmful physical and emotional responses that occur as a reaction of the worker to organizational events or occurrences that can lead to poor health and even injury of the worker (Kundaragi & Kadakol, 2015).

Organizational culture: The way employees have been socialized by their work organization (Cao, Huo, Li, & Zhao, 2015).

Work–life balance: Prioritization between work and home life (Turliuc & Buliga, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are the unverified facts of a study that are assumed to be true (Nkwake, 2013). In this study, I had three assumptions. The first assumption was that the identified participants would respond to the questions honestly and to the best of their knowledge. The second assumption was that the participants would provide detailed, thought provoking, transparent responses to the interview questions reflective of

knowledge of their organization practices. My goal was to obtain the candid truth. The third assumption was that the open–ended questions would capture what strategies senior leaders used to improve employee work–life balance.

Limitations

The limitations of a study are the influences that are not controlled by the researcher (Kahlke, 2014). The first limitation was that there was a variance in tenure among the participants. Organizational tenure may relate negatively to innovative behavior, which can be a moderator of work–life balance (Liu, Ge, & Peng, 2016). The second limitation was that findings may not be generalizable to all businesses in all locations. The third limitation was that I focused on the experiences of senior leaders from one organization located in North Carolina. Qualitative studies are limited by biases (Elo et al., 2014), and the demographics of an organization may impact organizational perceptions.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries established by the researcher that outline the scope of a research (Ody-Brasier & Vermeulen, 2014). The first delimitation was the geographic location of this study as North Carolina was the boundary. A second delimitation was the sample size. I interviewed only four senior leaders of a hospice care agency.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Business leaders may benefit from the information gained from this study. Business leaders might gain a better understanding of specific strategies to implement that may lead to enhanced business operations and profitability. Business leaders who effectively leverage the delicate work–life balance may improve work–life balance and employee productivity (Kossek, Valcour, & Lirio, 2014). Employees who achieve work–life balance may become more productive and engaged and may remain with the company, positively influencing business stability and growth (Nagurney, Dong, & Mokhtarian, 2003).

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change include the potential for organization leaders to increase employee morale and employee perceptions of leader credibility in organizations, which may result in improved personal well-being for individuals and families and healthier communities (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). Employees who have a healthy work–life balance tend to be loyal, productive, and dedicated to fulfilling the organization's mission and vision (Latham, 2014). Sustainable organizations with effective work–life balance may continue to provide valuable and affordable services to local and broader communities (Kossek et al., 2014).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to uncover employer strategies to improve employee work–life balance. In this study, I focused on outlining the key

methodology that would direct the study in uncovering pertinent information related to leadership strategies that contribute to employee work–life balance. In this literature review, I reviewed current and past literature related to Burns's (1978) transformational leadership theory.

Researchers have noted that effective leadership strategies that are diverse have the ability to help leaders influence followers towards predetermined goals and to assist in employee work–life balance (Koch & Binnewies, 2015). The employer–employee relationship should have an employee-perceived balance in the give and take relationship between the organization and the employee that constitutes employee work–life balance. Research studies have indicated the need for this balance (Banerjee & Perrucci, 2012). Researchers propose that organizations can benefit from proper employee work–life balance, though there is a lack of understanding at the organizational level as to how this is achieved (Koch & Binnewies, 2015).

Literature Search Strategy

Using Walden University's collection of databases, I conducted an extensive review of the literature. Databases included EBSCOhost, ABI/INFORM, ProQuest and Business Source Complete. Outside databases included Google Scholar and the selected company's intranet. The results of my search included peer-reviewed and nonpeer-reviewed articles, journals, books, and trade publications in and outside of a 5-year range. In my literature review, I used 106 references that contained 104 articles, with 100% of these articles being peer-reviewed. Additionally, a majority of the utilized articles were from 2014–2018, which reflects publication dates within 3 to 5 years of the completion of

my doctoral study. The references selected directly related to my research topic. All sources were verified to be peer-reviewed by utilizing Ulrich's Periodical Directory. Key words used to search for literature included: *leadership training, work–life balance programs, job stress and remote work, motivation, organizational culture, leadership, employee engagement and work-family conflict*. The main topical points presented in this literature review are transformational leadership and the effects on work–life balance, job stress, leadership training, work–life balance programs, remote work environments, and flexible work arrangements.

For this literature review, I used the purpose statement and research questions to guide the context. There is limited research on the effects of transformational leadership strategies on work–life balance (Koch & Binnewies, 2015). Sustaining employee work–life balance can pose a significant issue for organizations that do not have work–life balance programs in place for the employees. Various countries such as Poland have guaranteed work–life balance benefits and have implemented them by law. Studies have shown job satisfaction improves with proper employee work–life balance (Braun & Peus, 2018).

Theoretical Foundation

The transformational leadership theory was the lens for my review of academic literature. Burns (1978) posited that leadership behaviors can be transformational and focus on the needs of the followers. Burns (1978) believed there are a myriad of qualities within a leader that influence followers and create trust in the relationship. Bass (1985) expanded on Burns's (1978) theory, suggesting leadership behaviors can be transformed

to fit varied situations. Bass (1985) aligned psychological mechanisms to this theory to

measure and explain the efficacy of the transformational theory in organizations. Bass

(1985) introduced the multifactor leadership questionnaire to further explain leadership

behaviors.

Transformational Leadership and Work–life Balance

Transformational leadership applies a varied approach to an organization's culture

and promotes innovation with employees to achieve a goal (Çekmecelioğlu & Özbağ,

2016). Burns (1978) introduced the transformational leadership idea as leadership that

facilitates a long-lasting change. The leadership approach of transformational leadership

causes change, positive or negative, within individuals and social systems. In founding

the concept of transformational leadership, Burns (1978) explained that transformational

leaders encourage motivation, morale, and performance in a leader-subordinate

relationship. Burns (1978) established two dynamic forms of leadership,

transformational leadership and transactional leadership. Transformational leadership

creates a change in organizations and people to achieve a goal (Caillier, 2016). Rather

than the "give-and-take" relationship approach of transactional

leadership, transformational leaders use a moral compass to enact cultural change within

an organization, inspiring followers by connecting with their identity to work toward a

unified mission (Çekmecelioğlu & Özbağ, 2016). Transformational leadership focuses on

reacting to the needs of the employees. (Çekmecelioğlu & Özbağ, 2016).

Transformational leadership inspires the follower and aligns the goals of the employer

and follower to achieve a common organizational objective. Employee differences are

acknowledged and supportive, innovative environments are fostered in organizations with transformational leaders (Pandey, Davis, Pandey, & Peng, 2014).

The transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) was the conceptual framework guiding my study. The transformational leadership theory is an accepted theory and has been used as a basis for many other theories regarding leadership strategies. Researchers have utilized the transformational leadership theory to develop and understand relationships between leaders and employees (Mathieu, Fabi, Lacoursiere, & Raymond, 2016). Scholars have determined that the transformational leadership theory has been useful in exploring the leadership strategies used in the workplace that assist in the development of productive employees (Gyensare, Anku-Tsede, Sanda, & Okpoti, 2016). Employer leadership strategies and employer work–life balance strategies are the lens for my review of academic literature. Burns (1978) argued that leaders can shape learning in an organization through an individualized approach that transforms the leader/subordinate relationship. Transformational leaders motivate, inspire, intellectually stimulate, and use individualized approaches to achieve desired outcomes (Rawung, Wuryaningrat, & Elvinita, 2015). Fullan (2001) stated leaders who develop initiatives to promote a diversity of perspectives and understanding within their organization tend to foster greater work–life balance among their employees. Rawung et al. (2015) further suggested employees without work–life balance can negatively impact organizational success outcomes. When work is not in balance with the home life of an individual, it can become a major contributor to conflicts within the home and at work (McElwain, Korabik, & Rosin, 2005). Leadership should understand the factors that contribute to

negative job stressors and a lack of employee work–life balance. Job stress can contribute to lack of productivity and health issues (Rawung et al., 2015). Furthermore, organizational leaders have a responsibility to identify and mediate factors that contribute to inadequate work–life balance and stress on employees.

The theory of leadership has been a key area of study and dynamic, flexible leadership approaches that incorporate dynamics that are relational between followers and leaders (Carter, Beattie, Caswell, & Fitzgerald, 2015). Leaders desire complexity of an ever-changing society to achieve organizational success (Carter et al., 2015). Dunn, Lafferty, and Alford (2012) found that the majority of historical studies starting from the great man theory assume organizational goals are accomplished through the charisma of particular leadership. Theorists have moved away from the leadership concept being universal and have posited situational and relationship theories that have flexibility to multiple applications (McCleskey, 2014). Effective, flexible leadership that promotes strategic thinking can improve the functionality of an organization (Goldman, Scott, & Follman, 2015).

Lester, Hannah, Harms, Vogelgesang, & Avolio (2011) found transformational leaders have different ways of perception and thinking than transactional leaders. Transactional leaders who utilize contingent rewards exhibit a commitment to meet an organizational objectives without establishing interpersonal-orientated relationships (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). The interpersonally oriented leadership approach that transformational leaders use motivates individual proactivity through the ability of a follower to identify with the leader (Li, Furst-Holloway, Gales, Masterson, & Blume,

2016). Money (2017) argued transformational leaders as positive change agents create a trusting atmosphere that enhances teamwork, organizational planning, and growth. Utilizing a transformational leadership theory, leaders can influence an organization to evolve towards a set goal.

Sun, Chen, and Zhang (2017) found that transformational leadership contains three sets of antecedents: the leader's qualities, organizational features, and the leaders' colleagues' characteristics. Transformational leadership qualities in the leader can directly and indirectly influence a follower's positive change-orientated behaviors. Li et al. (2016) found in a study of 329 following dyads within a Chinese organization, intellectual stimulation was relatively highest within the leader–subordinate role. Negative direct and positive indirect effects that were seen in high performance expectations were nonsignificant in the transformational leadership role. In addition, personalized support in the leader-subordinate relationship was deemed most significant for the followers when the organization implemented cultural norms supportive of work–life balance (Li et al., 2016). The four values of transformational leadership--intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and idealized influence-- ranked insignificant within a subordinate's take-charge behavior. Ashforth, Shinoff, and Rogers (2016) further found followers identify with leadership behaviors that reduce uncertainty related to the follower's future self and further enforces the follower's positive self-views.

The role in which transformational leadership plays in initiating change is limited by empirical studies that support how transformational leadership influences take charge

behaviors which are needed in work–life balance (Parker & Wu, 2014). Ninković and

Knežević Florić, (2018) argued transformational leadership is directly related to self-

efficacy and collective efficacy. Transformational leadership styles have a direct

association with an increase in thriving and proactivity (Niessen, Mäder, Stride, &

Jimmieson, 2017). Transformational leadership literature proposes that when leaders

engage in encouraging behavior arrangements that benefit the worker, such as innovative

work environments and intellectual stimuli and express sincere concern about employees'

needs, leaders produce encouraging work environments that positively motivate

employees' in achieving higher levels of performance and greater contentment (Arnold,

2017).

Transformational leadership has been identified as an important leadership style

(Flynn, 2009). Bass (1985) based his transformational leadership model on the work of

Burns (1978), which explained there are various behaviors attributed to transformational

leaders. Bass (1985) and Bass and Avolio (2000) identified transformational leadership

behaviors as including the following four characteristics: idealized influence, both

(attributed) and idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual

stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influences are the characteristics

of the leader that produce trust in the follower; idealized influence behaviors are the

actions that influence a follower's perceptions (Bass, 1985). The followers of a

transformational leader relate to the leader and trust the leader's vision, mission, and

objectives due to the transformational leader's demonstration of core goal-focused

characteristics. Followers of leaders who exhibit these behaviors relate to the leader's charisma, which instill pride and garner the respect of the subordinates.

