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Gender Quota Policy Plans and Female Members of the Board of Directors

Saidah Muhammad Traish
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Saidah Muhammad Traish

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Gender Quota Policy Plans and Female Members of the Boards of Directors

by

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MA, American Public University, 2013

MS, University of Akron, 2010

BS, Ohio State University, 1993

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

The present study explored how gender quota policy plans hindered and supported the access of female board members serving on the board of directors of their nonprofit organizations. The gender organizational theory guided the theoretical framework of this study by exploring how gendering organizational processes replicated, challenged, and reproduced gender perceptions of women in caregiving roles rather than leadership roles. The qualitative phenomenological approach explored the lived experiences of 6 female board members from 6 different nonprofit organizations on gender quota policy plans. The results of the analysis revealed succession planning, the inclusiveness of the mission and vision statements, and mentoring programs support female board members on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. The social change implication is understanding how gender quota policy plans supported by gendering organizational processes increased the number of female board members on the board of directors of their nonprofit organizations.

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Dedication

To my husband, Sadi, and my daughters, Sondos, Sujude, and Istabraq.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Campbell for his continuous support, patience, and motivation during my dissertation process. I could not have imagined having a better committee chair, advisor, and mentor to guide me in my academic journey. His positive encouragement throughout the process had me constantly striving to reach the next milestones.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In nonprofit organizations, women make up 75% of employees, while men occupy 79% of leadership positions (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Hughes, Paxton & Krook, 2017; Renock, 2017). At the same time, the share of women in the American labor force has risen dramatically over the last 50 years, from 32% in 1948 to 56% in 2016, and the men's labor force participation fell from 86% to 69% in the same period (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). This study addressed how gender quota policy plans may impact the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. The definition of gender quota policy plans used in this study is gendering organizational processes that increase the diversity of leadership and ensure diverse perspectives in nonprofit organizations. As a result, this study recognized the importance of the experiences, insights, and values women bring into the decision-making process. The social implications of this study can help women identify potential areas within the gendering organizational processes that increase the number of female members on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations.

In this study, how gender quota policy plans in nonprofit organizations impact the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors are explored. Numerous scholars found that companies with more women on their boards were more likely to exhibit a transformational and resonant leadership style of governance (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Kanadli, Tochia & Gabaldon, 2018; Pedulla, 2016; Rivera & Tilcsik, 2016). However, the potential of this type of feminine leadership style to address female

underrepresentation as members on the board of directors is exceptional (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Rivera & Tilcsik, 2016). Female members of the board of directors can positively impact the level of organizational innovation, performance, and higher levels of transparency due to their leadership styles (Kanadli et al., 2018). With the in-depth lived experiences of the female board members, the findings can increase the understanding of policymakers and how legislation reinforces, replicates, and challenges gender perceptions in all organizations from their point of view. The results of the study can help women learn how to increase their opportunity to serve as members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations as well as for-profit organizations.

In this chapter, the background of the study from peer-reviewed journals is covered. The purpose and the statement of the research problem is introduced. I include the research question that guided the study, the overall nature of the research, the definitions of critical terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and the limitations to the study. In the last section, the significance of the research findings on future implications for positive social change in gender equality on the board of directors is explored.

Background

Since the 1970s, most legislative analysis regarding women has incorporated the feminist perspective as the theoretical foundation for analyzing the impact of policy on gender equality, gender diversity, and gender in leadership roles (Fishman-Weaver, 2017; Gabaldon, de Anca, de Cabo & Gimeno, 2016; Seierstad, Warner-Soderhold, Torchia & Huse, 2015; Shaw & Leberman, 2015; Terjesen, Aguilera & Lorenz, 2015). The radical

feminist perspective has focused on constructing systems of governance parallel to older systems as a way to combat gender equality (Gabaldon et al., 2016). For example, radical feminists have sought alternative ways to gauge the compatibility of an applicant other than through their employment history, which was often a trigger sign of the applicants' gender and obligations outside of their careers (Gabaldon et al., 2016). Liberal feminist scholars have approached the issue of gender equality by supporting female-oriented policies such as equal opportunity employment law, maternity leave, and options for flexible working hours (Gabaldon et al., 2016). Even as postmodern feminist scholars have sought to empower the female experiences by marketing their exceptional career routes that harness their passion for social service, future sustainability, and community welfare, it has not been enough to support their aspirations to gain access to leadership status (Shaw & Leberman, 2015; Terjesen et al., 2015). As the number of women in leadership roles has continued to be limited, scholars have increasingly shown an interest in ways to explore how to shift gender perceptions to be more representative of the female populace.