Inspirational motivation (also called high-performance expectations) refer to the behavior of leaders that motivate and inspire followers to attain their goals and challenge the followers to progress. Intellectual stimulation Suggests that leaders encourage their followers to discover new ways to frame problems and challenges in order to find alternative solutions. Individual consideration is the ability of leaders to relate to their followers through individual contact to develop skills and elevate goals. Individualized consideration is enhanced through the leader's ability to be attentive to the individual needs of the follower, demonstrating a true concern for each person.
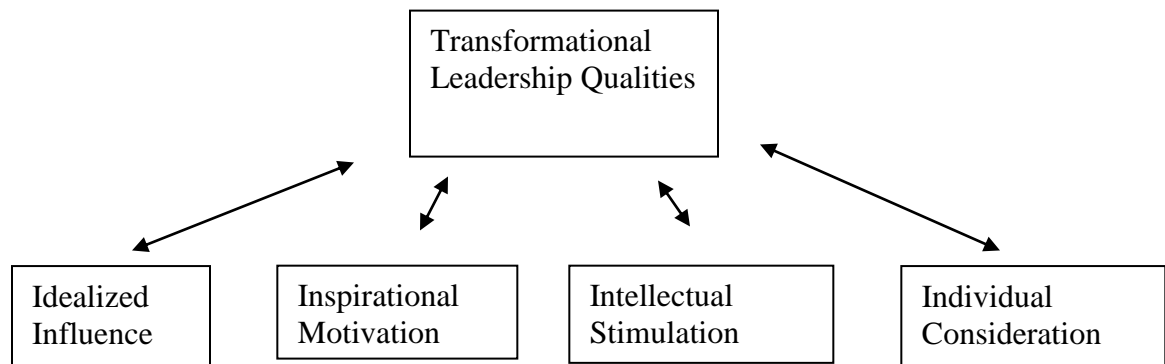
Figure 1. Transformational leadership qualities.

The importance of transformational leadership in business and political areas was highlighted by Mills (2005). Mills (2005) contended that without effective leaders capable of adapting to an array of situations, changes would not be implemented at an organizational level. Ghasabeh, Soosay, and Reaiche (2015) supported transformational leadership research and found that organizations having an effective transformational leadership structure are capable of implementing organizational level changes. Ghasabeh

et al. (2015) argued transformational leadership was an ideal form of leadership that enabled firms to sustain and be competitive in a global market. Ghasabeh et al. (2015) expressed transformational leadership as a form of leadership that is best for globalized markets, where there is expanding dissemination of products, administrations, qualities, and advancements all-inclusive, which brings about the joining of social orders toward a uniform example of financial, political, and social association. Wadsworth and Blanchard (2015) suggested that an adaptable leadership form is best for a remote work environment, as forms of leadership that are utilized in a brick-and-mortar environment may not be the best form of leadership when enacting work–life balance programs such as a remote work program.

Transformational leaders who treat their employees as individuals achieve goals and meet performance measures in a unified way. Flynn (2009) furthered Burns (1978) and Bass' (1982) work, stating transformational leaders utilize charisma, inspiration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to achieve goals. Flynn (2009) explained that transformational leaders share similar characteristics such as empowerment, staff development support, supportive leadership, charisma, and innovative thinking. Transformational leadership is beneficial for employees and leadership in an organization (Hannah, Schaubroeck, & Peng, 2016).

Hammond et al. (2015) argued transformational leaders positively affect work–life balance, as the relationship between transformational leadership and work–life balance is mediated by managerial support. Hammond et al. (2015) associated an organizational culture of positive employee work–life balance with the climate shaped by

the leadership of an organization. Hammond et al. (2015) sampled 411 managers in 37

US-based hotel properties to discover the positive effects mediate the relationship

between work-family conflict and transformational leadership of an organization.

Hammond et al. (2015) explained work-family conflict (WFC) as the extent in which

family responsibilities and work roles are irreconcilable. Leaders can influence followers

towards positive work-family management as they mediate organizational resources to do

so (Hammond et al., 2015). The perceptions are mediators of leader- subordinate

relationships that support organizational outcomes and foster an environment of work–

life balance. The support of organizational work–life balance programs is shaped through

the perception of followers of transformational leaders (Hammond et al., 2015).

Transformational leaders who treat individuals in the inspirations as important,

encouraging their development. Caress (2000) found transformational leaders have more

productive followers then transactional leaders working on similar projects.

Transformational leaders have leadership sub-elements that are directly linked to the big-

five personality traits described by Costa and McCrae (1992). A transformational

leader's traits are extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness,

and neuroticism. Deinert, Homan, Boer, Voelpel, and Gutermann (2015) further found

the big-five personality traits indirectly linked to a leader's performance, which can lead

to different leadership behaviors. Deinert et al. (2015) also suggested that a leader's

behavior directly sets the tone of an organization and can trigger behavioral outcomes in

subordinates that can lead to interactive patterns, some of which can impact the

organization negatively dependent on the leader's personality.

In a study conducted by Fernet, Trepanier, Austin, Gagne, and Forest (2015), transformational leadership was directly linked to positive perceptions of job characteristics and optimal job functioning. Fernet, et al.'s (2015) two-part study that utilized 4,280 randomly-sampled nurses and principles, linked the leader's behavior to attitude, psychological health, performance and job functioning. Fernet et al. (2015) also found that leadership strategies used was an integral part in formulating retention strategies within the organization. Fernet et al. (2015) argued when transformational leadership strategies were utilized by senior leaders, which influenced followers in a positive way, the employee's performance, motivation, and psychological health improved the level of job satisfaction reported also improved, which lowered turnover. A lack of transformational leadership may affect employee turnover and result in profit losses and organizational issues (Abdussamad, Akib, Jasruddin, & Paramata, 2015).

Mutera, Hemsworth, and Baregheh's (2016) study dived deeper into leadership strategies and looked at the effects of leader-perception and follower-perception models used in relation to employee-employer relationships and within an organization to achieve desired goals. Mutera et al. (2016) utilized a structural equation model on a sample of 372 leader-subordinate relationships. The transformational leadership construct was analyzed within the organizational leadership in which they analyzed their own transformational leadership behaviors and from the follower's estimation of their paired leader's transformational leadership qualities. Mutera et al.'s, (2016) study showed transformational leadership as having a positive effect on organizational relationships, employee job satisfaction and organizational performance (Mutera et al., 2016). With

respect to the four characteristics of a transformational leader, idealized influence, both (attributed) and idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, the follower's estimated the leader's transformational leadership qualities significantly higher than the leaders surveying the same qualities (Mutera et al., 2016). The relationship between organizational performance and transformational leadership mirrored in both the leader-perception and follower-perception models. A lack of transformational leadership has been found to effect employee turnover which can result in profit losses and organizational issues (Abdussamad, Akid, Jasruddin, & Paramata, 2015). Abdussamad et al.'s (2015) study demonstrated the importance of employee perception, which influences organizational development.

The role of a transformational leader facilitates learning and innovation through a shared vision (Ghasabeth, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015). Ghasabeth, Soosay, and Reaiche (2015) argued that it is not possible for any organization to be successful without the implementation of a transformational leadership strategy. Leaders who use the transformational style of leadership promote creativity and innovation within their organization, which is best suited for the promotion of longevity within a highly innovative and competitive world (Ghasabeth et al., 2015).

Previously, Pieterse, Van Knippenberg, Schippers, and Stam (2010) found creative conduct is progressively essential for organizational survival. This is a transformational leadership strategy which has been contended to be especially compelling in inciting supporter-creative conduct. Pieterse et al. (2010) suggested

adherent mental strengthening moderates the connection among transformational and value-based authority with supporter creative conduct. Pieterse et al. observed over 200 workers of an administrative organization to study how transformational authority is decided. Pieterse et al. demonstrated transformational authority is decidedly identified with inventive conduct just when mental strengthening is high. Pieterse et al. further noted value-based initiative was negatively associated with creative conduct.

More recent studies of leadership strategies have incorporated the relationship between organizational innovation and types of leadership strategies used. Mokhber, Khairuzzaman bin Wan Ismail, and Vakilbashi (2015) argued individualized stimulation, attributed charisma of the organizational leader and inspirational motivation has a direct relationship with organizational innovation. In contrast, Mokhber et al. found idealized influence was not positively related to organizational innovation. A characteristic of idealized influence within a transformational leader is that the needs of others are considered over the needs of the leader. Inspirational motivation provides the follower with a clear understanding of the expectations of the senior leader, appealing plans for the future. Mokhber et al. stated the follower understands his or her role in the organizational plan and found transformational leadership strategies facilitate innovation and growth within an organization, ensuring organizational success.

Job Stress

Job stress is defined as the physical and emotional responses that occur as a reaction of the worker to organizational events or occurrences (Kundaragi & Kadakol, 2015). Stress can be environmental, social, physiological, or perceived. If stress is

perceived as distress by an employee, it can lead to poor health and even injury of the

employee (De Carlo et al., 2014). Distress or negative stress can be viewed as the

negative psychological and physical reactions to cope with various situations based on

how the employee perceives a situation (Kundaragi & Kadakol, 2015). Distress occurs

when there is a stimulus (stressor) that produces a stress response in an individual as a

way to cope through the utilizing of a cognitive, emotional or psychological reaction

(Grawitch, Ballard & Erb, 2015). Haar et al. (2014) found that stress and a lack of work–

life balance are directly related to poor physical health and increased depression. Shazia,

Tasneem, and Inam Ul (2018) looked at the effects of emotional exhaustion and stress on

employees in an organization and the effects that the emotional exhaustion and stress

have on the employee's home life. Shazia et al. (2018) argued high levels of stress and

anxiety in the workplace have negative effects on an employee's non-work life.

Organizations can implement employee coping mechanisms to combat stress

(Shazia et al., 2018). Earlier work from Grawitch, Ballard, and Erb (2015) argued

employer strategies for work–life balance concentrate on a broader conceptualization

than is traditionally utilized in individual, employee strategies relating to stress

management. Employer-provided stress-reduction strategies broadens changes from

employer offerings to systemic changes within the organization (Grawitch et al., 2015).

Employee turnover can be reduced in organizations that offer stress-reduction

strategies for work–life balance and job satisfaction (Cho, Rutherford, Friend, Hamwi, &

Park, 2017). Organizational stress directly impacts employee performance (Cho et al.,

2017). Cho et al. (2017) examined the influences of job satisfaction, turnover intentions

and organizational commitment of frontline employees. Cho et al. (2017) argued deep

emotional exhaustion, such as stress, significantly impacts employee job satisfaction.

Cho et al. (2017) found employee emotions and job satisfaction predict positive

organizational commitment. The authors go on to add deep acting emotions that are

reflective of organizational dynamics and emotional exhaustion have the ability to impact

turnover intentions significantly. Cho et al. (2017) argued leaders understanding

employee emotions is a significant underlying facet of transformational leadership,

specifically individualized consideration which incorporates the emotions of the

employee which directly influence's strategic and the organization's decision generating

process.

Katiba, Sikuku, and Walalwa (2017) conducted a study to determine the causes of

organizational stress on employees. This study found that stress was key in negative

work performance among the surveyed employees. The employees surveyed had various

positions within the company and it was noted that adding time pressure and targets

without a stress outlet caused and increased negative stressors within the employees.

Katiba et al. (2017) noted that organizations establishing stress management seminars and

training as a part of their organizational policy can minimize the effects of negative stress

that job demands may place on employees.

Job demands may have negative psychological and physiological effects on

employees of an organization (Pignata et al., 2017). Greaves et al. (2015) argued

psychological demands are a common social problem which impact employees' health

and well-being. Greaves et al. (2015) further found the three key components of

organizational stress are (a) stressors, (b) response in relation to felt experience, and (c) psychological, physical, or emotional reactions that result from exposure to job stressors. Organizational stress can affect worker productivity and costs associated with employer-provided health programs (Greaves et al., 2015). Newton and Teo (2014) found these stressors pose a threat to the health of workers and organizational profits. MacFadyen (2015) substantiated this stating workplace stress originates from excessive workload, lack of effective leadership and organizational training. Dagher et al. (2015) argued workers can transform fears of work stress into belief of their abilities by controlling behaviors and reactions expressed to lower stress levels. Dagher et al. (2015) also found that a lower sense of self-efficacy was exhibited in workers exposed to job stress.

Job stress can be defined as occupational stress and work stress (Liu Liu, Mills, and Fan, 2013). There are various terms to describe job stress, which include occupational stress and work stress. Liu et al. (2013) defined occupational stress as a significant issue that has a direct influence on the health, productivity and well-being of an employee. The American Psychological Association (APA) released their *Stress in America™: The State of Our Nation* report, which surveyed 3000 American adults and reported, 62% of adults were stressed by money, and a close 61% were stressed by their job (American Psychological Association, 2018). Additionally, the APA (2018) found that:

- The main stress reported dealt with finances.