In the 1990s, the literature on gender diversity and gender equality focused on a new perspective as a way to address gender diversity in leadership roles. Scholars began to explore gender equality using the social investment perspective (Fishman-Weaver, 2017; Jensen, 2015; Miller-Stevens & Ward, 2019; Thams, Bendell, & Terjesen, 2018). Unlike the previous feminist perspectives, the social investment perspectives did not focus on empowering marginalized groups such as women through specific female-friendly policies or programs (Jensen, 2015; Thams et al., 2018). From this perspective,

scholars pushed for educational reforms and general employment opportunities as a way to address equality in society as a whole (Thams et al., 2018). However, like the feminist-backed perspectives, the social investment perspective failed to acknowledge the differences in gender power dynamics about individual backgrounds, educational opportunities, and personal abilities and skills.

Scholars noted how the social investment perspective is not without fault. The social investment perspective did not take into consideration the complexity and dynamic nature of human experiences (Fishman-Weaver, 2017). It overlooked how existing gender perceptions challenged the perspectives, views, and thoughts of the public on the role women were to pursue as their careers (Fishman-Weaver, 2017). As a result, the social investment perspective ignored the potential of women acting as their agents of change using their transformational and resonance leadership passion for social service (Fishman-Weaver, 2017; Stainbeck, Kleiner & Skaggs, 2015). Female leaders defined effective gendering organizational processes with integrating mentoring programs (Fishman-Weaver, 2017; Miller-Stevens & Ward., 2019; Stainbeck et al., 2015). Rather than push for legislation that focuses on the general good of the entire population regardless of background, experiences, and socioeconomic factors, I explored how gender quota policy plans may impact the specific experiences of female board members. More specifically, the use of Acker's (1990) theory, as the theoretical framework, helped explore how gender quota policy plans may impact the experiences of female board members using gendering organizational processes. Gender organizational processes had

the power to replicate, reinforce, and challenge outdated gender, and male-dominated gender perceptions were the focus of this study.

This qualitative phenomenological study addressed the impact of gender quota policy plans on the experiences of the female board members by exploring the statements, experiences, thoughts, and views of female board members of nonprofit organizations. The phenomenological approach to analyzing the data from the study complements the goal of Acker's (1990) theory to highlight the experiences of women in organizational processes as I explored the impact of gender quota policy plans on female members on the board of directors serving on nonprofit organizations. The four gender organization processes that helped explore the participants' experiences were how gender divisions, gender image and symbols in the media, gender identity development, and gender relationships have hindered or supported the number of women serving on the board of directors. Concepts extracted from the literature reviews were reciprocal relationships, relational networks, groupthink, organizational branding, identity development, and critical mass. The themes build upon the participants' lived experiences within the context of Acker's gender organization theory. Acker's (1990) theory added to the complexity of female experiences to the existing literature on how the gender quota policy plans may have impacted the lived experiences of female board members.

Problem Statement

The problem statement was that women continue to lag behind their male counterparts on the board of directors of their respective nonprofit organizations. Even

though female-friendly legislation, such as the *Equal Opportunity Commission* (1961), *Family and Medical Leave Act* (1993), and *Roe vs. Wade* (1973), there continue to be a limited number of women in leadership roles who hold decision-making responsibilities and occupied leadership roles. In this study, the discourse was shifted by using the lived experiences of the female board members with gender quota policy plans to make sense of how women continue to lack the numbers on the board of directors. Scholars have been concerned the limited knowledge and information on how gender quota policy plans impact female board members may negatively impact them (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Hughes et al., 2017). The added knowledge and information from this qualitative phenomenological study addressed the problem statement by expanding on existing knowledge of how gender quota policy plans increased the number of women on the board of directors.

This new information and knowledge introduced alternative knowledge to explain the lack of numbers of female members on the board of directors of their nonprofit organizations (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Hughes et al., 2017; Kanadli et al., 2018; Pedulla, 2016; Stainbeck et al., 2015). Thus, the continuous paradigm of exploring new knowledge that expands on existing theoretical frameworks on gender equality helps understand the present experiences of the female board members as they are related to the gender quota policy plans. The existing literature revealed how the limited understanding of gendering processes restricted the number of female board members serving on the board of directors (Chizema, Kmuriwo & Shimosowa, 2015; Grosvold, Rayton & Bramme, 2016; Hurst, Leberman & Edwards, 2018). The results of this study help make

sense of how to use gendering processes to advance female members of the board of directors of their nonprofit organizations.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the impact of gender quota policy plans on the lived experiences of female board members by using their statements, experiences, thoughts, and views. The central phenomenon was the lack of female board members on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. The qualitative phenomenological approach of the study helped address the gap in the literature on how gendering processes hindered or supported the career aspirations of female board members. These gendering processes include gender divisions, gender symbols and images in the media, gender identity development, and gender relationships. Ultimately, the results of the study helped understand how gendering organizational processes challenged the negative gender perception of women in decision-making roles. Furthermore, the findings from this study add new knowledge to the existing literature on how to support the increase of gender diversity on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations.

Identifying themes and concepts associated with how the gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female board members increased the knowledge of how to increase the number of women on the board of directors. The findings introduced new experience with complex descriptions from the participants on how gender quota policy plans impact their lives. The qualitative phenomenological approach provided the participants with a venue to voice the narratives behind their experiences associated with

gender quota policy plans. The participants added to the theoretical paradigm on literature regarding gender quota policy plans with their experiences with them. The results of the study addressed how gender quota policy plans support women pursuing leadership positions on the board of directors.

Research Question

Central Research Question: How do gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Acker's (1990) gender organization theory. Acker's theory addressed the research question on the impact that gender quota policy plans had on the lived experiences of the female board members. Acker's four gendering organizations processes was used to explore the lived experiences of the female board members. These gendering processes include gender divisions, symbols and images in the media, relational and reciprocal relationships, and gender identity development. The rationale for using this theory was to extend the existing literature on gender policies to include the lived experiences of the women impacted by the gender quota policy plans. By exploring how legislation impacts the organizational gendering process from a phenomenological approach, decision-makers will learn how to increase the number of female board members on the board of directors. Unlike past studies, this study relied on both the female board member's perspective and how to challenge the gendering organizational process that inhibits female board members from attaining a seat on the board of directors.

The seminal work of Morgan (1986) was the basis of Acker's (1990) gender organizational theory. Morgan highlighted the importance of human gender perceptions at influencing the progression of social changes within communities. According to Morgan's theory, social changes in human gender perceptions must come from the top as a general policy in order to make an impact on all citizens as opposed to targeting a specific gender. Acker's gender organization theory expanded on Morgan's theory by calling attention to challenging gendering processes within the organization as a way to challenge gender perceptions and help women reach their full potential within organizations. In addition, by using a phenomenological approach, Acker's theory highlighted the lived experiences of the participants with the gender quota policy plans. Using Acker's theory as the theoretical framework for this study promoted the understanding of how female gender perceptions continue to be replicated and reinforced within organizational cultures. The knowledge from the results of the study provides an understanding of how gender quota policy plans impact female board members.

According to Acker's gendering organizational processes were not gender-neutral. These gendering organizational processes played a significant role in replicating and reinforcing gender perceptions through processes that emphasized gender divisions, gender identity development, gender symbol and images in the media, and gender relationships. Thus, unlike Morgan's (1986) theory on the importance of using legislation to impact the general well-being of all citizens equally, Acker's theory focused on how legislation impacts gendering organizational processes that replicated and reinforced traditional gender perceptions of women. Acker's gender organizational theory worked

well with the phenomenological approach of this study because I highlighted the lived experiences of the female participants. Acker's theory, like the phenomenological approach, targeted the female perspective on how the gender quota policy plans impacted their lived experiences. There is a more detailed explanation of Acker's gender organization theory in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study was qualitative phenomenological because I addressed the lived experiences of six female board members. The responses from the written interviews of the participants' lived experiences with six female board members helped construct the analysis of the findings. According to Joshi and Neely (2018), the experiences, perceptions, and thoughts of the participants help make sense of a phenomenon within the paradigm of building upon existing theories on gender diversity and gender equality. The context of the gendering organizational processes of their nonprofit organization's culture was taken into consideration when using the qualitative phenomenological approach of this study. Ultimately, I explored and described the impact of gender quota policy plans on increasing the number of female board members in nonprofit organizations from the first-hand perspectives of the female board members.

A phenomenological approach was a suitable design for this study because it situates the study within the context of the participants' thoughts, perceptions, and experiences on gender quota policy plans. The phenomenological approach focused on the experiences of female board members serving in a nonprofit organization. The personal thoughts, experiences, and experiences of the female board members added the

necessary in-depth descriptions to explore new information on how women continue to gain limited access to leadership roles. The primary purpose of the phenomenological approach was to describe the phenomenon using the universal essence or composite of the participants' various thoughts, statements, and views of their experiences (see Fusch & Ness, 2015; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). The experiences, thoughts, and insights gathered from the female board members referred explicitly to how gendering organizational processes impact their choices to serve on the board of directors.

The rationale for choosing this research method was to respond to the research question from participants' experiences with the phenomenon. Another rationale for using a phenomenological approach was to define and explore how gender quota policy plans impact the gendering experiences of the participants. Furthermore, the phenomenological approach of this qualitative study helped validate how the organizational context impacts a phenomenon (see Creswell & Poth, 2016). The phenomenological approach of this study increased the knowledge of how to help women increase their number as members of the board of directors of their nonprofit organizations. As a result, there can be an increase in the level of gender diversity within the decision-making processes of the nonprofit organizations by exploring how gender quota policy plans hindered or supported female board members seeking seats on the board of directors.

Operational Definitions

The following concepts pertain to this qualitative study:

Cognitive identity: To practice in self-reflection of personal beliefs, values, and behavior (Kamalath, 2018).

Critical mass theory: To reach a certain number of individuals in order to increase their degree of influence in the decision-making process (Scala & Paterson, 2017).

Diversity: A construct that represents differences among members of the interdependent work group concerning specific economic, social, and cultural attributes of the group members (Joshi & Neely, 2018).