- Nearly 1 in 5 of those surveys avoided seeking medical attention for stress related illnesses due to financial reasons such as income loss from work reduction.

- Women reported more stress than men, with 51% reporting stress has had a significant impact on their health, compared to only 32 percent of men.

Agency leaders in the United States and abroad assist in the mitigating of negative job stress. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is a federal agency that has the mission to develop and spread knowledge on occupational safety and health. According to NIOSH (2018), job stress was defined as the harmful emotional and physical reactions that occur when the job requirements do not match the resources, skills and abilities or desires of the worker (NIOSH, 2018). NIOSH formed the Work, Family & Health Network to assist in combating job stress. The Work, Family & Heath Network supports changes in the workplace that benefit both the employee and their families and produced the Work, Family and Health Study (WFHS) to show the impacts of various stressors on employees and their families and assist organizations in employing stress-reduction strategies.

Work life balance, safety, health and growth, and development practices assist in the proactive management and reduction of work stress (Grawitch, Ballard, & Erb, 2015). Employing multi-level, stress-minimizing strategies can enhance employee's emotional and physical health (Pignata Boyd, Winefield & Provis, 2017). Through levels of support from employers, organizational stress reduction practices can achieve optimal effectiveness (Kohler & Munz, 2006). Hammond et al. (2015) found issues related to

work–life balance deal with how employees divide work from work, family, social and personal responsibilities. Work–life balance is especially important in societies where child-rearing is centered on women.

Organizations should take approaches to minimize WFC (Hammond et al, 2015). Work-family conflict arises when there is an inability for an employee to essentially fill a role within either their work life or family life domain. The inability to fulfill the requirements of the role will hinder performance within the other life domain. The inability to fulfill role requirements can add stress factors, which can include depression, frustration, anxiety and tension within an employee. Biron and Karanika-Murray (2014) argued organizations should take an organic, realistic approach relating to environmental and organizational stress by offering resources that influence the employee's stress process.

Leadership Training

Gandolfi and Stone (2016) established that leadership training is an essential element which is part of all organizations. Leaders will need to exhibit the most effective style of leadership for their organization due to our ever-changing, globalized society. Gandolfi and Stone (2016) further suggested that even though there is a myriad of leadership styles, a leadership style that can adapt and produce positive outcomes for the organization should be used and employee training cultivates this. Transformational leaders inspire and cultivate the development of their employees (Flynn, 2009). Leaders implementing proper organizational training programs can enhance organizational worker's job performance, positively impacting the success of the organization (Zahra,

Iram, & Naeem, 2014) which has positive effects on work–life balance. Gaskell, Logan, and Nicholls (2012) found the enhancement of organizational performance through positive leadership behaviors and leadership training improves business performance within all levels of an organization. Solid leadership training that supports open communication and employee innovation have led to low turn-over rate in organizations (Gaskell, Logan, & Nicholls, 2012). Further, creating a social climate of learning (McVicar, Munn-Giddings, & Seebohm, 2013) assists as a stress management intervention.

Mandhanya (2015) explored the relationship between the working environment and employee retention. Mandhanya found that an employee's work environment has a positive relationship with employee retention, therefore influencing turnover and employee intent. The author argued leaders should develop skill sets that allow for an environment that facilitates growth and development. Research is limited, as Arnold (2017) argued that there is a need for more rigorous occupational health research to decide if additional connections exist between leadership training, health and results.

Babich et al. (2016) suggested that organizational learning increases the development of an organization's improvement capability and the development of leadership traits. Wells and Wells (2010) previously defined leadership traits as the broad phenomenon that encompasses various occurrences with no uniform definition. Wells and Wells' study demonstrated broad leadership traits can influences others to bring change, whether negative or positive. Furthermore, Hallett and Hoffman (2014)

found through training management and employees, senior leaders can assist in development of the ability to perform during stressful situations.

In a previous study, Watabe (2010) argued that leadership involves the performance of various functions and roles, which influences others. These various functions, or roles, serve as guides to management as a method to successfully develop, inspire and motivate organizational peers towards performance excellence (Kunnatt, 2016). These roles are cultivated through training and effective work–life balance programs.

Work–life Balance Programs

Work life balance programs allow the adjustment of work patterns to a schedule suitable to an employee's needs (Eddleston & Mulki, 2015). Amponsah-Tawiah et al. (2015) found work–life balance is directly affected by the employees commute to work and the total hours worked. Conflict within an organization can directly relate to the organization's ability to offer programs that mitigate improper employee work–life balance (Pedersen, 2015). Busch, Nash, and Bell (2011) described virtual teams in a work–life balance program as a group of people with complementary skills working towards a shared goal. Busch et al.'s (2011) study found that work–life balance programs are distinguished from conventional programs in a brick-and-mortar environment. Busch et al. argued that utilizing work–life balance programs allow organizations to pool together talents without hindrances and restraints associated with space and time barriers of a brick-and-mortar environment. Through levels of support from employers, work–life balance practices achieve optimal effectiveness (Kohler & Munz, 2006).

There is a need for work–life balance programs in the workforce due to changes in society and the increasing demand for flexibility. Wang and Verma (2012) examined the business strategies that influenced organization adoption of work–life balance policies, and the utilization of employer / employee surveys to obtain longitudinal data utilizing dependent and independent variables. The researchers found that organizations striving to obtain a competitive advantage utilize work–life balance programs as a business strategy. Boguslauskas and Kvedaraviciene (2015) supported this finding through the argument that organizational leadership must cultivate employee work–life balance and look further than the inventory and market to the personal intellectual abilities of their management systems to maintain a competitive edge.

Wattis, Standing, and Yerkes (2013) conducted a study examining management's relationship and the role in which work–life balance plays within an organization. The researchers focused on the employee's perspective in which work relationships with management were analyzed. Wattis et al. (2013) research found that demographic and social contexts may play a significant part when viewing overall satisfaction of employee work–life balance. This study stated demographics and management influence play a significant, direct role in the satisfaction of the employee and has influence on their view of work–life balance within their organization.

Mayo (2016) conducted a study to investigate the position of leaders within an organization and their belief of work–life balance to determine the adoption of social practices by employees of an organization. Mayo (2016) found the organization's implementation of a telework, or remote work provision, will take proper adaptation

based on its tops leaders' perceptions of remote work and work-family balance programs.

Additionally, benefits of leader perceptions related to work-family balance show higher

in knowledge-oriented industries, within firms that have an international presence and

micro-firms. Communication of common goals between the employee and organization

is pertinent in an organization's implementation of a remote work program (Zhu & Lee,

2017). Women may exert twice the amount of effort and time within a workplace when

utilizing a remote work program (Mousa & Alas, 2016) due to feelings based on

organizational opinions of the program. Men and women have different views on remote

work policies as shown by Wang and Verma (2012) previously found that utilizing a

remote work structure as a competitive advantage positively influenced finance, human

resource management and policy decisions incorporating the organization as a whole.

Contrary to Wang and Verma's (2012) study, some work–life balance programs, such as

elder care and daycare reimbursement, can be costly for organizations. As well,

representatives of varied generations may have varied views on remote work policies

(Großer & Baumöl, 2017).

Employers play a vital role in maintaining an organization that promotes a healthy

work–life balance for employees (Schlegal, 2017). The concept of work–life balance has

become a significant correlation between an individual and organizational performance.

Increasing technology, diversity management, and communication needs have made the

need for increased employee flexibility evident (Mousa, 2017). Mousa (2017)

argued leadership styles are effective in motivating innovation with an employee, a

mechanism for sustaining a business model, and a way to mitigate or problems as they

are properly managed. Mohamed's (2017) study examined this correlation. Mohamed (2017) concluded offering options to fit an employee's needs, including remote work and flexible work hours, assists in employees maintaining a healthy work–life balance.

Work–life balance programs can incorporate a virtual work environment, but often do not. Stigmatisms related to remote work environments have prevented this option to become mainstream (Allen, Golden & Shockley, 2015). Allen et al. (2015) reported that those offered this work–life balance initiatives often do not use it out of fear of their career being negatively affected (Mohamed, 2017). Lister and Harnish (2011) previously explored organizational support in remote work settings. Lister and Harnish (2011) concluded that there were no significant working differences when remote work was utilized by top management or staff in a company. Lister and Harnish (2011) found that the majority of negative feedback received regarding an organization's remote work program is received from upper-level management, which can dictate, or transform, the culture of a company. Additionally, Barnes et al. (2016) found that supervisors who engage in Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors (FSSB) have employees that are more engaged and are able to maintain a healthy work–life balance, as 24/7 work connectivity is discouraged. This furthered Mustosmäki, Anttila, Oinas, and Nätti (2011) research which focused on the views of employees within a virtual work environment and telecommuting practices used in relation to their work–life fulfilment. Mustosmäki et al.'s (2011) research found a significant relationship between work–life balance in employees and the effects that organizational perception has on remote work environments.

Remote Work Environments

Organizations can enhance work–life balance through remote work programs (Braun & Peus, 2018). Psychological factors associated with remote work environments are reviewed in Jaakson and Kallaste's (2010) research. Jaakson and Kallaste (2010) found that remote work inadvertently transfers a large part of the organizational responsibility on a worker, thus limiting and unknowingly, forcing the authoritarian to accept this relationship and by doing so, there is an increase in leadership attributes within the worker. Awareness of family supportive management was found to have a direct relation to the well-being of an employee (Goh et al. 2015). This was shown in a direct work-environment of the employee. The transfer of responsibility to the worker can benefit organizations in a remote work environment.

Recent researchers have shown the concept of leadership is associated with the physical presence of the leader. Ford, Harding, Gilmore and Richardson (2017) argued the concept of leadership is depicted through the physical presence of the leader and not the leader's set of traits, abilities or characteristics. Ford et al. (2017) further suggest past leadership theorists have paid no attention to the effects of physical manifestations of leadership qualities which effect organizations. This study suggests the presence of organizational leadership reflects the way in which the leaders are viewed. Ford et al. (2017) further noted that the look of the leader directly contributed to how organizational leaders are viewed. In remote work programs, physical appearances do not play a significant role in the way leadership abilities are perceived (Ford et al., 2017).

As well, Gajendran, Harrison and DeLaney-Klinger (2015) argued telecommuting does not lessen the quality of organizational performance and increase organizational social costs. Waszkowska et al. (2017) found the employee's work environment may diminish the influence of organizational stressors and assist employees in dealing with organizational stress more effectively. Remote work environments provide improved task and contextual performance within an organization (Gajendran et al., 2015).

Contrary to the findings of Gajendran et al. (2015), Ford et al. (2017) explored the concept of leadership through physical presence and not characteristics or abilities known about the leader. In this study, the researchers argued that leadership theorists failed to analyze the concept of leadership not relying on the physical presence of leadership, but on the characteristics and abilities known about the leader. Remote work environments rely on the characteristics of the leader while producing a positive outcome for organizations (Torten, Reaiche & Caraballo, 2016). Employees who work remote, flexible hours have shown more productivity than brick and mortar employees (Torten et al., 2017). Torten et al. (2017) noted employees benefit in the flexibility and freedom to manage their own time. Remote work environments and globalization have contributed to the utilization and influx of organizational virtual teams (Yee, 2014). Yee (2014) examined the way in which employees utilized remote work environments when given the option. Flexible work options utilized by virtual work teams were examined and found to have remote work policies in an organizational affected by assumptions and the environment. It was further noted that remote work environments are frequently utilized as a temporary measure to effectively use labor resources, but not a permanent measure

that can provide cost-benefits to organizations (I.G., 2016). Silva and Mareno (2017) argued remote work teams working outside and organization are knowledgeable about market trends and consumers. This knowledge promotes innovation within an organization (Silva & Mareno, 2017).

Contrary to Yee (2014) and Silva and Mareno's (2017) research, Howell, Neufeld, and Avolio's (2005) earlier research found negative connections exist between transformational leadership, work policies and employee performance with regard to remote employees. Physical distances between leadership and their employees have negative effects on the dynamics of the organizational culture (Howell, Neufeld, & Avolio, 2005) due to varied work environments of the employee. If a remote work policy is only permitted and utilized by a fraction of an organization, employees may perceive a remote work arrangement as a unique work relationship, consequently making the employee feel beholden to the leader for this privilege (Rousseau et al., 2006).

Eddleston and Mulki (2015) argued working solely from a remote work environment encourages overwork and a lack of work–life balance. Kojo and Nenonen (2015) also noted remote work environments may not always be beneficial to employees and organizations as a way to promote work–life balance. Family distractions can prevent a remote work environment from being an ideal employee working environment (Kojo & Nenonen, 2015). A previous study by O'Neill, Hambley and Bercovich (2014) argued cyberslacking can have negative bearing on the work of remote employees. O'Neill et al. (2014) concluded that the personality of workers can determine if they have a predisposition to cyberslacking. O'Neill et al.'s (2014) research evaluated remote

workers' personalities and determined that some personalities are prone to procrastination.

Conflicting demands between the demands of work and life have been the focus of human resource management (HRM) literature. Eddleston and Mulki (2015) supported Schlegel's (2017) research which found technology within a remote work environment can make it more difficult to separate work–life from home-life (Schlegel, 2017). Generational differences can lead brick and mortar employees to have different set of expectations from those that value and informal work environment. As well, there may be a negative perception of employees that seek to work remotely as working less than other colleagues that are in a leader - subordinate, face-to-face work environment. Anderson, Coffey, and Byerly, (2002) found that there is a negative relationship that exists between work–life conflict and work–life balance policies exhibited in an organizational structure utilizing a remote work environment. This is contrary to Busch et al.'s (2011) findings that utilizing remote programs allow organizations to pool together talents without hindrances and restraints associated with space and time barriers of a brick-and-mortar environment.

Eddleston and Mulki (2015) utilized a multi-method research design to examine remote workers that works solely from home, examining work hours compared to employees working in a brick-and-mortar environment. This qualitative study revealed that remote workers demonstrated increasing family to work conflict and work to family conflict as there was an inability to not overwork (Eddleston & Mulki, 2015). Azar (2017) found that organizations that promote flexible work arrangements and remote

work environments have workers that displayed more productive time management behaviors. Zhu and Lee (2017) noted trust between the organization and employee is strengthened as it becomes essential in a remote work environment.

Nagurney et al.'s (2003) study demonstrated at the effects of time saved, and various opportunities gained when factors associated with travel and time are mitigated due to a remote work environment. The authors of this study found that technology coupled with the reduction of the negative effects of standard work commutes, such as environmental pollution and traffic, effect work productivity. The authors of this study state that it is a first attempt in comparing the use of telecommuting in the workplace rather than analyzing employee decisions as they relate to commuting times (Nagurney et al., 2003).

In contrast, Kunnatt (2016) argued modern technology has made some leadership strategies increasingly difficult to implement, as modern networks are less personable. Issues related to technology connections can cause problems with communication in a remote work environment (Mendez, Al Arkoubi, & Cai-Hillon, 2015). Kunnatt (2016) also found that organizations utilizing advanced technology in a remote work environment dealt with nonlinear and strategical difficulties due to the advanced entities focus on knowledge empowerment and not the strategic guidance of team managers in a global business environment. Additional issues, such as the initial set up of a remote work program, may have slowed this option from becoming a work norm (Beham, Baierl, & Poelmans, 2015). Though the initial set up of a remote program may have challenges, Beham et al. (2015) concluded a remote work program can have long-term benefits for

organizations that are desirable to employees and offer competitive recruitment strategies for organizations.

Flexible Work Arrangements

Leadership can have different feelings about implementing a flexible work arrangement. Munsch (2016) described flexible work arrangements as the adjustment of a workday schedule so that same number of hours are worked, but at times conducive to the worker. Munsch (2016) found that flexible work arrangements can reduce inequalities in work-family conflict, but flexible work arrangements can be perceived as negative to employees in the workplace. Munsch (2016) further argued that in a study of participates evaluated with regard to flexible work arrangements, workers were negatively perceived by co-workers when requesting flexible work arrangements within their organization. Munsch (2016) found employees requesting flexible work arrangements in relation to childcare have an advantage in comparison to those that requested instances outside of child care. Munsch's (2016) research yielded flexible work arrangements were associated with career detriments. Munsch (2016) also found that employees requesting flexible work arrangements signaled to their employers outside responsibilities in addition to organizational commitment. This also differentiates the employee from traditional, brick-and-mortar employees. Activities and productivity can be monitored in a brick-and-mortar environment by leadership (Munsch, 2016). This may be a hinderance in flexible work policies becoming a mainstream norm in organizational life.

Bosco, Harvey and Patterson (2014) found that employees showed a 69% higher productivity rating in a flexible work arrangement. Employees found to have control over time and the environments where work is completed are significantly found to have more job satisfaction and reduced employee turnover intentions (Bosco et al. 2014). Galea, Houkes, and De Rijk, (2014) investigated the impact of expressed that expanding options within a brick-and-mortar environment by offering adaptable working conditions, such as flexible hours, enables employees to better adjust to work and individual life. Galea et al., (2014) performed subjective research to test the impact of a flexible work schedule. Researchers have found employees with family obligations view flexible working hours as a need and not an option when compared to employees that did not have family obligations outside of work. Galea et al. argued when a flexible work schedule is upheld by the leadership of the organization and is part of the work culture, there was an improvement of work–life balance for the employees and increased business relations for the organization.

Private and public organizations utilize flexible work schedules. The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) increased the organization's telecommuting pool by 469 employees from 2015 to 2016 and found by doing so resulted in a real estate cost reduction and an expanded candidate pool (USPTO, 2016). Additionally, work overload is found to minimize when organizational tasks can be organized according to the employee's schedule (Ross & Ali, 2017). Jex and Elacqua (1999) argued work overload decreases when tasks are better organized. Classens et al. (2005) further found flexible work arrangements can have a direct impact on negative

effects of work overload and overall job dissatisfaction due to productive time
management behaviors, such as planning, which can lessen overload. Flexibility can not
only benefit the employee, but the company as well (Ross & Ali, 2017). There are
benefits associated with remote work such as cost reduction and recruiting. Ross and Ali
(2017) explained flexible work arrangements are a highly favored benefit organizations
can provide to employees. Flexible work arrangements which promote work life balance
are progressively becoming a strategy of organizations to attract and retain gifted
employees (Ross & Ali, 2017). A previous study from Bosco et al. (2014) argued
unscheduled absences are proven to be reduced in organizations that offer flexible work
arrangements.

Although, this benefit is desirable among various generations of organizational
workers and have shown a benefit to organizations (Eddleston & Mulki, 2015), flexible
work arrangements are still new to organizations and is often looked on as an added
benefit in a brick and mortar work environment. Eddleston and Mulki (2015) stated
reason flexible work arrangements are slow to become the norm as there is more
visibility to an organization by the leaders in a brick and mortar environment.
Researchers identified stigmas related to flexible work arrangements and perceptions that
employees utilizing a flexible work arrangement are not working to their full potential
because they are in their environment. This perception was found to lead employers to
issue unwarranted career penalties on employees utilizing flexible work arrangements
(Williams, Blair-Loy, & Berdahl, 2013).

Technological increases throughout society have made common business technology widespread, with the first implementation emerging within the late 1990's (Busch et al., 2011). Technical feasibility is an essential factor in telework. Brumm's (2016) research explored this and strategies for companies to implement a successful remote work program which has been based on previous successful implementations. Shin (2003) previously explained this, reviewing two and three-way alignments within a remote work system and highlighting characteristics of distributive work settings. Shin (2003) showed characteristics, organizational communication and technological support are key components of a flexible work arrangement. Flexible work arrangements are becoming more common in roles where a global reach is needed, and effective communication within a company structure needs to align with the needs of employees. When employees have perceived control of time over their scheduling by utilizing a flexible work arrangement, stress levels of employees were reported to be lower than employees not utilizing a flexible work arrangement (Ross & Ali, 2017). These levels were heightened when also utilizing time management behaviors such as scheduling. These behaviors correlate to having a grasp over the employee's time giving the employee a perception of controllability. It was also determined that demographics are crucial in determining how an employee transitions into a work environment (Mustosmäki et al., 2011).

Transition

In Section 1, I provided an overview of employer work–life balance strategies and issues that may arise when employers implement employee work–life balance strategies.

In section 1, I discussed the theoretical foundation of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership has been seen as an effective style of leadership that has the ability to positively influence employee work–life balance and job satisfaction. Utilizing facets of transformational leadership such as intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, leaders are able to improve organizational survivability. Literature further suggests that the transformational leadership style also promotes employee innovation.

I conducted a case study consisting of semistructured interview questions and utilized organizational documentation that was provided by senior leadership of the organization. Methodological triangulation was used to ensure information and research done achieves data saturation to ensure the validity and accuracy of the research conducted.

Utilizing a case study for this qualitative research provided the best method to answer the research question of: What strategies do senior leaders use to improve employee work–life balance? In Section 2, I provided the procedure through which I conducted research, an explanation of various roles, the method and design in which research was conducted, data collection analysis and ways that I ensured the reliability and validity of the research presented. In Section 3, I presented the findings of my research, to include interpretations and recommendations for future research in this area.

Section 2: The Project

In this study, I focused on employer strategies senior business leaders can use to improve employee work–life balance. Research on work–life balance has increased, with the aim of finding effective strategies to promote satisfaction and employee productivity (Braun & Peus, 2018). However, some employer strategies to increase work–life balance can have an adverse effect on the culture of the organization. In Section 2, I explain the foundation used to research employer strategies to improve employee work–life balance. The major topics I discuss in Section 2 include the purpose statement, role of the researcher, the research method, research design, participants, data collection, ethical research, and the reliability and validity of the research.

Purpose Statement

In this qualitative single case study, I explored strategies senior leaders use to improve employee work–life balance. The target population was four senior leaders of a hospice care agency in North Carolina who successfully improved employee work–life balance. The implications for positive social change include the potential for organizational leaders to employ strategies and institute policies that support work–life balance, which may result in improved personal well-being of individuals and families, healthier communities, and improved working environments and increased productivity for businesses.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers select a qualitative method to analyze the thoughts and feelings of research participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). My role in this research was to serve as

the primary instrument to collect data in this qualitative single-case study. The topic of strategies to improve employee work–life balance originates through direct experiences of being an employee of leaders with varied leadership types. I explored transformational leadership strategies in previous leadership roles that improve employee work–life balance.

After approval was received from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; Walden University Approval No. 05-30-19-0617089), I electronically distributed a consent form to each participant in the study. By obtaining signed consent forms, the participants knew that I would abide by Walden University's IRB requirements, I would conduct my research in an ethical manner through preapproved data sources, and they would have the ability to withdraw from the study at any time.

Walden University requires IRB approval before there is a collection of data for a study (Walden University, 2017). I conducted semistructured telephone interviews to collect data for my research. By conducting semistructured interviews, researchers are able to gather evidentiary data in support of the conceptual framework and research questions of a study (Owen, 2014). Using an interview protocol assists the interviewer in guiding the discussion through the themes of the investigation (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). My central research question was the foundation for the interview questions used in my research.

I used a notebook and transcribed notes taken from each interview. Once notes were transcribed for an individual participant, I then transferred the notes onto an encrypted flash drive to protect the integrity of the research by maintaining the

confidentiality of participants and participant data. I then stored the notes and the flash

drive in a locked container for safe keeping where they will remain for no less than 5

years. Information used for this study was locked when not in use and only accessible to

me. To minimize bias to any information received, I preserved a sense of self-awareness

to my own biases during the interviews and data analysis. Researchers have the

obligation of remaining sensitive to conflicting information to avoid bias (Yin, 2018).

My procedure for identifying and mitigating my own bias throughout data collection

included using semistructured interviews, member checking, and the attainment of data

saturation.

I had not had a previous relationship with the selected participants. Participants

electing to take part in this study were treated with respect, and I made efforts to ensure

their well-being. I minimized possible harms by securing data as it was received and

protecting the identity of those interviewed.

Participants

The selection of participants is critical to the knowledge gained in a study as the

participants are the source of needed inputs and varying perspectives related to the

phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The participant population I selected

consisted of four senior leaders from a hospice care agency located in North Carolina that

participated in the qualitative examination to understand effective leadership strategies

for improved employee work–life balance. I am familiar with being an executive through

working as president of a contracting organization in Louisburg, North Carolina. The

selected organization has been successful in implementing leadership strategies that have

led to their employee's improved work–life balance. Using purposive sampling assisted in the selection of senior leaders to participate in the study. Purposive sampling assists researchers in the selection of participants who provide answers to research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Lewin et al. (2015) argued found that sample size should be dependent on the depth of the study and the type of study being conducted.