Equality: How resources are distributed to motivate and direct attitude, action, and career aspirations (Thams et al., 2018).

Female gender: The biological traits that men and women identify with and behave according to how they identify (Hughes et al., 2017).

Gender division: Work-related roles and identities that form in-groups and thus designate values and emotional significance that are attached to that membership (Labelle, Francoeur & Lakhali, 2015).

Gendering organizational processes: The potential for women to access decision-making roles due to power gaps between the gender because of cultural gender perceptions (Hughes et al., 2017). In this case, Acker's (1990) gendering organizational processes include gender divisions, gender symbols and media representation, gender identity development, and gender relationships.

Gender quota: Defines the proportion of women to men as a way to increase women's participation in the decision-making process. Organizations were forced to find, identify, develop, promote, and retain female presence in the form of experiences, background, and thoughts that go beyond acquiring specific numbers (Kanadli et al., 2018).

Gendered roles: Women's prescribed behavior within hegemonic masculine cultures that often includes childrearing and household chores (Luanglath, Ali & Mohannak, 2019).

Generation Y: Gen. Y refers to individuals born between the years of 1980 and 1990 (Carrasco, Francoeur, Labelle, Laffarga & Ruiz-Barbadillo, 2015).

Governance: Members of the decision-making group fulfilling vision and mission statements by being well informed with the flow of new information and evidence so they can anticipate emerging trends (Ferreiro, 2015).

Group think: Homogenous teams that foster optimism, lack of vigilance, and viable discussion (Brandth & Bjorkhaug, 2015).

Impact: In the context of this study, the impact was not used as a quantitative measure but as a qualitative exploration of lived experiences. As a qualitative measure the term impact is used to address the lived experiences of the participants. Impact describes the thoughts, insights, and experiences of the participants. The term impact describes a qualitative measure of a marked affect and influence.

Leadership: Change agents by focusing on the people of the organizations and their interactions (Stainbeck et al., 2015).

Leaning in: Challenging the status quo, especially gender perceptions and power dynamics within an organization by diversifying work teams (Arnold & Loughlin, 2019).

Nonprofit brand: A nonprofit's internal identity often stated in their mission and vision statements that aligns with their external image as a way to increase their competitiveness in the market (Chapleo, 2015).

Nonprofit organization: Organizations where leaders depend heavily on volunteers and donations to reinvested into the organizations' goals (Baixauli-Soler, Belda-Ruiz & Sanchez-Marin, 2015).

Organizational branding: Making a connection between personal values and the organization's mission and vision statements (Chapleo, 2015).

Reciprocal relationships: Complex relationships between individuals that enhance the creativity and decision-making process of a team (Shaw & Leberman, 2015).

Relational networks: Fostering creative, warm, independent work environments (Shaw & Leberman, 2015).

Social justice: Cultural transformations, social progress, fair economic rules that identify the causes of gender discrimination, bias, stereotypes in the selection processes (Cabeza-Garcia, Del Brio & Rueda, 2019).

Tokenism: The symbolic practice of hiring an individual to appease diversity efforts (Jensen, 2015).

Visibility: At least three female board members need to be on the board of directors in order to witness shifts in the board of directors' governance (Seierstad et al., 2015)

Work and life integration/balance: Spouses leaning in to help out with household chores and raising the children (Jensen, 2015).

Assumptions

Three assumptions emerged from this qualitative phenomenological study. The first assumption was that the organizational processes of nonprofit organizations were

gender-neutral. I assumed that the participants' knowledge of the gender quota policy plans of their nonprofit organizations were robust enough to increase the objectivity and accurately describe the impact organizational processes and legislation had on the participants. The robust description and well-developed discussions provided a dynamic analysis of the impact on gender quota policy plans to eliminate any bias and prejudice in entering into the final analysis of the findings on the potential for organizational processes to replicate and reinforce gender perceptions. Also, the in-depth descriptions of the female board members' insights and experiences with gender quota policy plans helped reach a data saturation level that avoided favoring a specific view of how organizational processes impact their choices. Through the qualitative methodology of the study, I approached the research question from the perspective of the female board members and therefore addressed the assumption that organizational processes were not gender-neutral.

The second assumption involved the demographic composition of the board of directors. I assumed the power dynamics between the board of directors held similar and identical power over one another and that the implementation of gender quota policy plans depended on how the members of the board of directors collaborated, cooperated, and coordinated with each other as a whole (see Joshi & Neely, 2018). The power balance between board members was crucial in directing the overall direction of the decision-making process during board meetings (see Grosvold et al., 2016). Due to the demographic composition of the participants, it would have been hard to include how the gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of female board members as a

whole. The findings of the study represented the lived experiences of the female board members participating in the study and did not attempt to expand the generalizability of the findings to all-female board members.