I incorporated the assistance of the Chamber of Commerce in an urban center in North Carolina. The Chamber of Commerce provided the contact information of several hospice care agencies that were stakeholders in the North Carolina community, had been in operation for more than 5 years, and had an effective employee work–life balance program. I sent a letter of cooperation in this study to the human resources department of the four organizations by e-mail, with the premise that one hospice care agency would be selected for the study. The organization that was selected has been in business for over 20 years. The human resources department of the organization sent the letter of cooperation to the chief operating officer and selected four senior leaders to participate in the research. The selected research participants had been in their profession for over 5 years and made decisions that impacted their business dealings. I provided information on my background to create a bond of trust with the selected organization. Establishing a bond with participants allows for less cumbersome research for all parties involved (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods offer various ways to obtain research data, and it is imperative that the proper research method is used (Goertz & Mahoney, 2013). The qualitative method was used for this study. Researchers use the qualitative method to seek an understanding of the nature of a phenomenon and its meanings through human experiences that provide a perspective on the phenomenon (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). By using the qualitative method of research, the researcher can explore phenomenon in a natural setting (Taylor et al., 2016). Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) found that in-depth research involves interviews of participants, other data collection, and data analysis basing conclusions on the evidence at hand. I used a qualitative method to reveal what strategies have been used to improve employee work–life balance. A qualitative research method can be used to reveal the behaviors behind why a phenomenon occurs (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The quantitative method is used to test hypotheses and analyze independent and dependent variables' relationships or differences using statistical methods (Counsell & Harlow, 2017). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study as hypothesis testing and analysis of variables' relationships or differences was not necessary to address the study's purpose. Quantitative research focuses on the construct validity of information and provides statistical information on a topic using close-ended questions. Researchers use the quantitative approach though limitations exist when using close-ended questions (Barnham, 2015).

The mixed-method research is a systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a holistic picture and understand a phenomenon (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). By using the qualitative method over the quantitative or mixed methods, a researcher can collect information on an experience without employing statistical analysis to comprehend an experience (Applebaum, 2012). I did consider conducting mixed methods research. However, I did not want findings of this study limited to relationships among variables. The mixed methods approach was not appropriate for this study as hypothesis testing and a statistical analysis of variables' relationships or differences was not necessary to address the research question and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of employer strategies to promote work–life balance.

Research Design

I chose the case study design for the study because I wanted my research to explore a phenomenon through an in-depth analysis of human experience with a particular case. Researchers select the case study design to explore a phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) explained that case studies are descriptive, explanatory, exploratory, and are bound in time and space. The investigator in a case study must (a) ask relevant questions to reach an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, (b) be a good listener to avoid biases, (c) show flexibility, and (d) have a firm grasp of the subject topic so that research effectively reflects on the views of the participants. The case study design was appropriate for this study because I used interviews and related organizational documentation to understand strategies used to

improve employee work–life balance. Using a case study design can produce a better, natural understanding of a phenomenon to show the *how* and *why* of senior leadership strategies to improve employee work–life balance. Using a qualitative single case study was the most appropriate approach as the researcher using a single case study can focus on events within a single organization to identify underlying themes that may provide a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Lewis, 2015).

Researchers using the phenomenology design of research explore participants' lived experiences to identify themes in personal accounts and perspectives (Lewis, 2015; Moustakas, 1994; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). When researchers use the phenomenology design, they gain understanding through the use of open-ended questions. Though the phenomenological researcher provides an understanding of a phenomenon, it was not suitable for this research study because the intent was to explore the nature of strategies for work–life balance, which makes a case study a more suitable design (Lewis, 2015).

The ethnographic design involves the research of everyday practices and cultural groups (Boddy, 2011). It is an understanding of settings, and an in-depth investigation of group behaviors. The ethnographic design is not appropriate because discovering group behavior was not the intention of this research. (Lewis, 2015). The narrative researcher considers life-long influences on current behaviors (Wolgemuth, Erdil-Moody, Opsal, Cross, Kaanta, Dickmann, & Colomer, 2014). The narrative approach would not inform on business decisions that may not related to life-long personal experiences; therefore, the narrative approach is unsuitable for the study. Using a narrative design was not

appropriate as I did not want to view individual experiences, but senior leader strategies to improve employee work–life balance through data collection.

Population and Sampling

The target population included four senior leaders from a hospice care agency located in the North Carolina area, whose employees have improved work–life balance at the time of the study. Recruiting the population involved emailing the consent form to the human resources department of the selected hospice care agency. The senior leaders who have experience within their organization improving work–life balance provided their experiences and answers to the posed research questions. The sample size was determined by the size of the hospice care agency that agreed to be a part of this study, and the number of senior leaders who have successfully implemented strategies to maintain employee work–life balance for 5 years or more. My goal was to select four senior leaders of an organization from which consent was obtained to participate in this study. Researchers can use participants to provide views based on various perspectives and experiences which provide credibility to a study (Yin, 2018). These senior leaders utilized their leadership skills, perspectives and experiences to improve work–life balance within the organization for the past 5 years.

The researcher selecting the appropriate sampling method is critical for improving the trustworthiness of a study (Elo et al., 2014; Robinson, 2014). The use of criterion sampling participant pools can ensure participants meet the same set of criteria and can provide insight into a phenomenon (Dipeolu, Storlie, Hargrave, & Cook, 2015). Criterion sampling involves the selection and identification of participants who meet

certain criteria for a study (Dipeolu et al., 2015). Criterion sampling was used in this study as it assisted the filtering of the participant pool by identifying only those participants meeting who meet specified criteria to deduce meaningful data.

Ethical Research

Grady (2015) confirmed the importance of participants understanding their rights to withdraw from a study. Participants in a study will understand their rights as it relates to the refusal of answering questions, as well as understanding potential consequences if they are part of a study (Sabar, 2017). Walden University's IRB requirements were followed to ensure there was an understanding by the organization and a full disclosure of what this research would entail. Once IRB approval was obtained and permissions were provided to the researcher by the organization, the assumption was that participants that were identified for the study would voluntarily accept to participate after the ethical standard and objective of the study was provided to the participants. Ethical research is critical to the validity of a study (Yin, 2018) and to ensure an ethical standard were followed, I arranged an introductory phone meeting with each participant. I then reviewed the guidelines of the research and discussed how I would protect the participants' confidentiality and data. I discussed time requirements and plans for utilizing information received. I received consent from each participant to participate in the interview before interviews occurred. As the researcher, I made myself available to clarify questions that may arise regarding the study to ensure each participant held the same understanding of the study. To minimize the effects of any ethical issues that may have arisen, ethical issues were anticipated in all stages of this qualitative study by the

researcher whether they existed or not. Participants maintained the right to answer none, any, or all questions and could withdraw at any time without consequence. Information gathered prior to leaving the study was destroyed. The final doctoral study manuscript included the Walden IRB authorization number.

Walden University's IRB requirements included approval (Walden University's IRB Approval No. 05-30-19-0617089) an informed consent, as well as the participant's procedures if they elected to withdraw from the study. Once participants were initially contacted and agreed verbally to participate, I sent each a consent form to review and acknowledge prior to commencing interviews. The participant procedures were located in this study. I followed the guidelines of Walden's IRB to ensure adequate protections and procedures were followed while interviews took place, including the protection of confidentiality and identities, ensuring participants were not harmed by participating in this study and ensuring the secure collection and storage of data. Following Walden's IRB guidelines included the assurance of privacy for participants to avoid the encroachment of the participant's welfare and rights (Walden University Approval No. 05-30-19-0617089). According to Turner (2010), a comfortable environment is desirable to conduct interviews, thus I conducted semistructured telephone interviews. By utilizing telephone interviews rather than an in-person interview, I provided convenience to participants in which they could select the atmosphere in which to conduct the interview. Allowing participants the ability to select interview settings can ease anxiety (Dilshad & Latif, 2013).

Bias tendencies were an ethical concern of this research. The rights of the participants were not violated by any information generated by the research. The costs and benefits of this research to the researcher and the organization were taken into consideration. I drafted notes during and after each interview and reviewed the interview notes with the respondent to ensure my understanding was complete and accurate. Data was stored in a safe place and will continue to be stored in a safe place for 5 years to protect rights of participants. The data is housed on a password-protected electronic media device. Elo et al. (2014) noted that the personal information of participants should be kept in a secured, locked place at all times. I provided each respondent with a copy of the notes after each interview through a secured email server. Any additional information or changes to responses, were notated and dated. The final doctoral manuscript included the Walden IRB approval number provided for this study. I ensured my research did not include the names or other identifiable information of individuals or organization participating in this study to protect the confidentiality of the research participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Each participant was assigned a pseudonym (P1, P2, P3) to protect identities.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the main data collection instrument used in my study. The main data-collection instrument in a qualitative study is the researcher (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Qualitative research generates a greater understanding of observable facts (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). I conducted face-to-face and semistructured telephone interviews with the participants. By using semistructured interviews, I was able to obtain data through

the participant's dialogue thus mitigating any potential bias that I may had (Fung, Chan, & Chien, 2013). The semistructured interview technique utilized defined open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allow a natural flow of conversation (Fung, Chan, & Chien, 2013). According to Yin (2018), semistructured interviews are exploratory, but also allow the interviewer to maintain control through the use of structured questioning. These telephone interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed onto a USB flash drive. The interviews lasted approximately 30-minutes.

Findings from previous peer-reviewed studies published 2014 through 2019 on this topic were compared to findings from this study. By member-checking and comparing findings, researchers can establish credibility to information received (Othman & Rahman, 2014). Organizational data and training documents were reviewed and served as an additional source to triangulation. The organizational documentation that I reviewed included (a) the organizational mission statement, (b) the organization's bylaws, (c) the organization's strategic plan, and (d) relevant identified organization surveys. By reviewing the organizational documentation, I increased the credibility of information received.

Data Collection Technique

Pre and post interview discussions were conducted to reiterate participant confidentiality, the nature of participation and to establish a repertoire with each participant. Participants reconfirmed their consent to participate verbally before data collection was conducted. Once participation was confirmed, in-depth note taking occurred. I utilized semistructured questions to conduct the interviews. Organizational

documentation received was discussed and summarized into notes. Documentation analysis is a systematic method for examining information received within a study (Bekker & Finch, 2016). By implementing a semistructured interview process in this case study, I was able to gather detailed responses to assist with information gathering and documentation analysis.

I used an interview protocol to guide the interview process (Appendix). The interview protocol contained the interview questions and ensured I followed a consistent process to contact participants, identified a suitable interview location and time, and asked the interview questions in a prescribed order. Interview protocols in case studies are appropriate for participants and researchers to engage in real time dialogue (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). An established interview protocol allowed for a more laxed approach that assisted in gathering unrehearsed responses. Mazerolle and Goodman (2013) found that researchers are able to use established protocols within a case study to take a holistic approach to explore strategies from participants.

Data collection permissions were obtained through both written and verbal consents. A completed consent form was submitted to participants and acknowledgement was required to be sent back before the commencement of interviews. Once data collection occurred, a post interview was conducted to review data received, notes taken and reconfirm the protection of rights and the confidentiality of the participant. Themes uncovered during data collection was discussed. Through triangulation, the reliability and validity of data was supported by the semistructured interviews and organizational documentation reviewed.

Data Organization Technique

Data organization involves the documenting, recording and securing of

information for research data analysis and recording (Elo et al., 2014). I housed

participant information, semistructured interview recordings and organizational

information received from each participant on a separate password protected, USB drive.

Data collection aligned and integrated the information that participants provided.

According to Elo et al. the organization phase assists researchers in explaining how

categories and concepts are created to provide a foundation for documenting the study.

On a password protected computer, I utilized a word document, categorizing the data

collected to include, but not limited to, consent forms, voice recordings, voice recording

transcripts, and additional organizational data received on each USB drive. Organizing

the information on an individual USB file assisted in maintaining a level of accessibility

and transparency of the information provided by each participant. Raw data was

recorded on a digital recorder and maintained in a locked container for no less than 5

years. As well, I kept a handwritten journal of my notes regarding each participant

conversation and categorizing data collected as it is listed on each USB drive. This

handwritten journal was stored with the locked, electronic files of each participant.

Coding of themes were kept on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and was securely stored

with all journals and USB drives used in this study.

Data Analysis

Researchers use data analysis in qualitative research to facilitate research within a

theoretical direction (Carmichael & Cunningham, 2017). The purpose of this study was to

explore senior leader strategies to improve employee work–life balance. I interviewed the selected participants and performed member checking through a series of phone and email exchanges. Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, and Rees (2017) found participants allowed to review research findings can vet the validity of the data the researcher captures during the research process (Smith, Sparkes, & Caddick, 2014). Member checking of the data interpretation will ensure the validity of the data received (Smith et al., 2014) and identifies the appropriate data analysis process for the case study.

Researchers use research questions and literature to act as a guideline to analyze collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). From the participants' interviews, I identified and coded emerging themes to analyze data received and look for any subsequent development of themes. Patterns and themes from an extensive review of literature was also identified and categorized as it related to the case study. The continuous analysis, or coding, of data was used. Inductive and deductive approaches to coding data was used to deduce or negate plausibility. Utilizing the participants' responses to the interview questions and performing a content analysis assisted in answering the central research questions: What strategies do senior leaders use to improve employee work–life balance?

Through the identification of emerging themes, a proper content analysis can be conducted to interpret the collected data (Elo et al., 2014). Researchers use data analysis to gather and interpret data received from participants into meaningful data. Classifying data through categorization and coding can assist in developing and manageable organization system. The organization and categorization of data received from

participants was completed as information was collected to safeguard the reliability of data. Marshall & Rossman (2016) to ensure researchers capture an accurate account of data, information received should bel cross-referenced. Cross-referencing data with the performed interviews validated data and themes interpreted from the data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I utilized Microsoft Excel for coding and identifying themes.

I cross-referenced the notes received through manually recorded interviews, participant provided data and through organizational documents to certify the accuracy of the notes and provide an in-depth, precise representation of views presented (Percy et al., 2015). To minimize bias to any information received, I preserved a sense of self-awareness by keeping detailed notes. The obligation to mitigate biases is on the researcher through remaining aware of conflicting information (Yin, 2018). Documentation analysis is a systematic method for examining information received within a study (Bekker & Finch, 2016). I used an interview protocol to guide the interview process (Appendix).

I took recordings during telephone interviews. I also took detailed notes while interviewing the participant. By doing so, I ensured data was organized and examined equally. I used data triangulation as a method to analyze data and evaluate it to fortify data collected. Marshall and Rossman (2016) detailed the four types of data collection within qualitative research; interviews, observation, participation within the participant's setting and analyzation. Using interviews and organizational documents, I cross-reference data received. Data triangulation can be used to explore the research from a

varied perspective utilizing data collected through interviews and documentation review (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Utilizing organizational documentation, observations and interviews ensured the triangulation of data. Data collected from participants on the phenomena of leadership strategies was compared to standing data.

Transformational leadership served as the lens of this study to understand employer strategies that improve employee work–life balance. By utilizing Burns' (1985) transformational leadership theory as my conceptual framework, I was able to analyze the way employers explore possible strategies to ensure improved employee work–life balance. Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth (2014) found that leadership styles, such as utilizing a transformational leadership style, can have an impact on how an employee responds to a leader-subordinate relationship.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity in qualitative study requires the researcher to utilize dependable measures to achieve research which is consistent, credible, and accurate (Kim, 2016; Leung, 2015). Reliability is important in qualitative research to achieve results that can be dependable, replicable, and transferable under the information that has been received through research (Yin, 2018). The reliability and validity of research are critical components of research that can eliminate concerns related to liability (Leung, 2015). The use of established qualitative methods, such as member-checking and methodological triangulation can ensure reliability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Methods such as using an interview question script can ensure the participants are provided a standard set of questions to maintain validity and consistency within the study.

Using an interview script ensured the responses were consistent and data collected was received through the same manner for each interview.

In qualitative research, validity can be achieved by obtaining multiple perspectives (Leung, 2015). By conducting an extensive literature review the suitability of the tools, processes, and data determines the validity of the research (Leung, 2015). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), a way data saturation can be achieved is through the repeating of the same set of questions to each participant until no new information is receives and no themes are provided from the same participants to the interviewer (Gibbins, Bhatia, Forbes, & Reid, 2014). During the interview, I used follow-up, probing questions to uncover additional themes which may not have been uncovered during the interview. Data was reviewed and analyzed until data saturation was reached. Saturation was reached when the analyzation of data and themes are exhausted with no new emergence of themes (Hanson, Balmer, & Giardino, 2011).

Credibility

The credibility of a study considers the view of the participants the research findings as interpreted in the trustworthiness of the researcher, as well as his or her actual research (Janesick, 2016). Janesick found the experiences of a study can be replicatable, it is shown that the research is credible (Janesick, 2016). Janesick stated credibility is increased when the researcher is able to provide a broad understanding of the research. Methodological triangulation was used through the comparison of organizational documentation to member-checked data. Allowing the research participants to review

information collected as it is collected, or member-checking, is a strategy that strengthens the credibility of the research (Janesick, 2016).

Transferability

Research findings should also be transferable to other situations in the future. To establish transferability in qualitative research, the reader of the research must be able to judge if the findings can complement their own needs (MacPhail, Khoza, Abler, & Ranganathan, 2015). I ensured my qualitative research had detailed descriptions of the data collection process and themes that were able to be seen as transferable to particular situations were done as deemed appropriate.

Dependability

In order for a qualitative study to see as dependable, the findings of the studies should be able to be reproduce if there are similar conditions and participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I used member-checking and methodological triangulation to ensure the dependability of this study. My own biases and ever-changing contexts within my research could be threats to the validity of my qualitative research. I remained vigilant and conscious of my own biases throughout my data collection process. I was also consistent with the processes of my data collection, interpretation and analyzation of data to ensure that any biases were mitigated through a comprehensive and meticulous analyzation of responses provided. A consistent analyzation of data ensured the completeness and accuracy of the interpretation of answers provided by participants were confirmed and completed before data coding and analyzation was done.

Confirmability

A paramount criterion of trustworthiness that a researcher can bring to a study is the confirmability of a study's findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Documenting procedures utilized during the research process added to the confirmability of this study. Documenting contradictory findings and negative instances of a similar study can demonstrate the analyzation of data received, thus further confirming a study's findings (Dang, 2015). Dang found through the utilization of company documents and company archived information, confirmability can be added to a study. The use of triangulation can validate qualitative studies confirmability and confirmation that a study can be duplicated by other founded research adds to a studies confirmability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Additionally, confirmability can be provided by being consistent with my method of research deduction (Harvey, 2015).

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I included the purpose of the study, the research methodology, the research design, the role of the researcher, and data collection methods used. I conducted semistructured interviews of four senior leaders from the chosen hospice care agency located in North Carolina to understand effective leadership strategies for improved employee work–life balance. I obtained information from this organization until data saturation occurred.

I organized the information collected by electronically encrypting, organizing and storing information received through methodological triangulation. I gathered information through organizational research, interviews and organizational documents

received. I analyzed, and shared data collected with senior leaders surveyed to ensure I had accurately interpreted information received.

Section 2 contained a review of the research problem and purpose, and data collection instruments and analysis tools that used in an extensive effort to exhaust research. Analysis tools were used in this qualitative single case study to uncover decision making processes senior leaders used to improve employee work–life balance. Section 3 will include an analysis of the findings and detailed results of research received that is related to each research question. Section 3 will also include implications for social change and recommendations for future research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Inadequate employee work–life balance can present major consequences for employees and organizations (Wong & Laschinger, 2015). Higher turnover and financial loss have been reported in organizations that do not employ adequate work–life balance strategies for employees (Wong & Laschinger, 2015). In Section 3, I discuss (a) the overview of this study, (b) presentation of the findings, (c) applications to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendations for action and further study, and (g) reflections based on this study. I used a case study research design to explore strategies used for improving employee work–life balance. I collected the data from four senior leaders of a hospice agency who had implemented work–life balance strategies to support employees.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies senior leaders use to improve employee work–life balance. The primary research question was: What strategies do senior leaders use to improve employee work–life balance? To answer the primary research question, I conducted in-depth, probing interviews of four senior leaders who have implemented strategies in their organization to achieve employee work–life balance. The senior leaders have worked in their profession for more than 5 years. Interviews were conducted after obtaining Walden University IRB approval for data collection and consent from the client organization. In Section 1, I presented the problem statement and purpose of the study. I also presented the conceptual framework of transformational leadership. The literature review in Section 2 outlined the key

methodology that would direct the study in uncovering pertinent information related to leadership strategies that contribute to employee work–life balance. In Section 2, I detailed the research method and design that would be used in this study and outlined the role the researcher would take to deduce data from participants. I detailed data collection procedures and actions taken to ensure ethical research. In Section 3, I provide informational questions used to interview the four senior leaders, identify themes found, and detail findings. I compare these findings with previous literature reviewed, and I present my thoughts for further research.

Presentation of the Findings

I transcribed participants' and organizational identifying data using codes. I used P1 to represent senior leader 1, P2 to represent senior leader 2 and so on. I conducted semistructured interviews to allow for free-flowing responses from the participants interviewed. The information received from the participant interviews allowed for a more natural conversation that was pertinent in obtaining holistic data as it pertained to strategies the leaders used to improve employee work–life balance. I allowed the participants to pick their interview setting in an effort to provide a setting suitable for holistic responses to the interview questions.

The participants' responses were coded and data deduced from the responses were analyzed for themes presented. The triangulation that occurred through observations, website review, and interviews validated the interpretations and conclusions of the data. The results of the study included in-person and over-the-phone semistructured interviews to capture recurring phrases that qualified as codes from which themes emerged. I

associated the interview answers with organizational documentation and then shared the results with the participants for member-checking. The four key themes from this research showed (a) senior leaders can increase employee work–life balance through establishing a supportive work environment, (b) leadership trust is key to the success of employee work–life balance, (c) work–life balance programs minimize stress and improve employee job satisfaction and flexibility, and (d) remote work options increase employee work–life balance.

Burns (1978) found that the implementation of transformational leadership styles by leaders can have a positive effect on the followers. Burns found that leaders and followers can achieve a mutual process of understanding that raises one another's levels of motivation and morality. All four participants understood that their employees' commitments outside of the organization were important in ensuring their positional duties were achieved. Similar previously upheld research by Çekmecelioğlu and Özbağ (2016) supported the participants' understanding. Çekmecelioğlu and Özbağ (2016) found that leadership reacting to the needs of followers enhance organizational commitment and allow the follower and leader to effectively work towards a unified goal. All participants felt that knowledge of their personal commitments included the understanding that personal commitments could pose limitations on work commitments and that reasonable adjustments could be made to ensure organizational goals were still met.

Theme 1: A Supportive Work Environment Promotes Employee Work–life Balance

The participants were all asked about the strategies they used to increase work–life balance among their employees. Strategies included (a) the limitation of extended working-hours and encouraging paid time off, (b) leading by example to promote team commitment to work–life balance, (c) permitting their employees to work remotely or at an alternate work site and, (d) utilization of the employee assistance program (EAP) if needed. The resounding answer from all participants centered around providing organizational support to their employees. All the participants noted a supportive work environment is necessary to promote employee work–life balance initiatives. All participants responded that organizational support was the favored work–life balance strategy implemented by the organization. It was also the most cost-effective. P4 found that offering a supportive work environment where there is structure but employee individualism is noted has been beneficial to P4's leadership style.

The four participants encouraged participation in work–life balance initiatives through idealized influence (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 2000), which affected the followers' perceptions of the initiatives. P1 limited the senior leader's own work hours to 8-hour days and encouraged the department to do the same unless an after-hour emergency dictated the need for the employee to work longer. All participants utilized flexible work arrangements and encouraged their employees to do the same. All participants encouraged their employees to use paid time off (PTO). The organization did not limit PTO to vacation time and the PTO was able to be used as the employee deemed fit. P1, P3 and P4 did state the organization limited the amount of accrued paid

time off an employee can rollover to the next year. This strategy was implemented to discourage the nonutilization of PTO by the organization's employees.