In the third assumption, I noted the importance of nonprofit organizations as gender-neutral. The trustworthiness of the study depended on exploring the gendering organizational processes through an objective eye. Ensuring the objectivity of the analysis of the results of the study was important because it determined whether the organizational process of nonprofit organizations hindered or supported their female board members in pursuing a seat on the board of directors. Journal writing and the construction of a codebook limited biases from shifting the findings in the analysis process. Both the journal and the codebook maintain consistency in the definition of the concepts, experiences, and thoughts of the female board members as they recounted their experiences with gender quota policy plans. The journal writing and the codebook were essential tools to maintain objectivity when analyzing how gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of female board members.

The fourth assumption was to ignore my biases and prejudices regarding the neutrality of organizational processes. In my experience, individuals in the position of power interpret rules and regulations in favor of maintaining the status quo. I established this by following the results of the study and respecting the voices of the participants. Trustworthiness, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings considered during the data collection and data analysis processes limited my biases from interfering with the analysis of the findings.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the research was limited to the impact the gender quota policy plans had on the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations headquartered in the United States. As a result, the generalizability of the study to for-profit organizations was limited in its scope. In order to increase the potential for future scholars to replicate this study, a detailed journal on the data analysis process of the study was kept during the course of this study. In addition, journal writing helped separate personal thoughts from the participants' views. A codebook of the definitions prevented definitions from shifting over time. Lastly, the interview questions were broad enough to prompt participants to disclose as many descriptions and insights into their responses as possible.

The triangulation of the observations from the journal, interview questions, and knowledge from literature reviews maintained the consistency of the study for future scholars to replicate and expand upon the knowledge. Even though nonprofit organizations do not have the same goals as a for-profit organization, both types of organizations rely on peer-reviewed and research-based practices (Cabeza-Garcia, Del Brio & Rueda, 2019). Scholarly peer-reviewed and research-based practices are readily adopted by both types of organizations to guide their decision-making processes on how to serve best their communities (Cabeza-Garcia et al., 2019). In other words, both types of organizations can benefit from the results of this study on how the gender quota policy plans increased gender diversity on their board of directors.

Delimitations were the targeted population, objectives, and research questions that I had some control over during the study. The initial selection of the participants was from *LinkedIn*. The participants were female board members serving on a nonprofit organization headquartered in the United States who had a basic understanding of the gender quota policy plans of their organizations. The research question was used as a guideline to keep the participant focused on the purpose of the research. In addition, the research question kept the participants from going on irrelevant tangents of describing experiences that did not define and make sense of the phenomenon (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). The in-depth descriptions of the experiences also depended on how well-developed and broad the interview questions prompted concise and relevant responses from the participants. Nevertheless, complete control over the accuracy of the information and knowledge the participants divulged about their experiences was dependent upon the participants' discretion.

Limitations

Limitations were uncontrolled factors that revealed weaknesses in the study. Because I was the primary instrumentation tool in the study, the first limitation was to prevent personal bias and prejudice from influencing the results of the study. In this case, keeping a journal and codebook and triangulation of sources were used to prevent miscommunicating the findings of the study. Interviews were conducted with an open mind to avoid making any judgments of the participants' experiences (see Joshi & Neely, 2018). The second limitation was the population sample of the study. The population sample of female board members had the potential of not accurately capturing the

differences in experiences and new emerging trends found within in-depth data analysis and data collection processes (see Joshi & Neely, 2018). The participants within the study reflected a small spectrum of the female population. On the flip side, the rigor and in-depth experiences of the participants increased the potential of reaching the data saturation level sooner by absorbing different organizational contexts. My goal was to add trustworthiness to the findings of the study by acknowledging the experiences of all the participants.

I used three techniques to limit personal bias and values from entering into the analysis of the findings. I constructed a codebook to maximize the predetermined and emerging definitions, statements, perceptions, and thoughts of the participants' written interviews. The codebook helped capture the essence of the female board members' experiences using their composite descriptions of their experiences (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). The codebook helped keep the definitions of the statements, thoughts, and views of the participants from shifting and changing within the context of various organizational cultures and throughout the process of the study (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). Second, the use of a journal during the interviews to write down any follow-up questions helped describe the experiences of the participants. The journal writing helped clarify personal values and thoughts from the participants and thus increase the credibility of the study (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). Third, I had the written responses to the interview questions to refer to if I forget the content or context of the interview conversation. These techniques helped decrease personal bias from interfering with the trustworthiness of the results of the data collection process and analysis process.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was to expand the knowledge to the existing literature on how gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors in nonprofit organizations. The research question specifically addressed how the gender quota policy plans impacted the gendering processes of nonprofit organizations and, thus, the number of female members of the board of directors. The current literature focused on the cause and effect of gender perceptions and gender-friendly policies on the number of female board members in organizations (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Stainbeck et al., 2015). In this study, I went further by exploring ways gendering processes within an organization challenged and replicated gender perceptions that limited the number of female board members on the board of directors. The findings of this study can help policymakers allocate resources to specific processes within the nonprofit organizations that support women as members of the board of directors. The goal of this study was to explore how gender quota policy plans may impact the experiences of the female member of the board members.