All participants encouraged their employees' balance of home and work priorities. As an example, patient-facing employees were encouraged to use the after hour, on-call staff instead of dealing with on-the-job related work after their work hours. "Creating a culture of flexibility" by using varied perspectives is what P3 detailed was paramount in employee work–life balance. Ghasabeh et al. (2015) noted the adoption of varied perspectives to solve organizational issues is high among transformational leaders. P3's statement of "creating a culture of flexibility" and collaboration was reflective of the other participants' responses around organizational culture. The review of the company's online onboarding offerings listed an environment of "true collaboration and compassion," which was further indicative of an organizational foundation based on transformational leadership. P3's statement also supports Fullan's (2001) findings that found leaders who offer support usingvaried perspectives and understanding in their organization have greater work–life balance among their employee unit. The senior leaders remarked on a culture of support for their employees. The culture of an organization is principal in employee usage of available work–life balance programs (Pedersen, Minnotte, Kiger, & Mannon, 2009). P3 encouraged management to look for opportunities for employees to work remotely and encouraged the managers' mindfulness of the employees' home responsibilities as P3 felt the home responsibilities influenced the employee's on-the-job satisfaction. P1 noted an employee can be fully productive in an 8-hour day if they allocate their work time correctly.

Table 1.

Theme 1: Organizational Support

Theme	Statements in support of key theme
Organizational support	
	"I am not a micromanager I don't you know you can issue something about concerns come and talk to me."
	"I look for what strategies can we implement to make this person successful."
	"Encourage managers to [sic] look for ways to help retain your employees and accommodate them."

All of the participants mentioned the prioritization of home life was paramount. The individualized support shown by the organization and the participants' feelings support individualized consideration – an underlying construct of transformational leadership as stated by Bass' (1985). In individualized consideration, transformational leaders attend to the follower's needs, engage employees, and assist in their personal growth and development. Statements made in support of the senior leaders' views were evident on the organization's website, which describes catering to the needs of the individual as one of their community service obligations. All participants indicated the employees' responses were positive to the participants' support and that the organization was positively impacted.

Theme 2: Leadership Trust is Key to the Success of Employee Work–life Balance

Leadership support was shown to be beneficial when reducing employee work-family conflict and establishing trust between the employee and the organization. Fuscaldo's (2011) research supported this benefit, which found that establishing guidelines for employee work–life balance is vital to the commitment of the employee to the organization and establishing trust between an employee and employer. Dabke (2016) further supported Fuscaldo's (2011) findings that people follow leaders who exhibit transformational leadership skills based on the leaders' trustworthiness.

All participants found if they provided an atmosphere that established boundaries and fostered trust, the participants gained increased employee commitment supporting Dabke's (2016) conclusions. The four participants explained the employees' commitment to the organization governed the relationship between the senior leader and the organization, establishing an organizational culture based on a mutual relationship of trust. Kessler (2014) remarked that a nonsupportive organizational culture is one of the main causes of employee turnover. Kessler's (2014) findings support Shahzad, Iqbal, and Gulzar's (2013) research which asserted a robust organizational culture within an organization could increase employee commitment towards attaining organizational goals (Shahzad et al., 2013). No instances of voluntary turnover were reported by the senior leaders, though there had been two instances of forced turnover of direct reports noted by P1, P3 and P4.

All participants allowed their employees to have flexibility in the way in which the employee handled their assigned daily work duties. By doing so, the employees

facilitated assigned work roles with the ability to do so in settings authentic to the employee. The four participants mentioned trust as a key consideration for this established flexibility in their work environment. P1 ensured that once a week the employees under P1 had a face-to-face meeting to explain personal scheduling commitments as well as the employee's work needs to P1. The employees under P1 were able to provide their time needs for the completion of projects to the participant and the participant trusted that the employee would fulfill the needs of the organization through their own scheduling coordination. The four participants' assertions of trust were all based on the employees' individual work ethics, commitments, and work output. Dabke (2016) noted employees will emulate the transformational leadership skills of the leader and follow leaders based on the leaders' trustworthiness. According to all of the participants, offering employees organizational support and trust by establishing relationship boundaries has been shown to be favorable to this organization. P4 reported no voluntary turnover of her direct reports within the last 15 years. Documents referencing this organization show a recent expansion stemming from the organization's success.

Table 2

Theme 2: Senior Leader's Trust

Theme	Statements in support of key theme
Trust	"We're all a team here. You guys all back up each other."
	"I might tell you what I need and then I want you to tell me how long you think you need to do it."
	"We place trust and confidence in our people."
	"I feel like we are all adults here."

Trust of all the participants' staff was stated as being an important factor which allowed scheduling flexibility. P1commented, "I feel like we are all adults here." The participants all felt their reliance on the employee's work ethic was sufficient for the employee to achieve his or her work. All of the participants elaborated brick-and-mortar environments were only necessary if their job commitments warranted the necessity of an employee to be in the office. P3 noted monitoring employees under a brick-and-mortar system was not necessary if their work environment was telephonic-based and could be completed in a remote location. P2, P3 and P4 noted the dictating of work hours and the employee's place of work was not beneficial to the employee's work–life balance. No issues from the employees were noted in utilizing flexible work options by the four participants. The participants feelings aligned with extant literature on the effects of transformational leadership roles. Transformational leadership skills increase employee

trust and enhance independent thinking among followers (Gundersen, Hellesøy, &

Raeder, 2012).

Theme 3: Work–life Balance Programs Minimize Stress and Improve Employee Job

Satisfaction

Another theme emerging from the data received was the desire to minimize

employee stress through the implementation of work–life balance programs. Work-

related stress has been found to negatively impact organizations through employee

turnover, low productivity and absenteeism (Shaheen, Batool, Sajid, & Nab, 2013). The

health care field was defined as particularly stressful by the participants which was

heightened by the hospice setting. Fiaban, Giorgi, Sguazzin, and Argentero (2013) found

health care professionals face a multitude of job stressors that adversely impact both their

physical and mental health, which can attenuate employee work engagement and

organizational commitment. The four participants encouraged the employees' use of

work–life balance programs as needed to minimize employee stress and foster

organizational productivity. Through the dimension of individualized consideration,

transformational leaders support the needs of their employees while concurrently

achieving organizational goals (Ruggeri, 2009).

The four participants each acknowledged stress and the need to minimize employee

stress, with P1 commenting,

> Some people don't even realize the amount of stress that you're under all the time
>
> what that does to your body your cortisol levels and everything else. That when
>
> you have that added stress like it doesn't take much to put you over the tipping

point. You are always at a four. That's your baseline. When you should be at a zero. To this day, they don't know that there are strategies because that's all they knew.

All participants encouraged direct reports and employees to utilize all the work–life balance options available and emphasized the importance of stress-reduction strategies to their organization. The organization's website displays a section dedicated specifically to the various work–life balance initiatives offered to the organization's employees. Through the promotion of initiatives which support employee work–life balance (Fullan, 2001), the participants offer a supportive and innovative work environment. Bass (1985) expressed effective transformational leadership will support and appeal to the followers' aspirations, in turn gaining the followers' commitment. Based on this commitment, the four participants acknowledged implementing work–life balance strategies also minimized the micro-managing of the employees, to lesson stress and increased productivity. The four participants' feelings subsequently concur with Huffman, Olson, O'Gara Jr, and King's (2014) whereas adopting ways that employ an individual's environment leads to employee innovation, increased productivity and organizational self-sustainment. As further support and substantiation of the four participants' comments, articles on work–life balance were prevalent on the organization's website, addressing the needs of personal evolution and ways to enhance work–life balance.

When asked if there were additional measures that the four participants felt should be taken to increase employee work–life balance, the participants agreed the work–life

balance programs that they currently have positively fostered the organization's work environment. P1 commented additional implemented work–life balance programs would garner valuable monetary resources that could be utilized to improve client satisfaction. P4 did not address a need for additional work–life balance programs. None of the participants gave organizational training as an answer to improving their employees work–life balance or a way to minimize stress. A review of the organization's website shows continuing education is supported, which includes employee funding for education credits towards the employees' licensures. P1 did comment on the desire for employee tuition reimbursement and a fleet car program, further demonstrating a desire to ensure the employees' needs were fulfilled. Lu et al. (2016) elaborated on this, finding career development opportunities create a sustainable environment for employee growth and retention.

All the participants stated the need to periodically reassess the needs to their employees to minimize organizational stress. Grant (2012) argued transformational leaders respond to the needs of their employees which flourishes employee development. The four participants' continuous reassessment of employee needs are in line with Ghasabeth, Soosay and Reaiche's (2015) research explained transformational leaders influence organizational development through a shared vision and renewed commitment. The continued reassessment and implementation of employee programs that offered support assisted in maintaining employee work–life balance (P3). P1 and P3 both felt the implementation of an EAP program was crucial in minimizing employee stress. The EAP program supported the organization's employees and employee's spouses offering a

variety of employee need-based programs, short-term counseling, assessments and follow-up services as needed for employee on-the-job and employee home-related issues. P1 commented on a supervisory support program, further showing organizational support of the development of the employees.

Participants encouraged their employees to utilize technology as a tool to assist in minimizing daily work–life stress. Adapting a telemedicine program was used to assist with employee medical issues that were minimal and did not require an in-person doctor's visit. The implementation of telemedicine was listed as a positively received work–life balance program for the organization's employees. With this implementation, an employee contacts an on-call doctor for a medical assessment in lieu of an urgent care visit designed for a list of ailments. The use of telemedicine was used as an alternative to conventional patient care resources, providing doctors with an increased access to employee's medical needs and a reduction in geographic and scheduling obstacles that may prevent employees from obtaining needed treatment (O'Shea, Berger, Samra, & Van Durme 2015). When asked if additional measures could be implemented to increase employee work–life balance, P1 and P2 felt that job sharing could possibly benefit the employees supervised by them, though the participants (P1 and P2) did not know how the organization would implement job sharing effectively to provide the most benefit to their employees.

Table 3

Theme 3: Implementation of Work–life Balance Programs

Theme	Statements in support of key theme
Implementation of work–life balance programs	"EAP and that is kind of a really comprehensive service and we heavily promote that to our employees."
	"24/7 access to phone counseling so it's a 24/7 resource."
	"We figure out what events are going on outside of work and a confidential you know manner that they help them address and work through those other elements that are impacting the workplace."
	"We have the highest stress roles, for the most part, in terms of just nature of the work and volume of our case management, so we closely monitor a retention metrics our turnover in case management in particular."
	"Keeping great people and keeping them engaged in the organization."

Theme 4: Flexibility and Remote Work Options Increase Employee Work–life Balance

The theme of flexibility emerged from participant responses. The organization allowed remote work and flexible scheduling of work hours at the participants' discretion. Transformational leadership theory suggests leaders transform followers in three crucial ways: through a focus on unity; through an activation of higher order needs of self-esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1954); and through an increased

awareness of task importance (Bass, 1985). Allowing flexibility as it related to the employee's working hours ensured employees were able to meet both their work and personal obligations (P1 and P2) through the awareness of task importance. On days other than Monday and Friday, P3's employees coordinated each working offsite one day a week. allowed one remote workday a week organized by the employees in the unit as to maintain full coverage. P2 and P4 did not dictate employee hours and as long as the employees worked 40-hours as mandated by their position and "the work is getting done," the employees could adjust their schedule as needed. P1 found that instituting a remote work policy where employees can work from home was found to be beneficial to employee commitment. Findings supports the research of Taylor (2015) which found remote workers are not only more productive, but also have better communication, increased loyalty to their organization and higher levels of work–life balance than brick-and-mortar employees. Offering further support, Neufield, Wan and Fang (2008) found transformational leaders positively influence effective communication within their organizations. On P1's team, employees had the flexibility to work out their schedules amongst themselves to have one day of remote work a week. Communication was key to all four participants and their staff when participating in flexible work options to ensure the organization did not incur gaps in organizational coverage. Heathfield (2014) found frequent communication and shared goals, despite the employee's work location, is vital to organizational success. Heathfield's (2014) findings supported Roy's (2012) research whereas open lines of communication are vital to follower inspiration.

The exploration of the uncovered theme of flexibility disclosed strategies the participants utilized to increase employee work–life balance. Through the lens of transformational leadership, the participants (P2, P3 and P4) were able to offer flexibility to their employees' work arrangements while retaining the ability to inspire and stimulate their followers to surpass their own self-interest for a communal purpose of the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1990). All participants acknowledged the need for openness to employee flexibility was key to showing organizational support. Employees under P1's department had limited flexibility with their work schedule due to the nature of the work. The four participants did not present issues with the current employees' utilization of the implemented remote work policies. P1 and P3 noted previous issues in the past with a single employee in the organization who has since been terminated. P1 and P3 did not believe the remote work and flexible work schedule contributed to the underlying issues of the employee or the employee's negative work-related performance. P2 stated,

> If you got good employees that are committed to getting the work done. I think
> that's what makes the difference because if I had staff that I was questioning
> whether or not if they say they are working from home and I had to think, well,
> um you know, if you are working from home and I'm sending you an email and
> I'm not getting a response for two hours, my guess is maybe you are not so much,
> or if I'm not seeing the quantity or the quality of work that we might have to take
> different looks at what might have to happen but, I'm very, very fortunate to have

an incredible staff who are as committed to taking care of our patients as we are to taking care of each other.

Overall, the four participants found flexible work options and remote work options increased employee work–life balance. Advising of the opposing effects of remote work, P1 and P3 did highlight two obstacles to the utilization of the organization's remote work program. P1 exposed technical difficulties were experienced by a single employee when utilizing the organization's virtual private network (VPN). P1 noted the technical difficulties have since been remedied for the employee.

P1 and P3 both responded the more tenured employees did not adapt to having a flexible and remote work schedule as well as the less tenured employees did. P3 and P4 remarked the least effective strategy would be to "try and impose the same solution to everyone." P3 found that having some employees work from home was "colliding their work and their life and there's an inability to separate that." Though, Boyar (2013) remarked telecommuters have an increased ability to balance work and family time, the four participants disclosed the balancement was not present in 100% of their employees. The participants' comments support Pyoria's (2011) research. Pyoria (2011) advocated that in a virtual setting some employees may work less and not more due to personal commitments. By utilizing individualized consideration to the needs of their employees (Bass & Avolio, 2000), the four participants were able to allow employees to facilitate the adoption of the presented work–life balance initiative.

All four participants remarked on their trust for their employees to work independently. The senior leaders' sentiments support Greer and Payne's (2014)

findings, which uncovered the employee's mindset and environment will dictate the
employee's ability to work from home and is separate from the organizational support
provided. Still, in an effort to ensure continued support is offered from the organization,
employees are provided with a laptop and cellular phone if their role warrants it upon
onboarding. All employees qualify for a monthly discount from the company chosen
cellular provider.

Table 4.

Theme: Flexibility and Remote Work Options

Theme	Statements in support of key theme
Flexibility and remote work options	
	"I want you to work from home one day a week."
	"I do work from a different office one day a week."
	"I am not necessarily committed to 8:30 am to 5:00 pm everyday timeframe."
	"I'm very open to them making their own schedules."
	"We look for opportunities to work remotely or allow employees to do this job in a setting in one of our other offices that's actually closer to their home."

Applications to Professional Practice

Findings in this study can aid stakeholders and organizations in establishing
work–life balance strategies to gain a competitive advantage in their field. The theme of

organizational support was resounding throughout answers and documentation provided. All four participants had a high regard for life and acknowledged the negative stress that merging varied cultures can place on an individual encouraging the need for organizational support. Negative effects of psychological demands placed on an employees' well-being was noted by Greaves et al. (2018). To combat negative effects of psychological demands, organizations can apply work–life balance programs to positively effect employee organizational commitment. Proactively confronting the needs of employees through work–life balance strategies increase employee retention (Facer & Wadsworh, 2008). The client organization successfully utilized transformational leadership ideals to implement work–life balance strategies, minimizing stress in a high stress field. Participants emphasized the importance of gaining employee trust and the senior leader's need to offer support to the employee to ensure personal and organizational objectives were met. Organizations can utilize the information in this research to implement resources to enhance organizational work–life balance among employee organizations. To ensure there were no limitations on flexibility as it related to remote work and the scheduling of work hours, this organization used technology to bridge gaps which may be present in communicating from a remote work environment. Employee wellness was prioritized, and findings of this study revealed that even with the use of technology as a tool for communication and access to information, the participants understood the importance of the employees' personal time and that employees were not always available. By doing so, the client organization provided their employees the ability to disconnect from technology when off, as well as provided the organization with

the ability to proactively manage organizational demands through a holistic approach. Additionally, by taking a holistic approach by adapting to the intrinsic needs of their employees, this organization was able to create a better operational position for organizational sustainment.

The findings further revealed leadership has a vital role in creating a culture of trust and understanding. Organizations should build a relationship based on trust with their employees through a supportive environment and a culture of authenticity which affirms employee welfare. To create a culture of mutual support, the senior leaders showed individualized consideration and demonstrated transformational leadership strategies to increase sustainability. Additionally, the senior leaders found implementing strategies that have worked for previous decades was not affective in the sustainability of their organizations in a technological world with access to constant communication. Businesses can review these findings in an effort to understand their own organizational culture and to assess the adaptation of implemented work–life balance strategies used. Business leaders should understand the adaptation of organizational culture which offers support to work–life balance strategies are dependent on senior leader perceptions of the initiatives and the leaders' desires to implement them independent of the organization's field of work. This organization found the use of transformational leadership strategies and access to technology was effective in bridging communication gaps when presenting remote work and flexible work strategies. Organizations can fully utilize technology to minimize the need for constant physical supervision of their employees. Organizations

and senior leaders should understand that access to technology should be used as a driver for employee work–life balance built on a culture of support and trust.

Implications for Social Change

The business implications of utilizing employer strategies for improving employee work–life balance for employees are compound. Participants were able to utilize transformational skills to facilitate measures that blended two cultures together to work competently; the employees' work culture and the employee's personal life. Through this blend, the participants were able to assist in the prioritization of employee commitments, thus also ensuring the completion of the organization's mission and objectives. By gaining a holistic understanding of the employee and the employees' environmental influences which are comparable to the level of an employees' work life, organizations can positively effect employee health, organizational turnover, and gain a competitive landscape (Omonijo, Oludayo, Eche, Uche, & Ohunakin, 2015).

Recommendations for Action

I recommend senior leaders gain a complete understanding of their employees' needs to understand how the limitations of the employee will impact the organization. Organizations should take a proactive approach to understanding the drivers of the employee and how employee support must be maintained. As a basis, organizational support should be provided to gain the trust of the organization's employees. Additionally, I recommend senior leaders assess their company culture to measure the openness to work–life balance measures. Through this knowledge, organizations can get

a real view of how organizational stress impacts employee productivity and affects employee attrition (Newton & Teo, 2014).

Organizations should assess their organizational culture, understanding that stakeholders will dictate how the organizations' employees may react to stressors both psychologically and physically. By assessing the company's culture, stakeholders can gain an understanding around the limitations to the implementation of effective work–life balance strategies within their organization. By offering organizational support to their employees and acknowledgment of the competing demands within the employee's culture, organizational and personal environments, this organization effectively initiated strategies to balance those demands. Through the balancement of these demands, organizations can increase employee health and well-being, reducing health care costs and employee turnover thus helping the community in which it serves (Haar et al., 2014). Organizational leaders can review information within this study to utilize transformational leadership skills and enact work–life balance strategies to increase employee performance. Because employees spend much of their waking hours outside of their personal environment, investing in strategies that support organizational objectives while simultaneously promoting effective employee work–life balance will assist organizations in lowering stress levels and turnover (Barnes & Collier, 2013).

I further recommend senior leaders build a bond of trust with their employees, which dictates the employee's perceived psychological safety within the organization (Roussin & Webber, 2012). Organizations can retain valued talent through trust building and implementing effective work–life balance strategies (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, &

Pemberton-Jones, 2015). Senior leaders may review this study and understand how embracing concepts of transformational leadership encourage an expansive view of the needs for organizational sustainment to coincide with societal development. Through this embracement, their organizations gain a competitive advantage and create authentic relationships between the employees within their organization and their community.

I will provide my findings to the client organization. My goal is to publish my findings to a broader audience. I will submit the findings of this research to the following professional journals: (a) International Journal of Current Research, (b) Human Resource Management Journal, and for publication in the National Society of Compliance Professionals (NSCP) circular. I will also publish this study in the ProQuest Dissertation database for use by academicians and others who may find use for this information.

Recommendations for Further Research

When I began my research, my intent was to provide additional employer strategies for employee work–life balance. Through this experience, I saw first-hand how valuable transformational leadership skills are, specifically when senior leaders have individual consideration of their employees' work–life balance. Themes showed organizational support and company culture served as the cultural foundation. The findings of this research included information obtained from senior leadership and not the employee units. Further research should be done obtaining information from the employees to understand the effects of employer implemented work–life balance strategies.

While obtaining research from the client organization, a senior leader disclosed personalizing the work–life balance strategies used by the organization showed as having a positive effect on an employee suffering from a mental illness. Further research should be done on the effects that a lack of work–life balance has on mental illness. A 2017 study conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2018) revealed in the United States alone, approximately 1 in 5 adults suffer from a form of mental illness, with one-fifth of these adults suffering from a life-impacting severe mental disorder on a yearly basis or more. Severe mental disorders are described as a mental disorder impacting one or more major life activities. The effects of not implementing work–life balance programs produce compounded issues for organizations when employees are dealing with mental issues such as anxiety and depression. The results of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (2018) study are limited as 32.9% of the participants did not respond. The pool of participants which did not respond is a significant number and may contain non-respondents who are dealing with mental illness and warrants further research due to the impacts of mental illness on society.

Reflections

When I first approached my doctoral journey, I felt the success acquired throughout my life would easily transition me into a scholar. I was then humbled and went through an unlearning and relearning phase. I had to find an acceptance of my ignorance and obtain an openness to new knowledge. Through this phase, life continued to happen. Death continued to happen. I learned the true appreciation of implementing

work–life balance strategies into my own life. Through Walden University's Doctor of

Business Administration (DBA) program I wanted to learn more.

While conducting research, I had a first-hand view of transformational leadership

skills in action in a high stress health care organization. I recall the skills and beliefs the

participants garnered, and uncovered essential beliefs that should be utilized as courtesy

to our fellow man such as: (a) providing one another mutual trust through establishing

relationships and boundaries, (b) having empathy for one another, and (c) working

together for a common goal. Are organizations losing these fundamental psychological

beliefs as society makes strides in societal advancements?

I have now become a president of my own company. Through this research

process and my experiences, I now possess a wealth of knowledge to better prepare

myself and my workforce for a competitive advantage. I have a greater need to ensure

the leadership strategies my organization adopts is supportive of my employees' growth

and work–life balance. The discipline and commitment used to gain trust and

understanding from my participants has supported the leadership skills used in my daily

life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research supported positive benefits can be gained by

leadership through the successful implementation of work–life balance strategies for

employees, even in a high-stress environment. The culture of the organization was

reflective of the senior leaders' beliefs. Unanimously, the leaders all mentioned how

valuable life was. None of the senior leaders in the study described personal life as a

hindrance to the completion of organizational tasks. The importance of their and their employees' personal life was prioritized to the level of the organization needs on the employee. When influenced by transformational leaders, followers have a willingness to affirm commitment through acts of gratitude (Gao, Shi, Niu & Wang, 2012). This organization found benefits in the strategies they chose to implement within their organization. Organizations implementing work–life balance strategies for employees, must remember that there is not a set standard of strategies to use. Implemented standards used by this organization may not be beneficial to another.

The main strategies relied on trust and understanding of the employees' needs inside and outside the organization - the foundation on which the employee gained employment. Due to societal changes and trends, organizations should maintain an open line of communication, where employees can provide recommendations to the betterment of their organization. Periodic evaluations and assessments of employee work–life balance strategies which ensure an alignment to business goals and objectives are key to organizational sustainability.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Study: Employer Strategies for Improving Employee Work–life Balance

Date and time of Interview:

Interviewer: Vernessa L. Hoffman

Interviewee: (Insert Pseudonym)

Place of Interview:

Explain purpose of Interview: Welcome interviewees. Address the following:

- the purpose of the case study

- type of data collected and source

- confidentiality of data

- the length of interview

Interview Questions:

1. What strategies have you used to improve work–life balance among your employees?

2. What strategies did you find worked best to improve work–life balance among your employees?

3. How did the employees respond to your different techniques to improve work–life balance?

4. What strategies were least effective in improving work–life balance?

5. What, if any, modifications did you apply to any strategy to improve the effectiveness of improved work–life balance among employees?

6. What additional information can you provide regarding increasing employee

    work–life balance?

7. How did you assess the effectiveness of your strategies to achieve the desired

    outcome of improved work–life balance?

Interview Wrap-Up:

Thank interviewee for participation. Reaffirm data confidentiality.

Attach Interview Notes.