The significance of the results of the study can help scholars, policymakers, and decision-makers identify ways to increase female board members. In this study, positive social changes in gender perceptions did not shifted cultural norms from within the public arena, as in previous literature. Positive change in gender perceptions was defined by how gendering organizational processes supported and hindered the lived experiences of women. This study enhances the understanding of how legislation and policies change cultural perceptions when women are part of the decision-making process. Female board

members are in a unique position to identify specific gendering processes within the organizational culture to allocate resources to help maximize the number of female members on the board of directors. The findings from the study focused on how gendering organizational processes are designed and constructed to specifically support and hinder the number of women on the board of directors.

Summary

Female-friendly policies, gender norms, and gender perceptions have impacted the opportunities for women to serve on the boards of directors of nonprofit organizations (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Iannotta, Gatti & Huse, 2016). In this study, I explored practical experiences in how gender quota policy plans may challenge preexisting gender perceptions that challenged them from pursuing their career goals. The insights, experiences, and values of the female board members who participated in this study revealed alternative perspectives on how to increase the number of female board members on the board of directors. I also explored how gender perceptions and female-orientated progressive policies have impacted the lack of visible female leaders from the perspective of female board members. This study expanded the existing discourse on gender diversity and gender equality by exploring how the gender quota policy plans have impacted the lived experiences of female members of boards of directors across various nonprofit organizations.

In this study, I explored the gap in the literature regarding female boards of directors in organizations in three key areas. First, I focused on the voices of a marginalized group of female members of the board of directors. Acker's gendering

organizational processes provided the theoretical framework to focus on how the gendering organizational processes of the organization may impact gender perceptions. Second, the results of the study expanded on the existing literature regarding gender and organizations with in-depth data of new concepts and themes that might emerge from the recent experiences of the participants. Third, the results of the research revealed how to use existing resources to support organizational processes within the nonprofit organizations as female members of the board of directors.

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review of gender equality. This literature review chapter consists of the theoretical framework of how scholars have approached addressing gender equality. In the chapter, I introduce the gender-based concepts that emerged through the existing literature on gender diversity on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. The last section of chapter 2 includes a discourse summary of the positive and negative impact of the gender quota policy plan on the lived experience of female members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The general problem this study addressed was how the gender quota policy plans might impact the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors on nonprofit organizations. Women enter the workforce in higher numbers than men, yet few make it to senior leadership roles (Chizema et al., 2015; Pedulla, 2016; Rivera & Tilcsik, 2016). In nonprofit organizations, women made up 75% of the employees, while men occupy 79% of the leadership positions (Chizema et al., 2015; Gill & Orgad, 2018; Grosvold et al., 2016; Stainbeck et al., 2015). Female-friendly policies such as the *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Act* (1961), *Family and Medical Leave Act* (1993), and *Roe vs. Wade* (1973) failed to address gender equality. The prevailing thought within the literature was that policies do not shift changes in gender perceptions and thus have played a detrimental role in women interested in serving on the board of directors.

The gap in the literature on how gender quota policy plans have impacted the lived experiences of the female board members continues to exist. In addition, recent interest in gender diversity on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations has continued to grow among gender equality scholars. Gender quota policy plans include organizational processes that have helped increase the number of women on the board of directors. As a result, the diverse perspectives, insights, and thoughts from female board members can help direct scholars and policymakers on how gender quota policy plans increase the number of female board members on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. These experiences can help explore how to challenge gender

organizational processes that continue to hinder and replicate gender perceptions that continue to associate women in caregiving and nurturing roles.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how the gender quota policy plan has impacted the lived experiences of the female board members of nonprofit organizations. This qualitative study was a phenomenological research design to address the gap in the literature on gender equality. By identifying concepts and then themes that reflected the participants' experiences, this study addressed the impact of the gender quota policy plans on the gendering processes of the nonprofit organization in terms of gender divisions, gender images and symbols in the media, gender relationships, and gender identity development. Overall, the results from the study expand on the existing literature by providing valuable knowledge on how to help women become board members by exploring how to allocate resources to organizational gender processes that support them in their careers.

The literature review is divided into seven sections. The first section presents the library strategy for uncovering the knowledge and information on the phenomenon of the lack of female members on the board of directors. In the second section of this chapter, the significance of the theoretical framework of gender organization theory is introduced. The historical background of the evolution of feminist perspectives is explored in the third section of this study. In the fourth section of this chapter, I analyze how Acker's (1990) gender organization theory is applied using gender-based concepts, trends, and values the participants introduce in their interview responses. The fifth section of this chapter describes how the optimal conditions for positive gender perceptions are

important to the effectiveness of gender quota policy plans in the fifth section. In the sixth section, I address the impact of gender quota policy plans on female members of the board of directors. Finally, I present the potential impact of gender quota policy plans on the lived experiences of female board members.

Literature Search Strategy

I used Walden University's online library to gain access to the multidisciplinary database search tools such as Thoreau Multi-Database Search, ProQuest Central, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, and EBSCO. I searched the database for peer-reviewed publications within the last five years on gender diversity, female leadership, nonprofits, and female members on the board of directors in nonprofit organizations. For the theoretical background of the study, I used the search term *gender organization theory* to locate all of the disciplines that used Acker's gender organization theory in the last five years. I used the term "Abstract" in the search box to increase the relevancy of the results in the articles that mentioned the gender quota policy plans in their abstracts. To provide the literature review section for this study, the search terms used were *gender diversity*, *gender inequity*, *gender gap*, *women quota*, *gender equality*, and *gender quota policy plans*. Other keywords included *boards of directors*, *nonprofit organizations*, *the board of directors*, and *female leadership*.

There was little information on the impact the gender quota policy plans may have on female board members in the nonprofit organizations located in the United States. As a result of the limited literature on gender diversity in the United States, the search for articles on gender diversity, female leadership, and gender quota plans

included European countries. Broadening the regions included in the literature review helped develop a list of concepts, definitions, and themes commonly associated with female leadership, nonprofit organizations, and gender diversity. In addition, the concepts and themes developed from the peer-reviewed journals provided the study with the triangulation required from various peer-reviewed and scholarly literature to validate the trustworthiness of the discussion section of this study (see Creswell & Poth, 2016). The knowledge and information from the scholarly journals on Western European countries to this study were relevant because of their history of progressive policy toward women (see Luanglath et al., 2019). In addition, approaching the phenomenon from practitioner-oriented practices introduced in peer-reviewed studies emphasized the reality of gender equality on the board of directors on a universal scale.

The literature reviewed covered four leading disciplinary journals on management, gender, organizations, and business. The primary four journals cited for this study are from *Business & Society*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Corporate Governance*, *Journal of Career Development*, and *Management Research Review*. After reviewing the articles, it is evident that that by increasing the number of women in leadership roles can have on making a positive contribution to the overall effectiveness of the board of directors (Jensen, 2015; Shaw & Leberman, 2015; Stainbeck et al., 2015; Thams et al., 2018). These three articles included *Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations* (Acker, 1990), *Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations* (Acker, 2006), and *Differential Recruitment and Control: The Sex Structuring of Organizations* were the basis of Acker's theoretical framework used in this

study (Acker & Van Houten, 1992). Acker's (1990) theory focused on how four gendering processes may impact the lived experiences of women. This study continues to develop this perspective by exploring how the gender quota policy plan may impact the gendering processes within organizations and on the lived experiences of the female members of the board of directors.

Gender Organization Theory

Acker's (1990) gender organization theory explored the contradictions in the perception of gender-neutral organizations by exploring how four gendering processes replicate gender perceptions within the organization. Acker believed that there were gendering organizational processes within organizations that resulted in men having a more robust presence in decision-making roles than women. These four gendering organizational processes included gender divisions, gender imagery, and symbols in the media, gender relationships, and gender identity development (Acker, 1990). Acker believed that organizational processes have the potential to reinforce traditional female norms and therefore have the force to shift gender perceptions to new cultural norms. Understanding and gathering knowledge on the four gendering processes within the organization alleviated obstacles and hurdles women come across during their career progression into leadership positions (Acker, 1990). The purpose of this study was to explore how gendering processes may impact the lived experiences of female board members using their personal experiences as a way to make sense of gender quota policy plans.

Morgan (1986) seminal work on gender equality is the basis for Acker's (1990) theory. Morgan embraced a perspective of how human consciousness elicits social change. However, unlike Acker, Morgan believed the organizational impact on gender perceptions was neutral and had no link to supporting and challenging organizational culture. Morgan argued that the purpose of organizations was to manage and control human behavior in order to maintain a stable existence. Like Acker, Morgan interpreted rules, regulations, and norms as artificial constructs of individual or group views, perceptions, and thoughts and, as a result, a source of contradiction in human values and beliefs among populations. It was this contradiction in values, according to Acker and Morgan, that created the force for social change. Unlike Acker, Morgan did not differentiate between the different contexts and variations in human experiences, backgrounds, and values on gender perceptions and gender equality. As a result, Acker's expanded on the organizational theory. The qualitative nature of this study expanded on the contexts of these various perspectives to develop a more thorough understanding of how legislation may shape gender perceptions of women in decision-making roles.

Acker (1990) expanded on Morgan's (1986) perspectives by exploring organizational processes from the immediate perspectives and experiences of the women. Acker pushed the boundaries of Morgan's perspectives beyond the generic interpretations of human experiences to focus on the female perspectives, thoughts, and perceptions of their experiences. Gender divisions were one gender organizational process. In this process, men were associated with decision-making roles, while women are associated with caregiving roles. In the other gender organizational process, Acker explored how

gender perceptions of female leaders using imagery and symbols in the media reinforced specific code of dress, language, careers trajectories, and behavior on women. In the third gender organizational process, Acker described the importance of gender relationships in providing the necessary support system for women to access leadership roles. Lastly, the fourth gender organizational process included the development of gender identity of women as professionals and experts in their leadership positions in order to increase their numbers in decision-making positions. The gender organization theory explores how gender quota policy plans may impact gender perceptions when challenging gendering organizational processes within the context of nonprofit organizations.

The rationale to use Acker's (1990) gender organization theory was that it extended the existing literature beyond the assumption that organizations were gender-neutral. According to Acker, organizations are an extension of male-dominated societal perceptions, rules, and norms, and therefore, should not be interpreted as gender-neutral entities. Acker's theoretical framework was useful to this study on gendering processes because it moved beyond exploring dominant gender perceptions. Acker's theory explored how gender perceptions were being replicated, reinforced, and challenged through the practices with the organizational cultures. Using a qualitative method with the phenomenological approach, I analyzed how gendering organizational processes use the practical experiences of the participants in the study to answer the research questions (see Iannotta et al., 2016). Personal insights and thoughts on how gender quota policy plans changes and shifts were uncovered in the data collection process of this study using the participants' responses to the interview questions.

In previous literature, scholars showed by using Acker's (1990) theory of how gender perceptions were replicated and reinforced using gendering processes. Chizema et al. (2015) found that, for example, gender symbols and images from the media had the power to reframe and reshape gender processes in their readers and viewers. For example, continuing lauding the contributions of the male board members and overlooking the accomplishments of the female board members put men at the forefront as ideal leaders. Grosvold et al. (2016) noted how female employees were at a disadvantage when nurturing professional relationships through after-work activities such as informal meetings, social gatherings, and dinners that helped them cultivate work networks. Thams et al. (2018) and Terjesen et al. (2015) explored how the broader implications of female-friendly legislation did not necessarily meet the needs of female employees to seek projects that resonate with their values and beliefs at making a positive impact on their communities. Brieger., Francoeur, Welzel, and Ben-Amar (2019) noted how women exhibited freedom to forge reciprocal and relational relationships with their students that helped them make a substantial impact on the academic performances of their students.

This study explores how the gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of the participants by expanding the analysis to include how gendering organizational processes supported and hindered the access of women into leadership positions. As a result, past concepts, themes, and definitions that were based upon male-dominated interpretations of gender equality are challenged by female perspectives that offer alternative experiences on how to make sense of gendering organizational processes

within their respective organizations (Labelle et al., 2015; Shaw & Leberman, 2015). As a result, this study introduces new perspectives to the existing paradigm of discourses on gender equality and gender diversity.

Evolution of Gender

According to Shaw and Leberman (2015) and Stainbeck et al. (2015), the historical perspective of gender and organizational processes ignored how their organizational processes favored men. The general perception was that legislation was enough to address the issue of gender equality. However, the continued practice of looking at organizations as gender-neutral and as legislation alone as an effective shield did not wholly address how the number of women continued to be limited in leadership roles. A search of the literature revealed information on how progressive female-friendly policy neglected to address the unequal power dynamics, nuances, and complex female experiences that make sense of the policies (Jensen, 2015; Terjesen et al., 2015; Thams et al., 2018;). As a result, many policies are undermined by the complex reality of the various lived experiences of women as diverse perspectives start to take form in various power dynamics between and among genders.

The difference in gender career trajectories is an emerging issue in gender equality. Male undisruptive and linear trajectories of career paths often are imposed on female career journeys (Gabaldon et al., 2016; Labelle et al., 2015; Shaw & Leberman, 2015). The different career journeys prompted many of the decision-making roles to be defined by the public population as male domains. For example, women who take advantage of leave of absences to take care of their families are often described as less

committed to their careers than men (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). The leadership styles of men presented female leaders as limited in their abilities and capabilities to lead an organization (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). As a result, male perspectives interpret the data collected on how to define leadership characteristics. Previous scholars had not considered the consequences of these perspectives that gender divisions are maintained, and the status quo is justified using the experiences of men. Acker's (1990) gender organization theory addressed this oversight by exploring how the gender quota policy plans helped female board members with the opportunity to showcase a different type of leadership style.

Most of the focus of the literature review on gender and legislation leaned toward the feminist perspectives, however, in the mid-1990s, literature reviews had shown an increased interest in the social investment perspective (Jensen, 2015; Terjesen et al., 2015; Thams et al., 2018). This period was a turning point from the feminist perspective because challenging gender perceptions and passing female-friendly legislation no longer appeared to be the solution to gender equality. With the social investment perspective, scholars have begun to focus on how providing universal amenities such as accessible childcare, employment, and education to help increase equal opportunities to the general population (Jensen, 2015; Terjesen et al., 2015; Thams et al., 2018). The female board members' educational background in this study helps understand how the principals of the social investment perspective, such as universal education, childcare, and employment, impacted the degree gender quota policy plans reflected these ideals.

From the social investment perspective, gender awareness of different experiences no longer played a prominent factor in gender equality discourses (Fishman-Weaver, 2017; Jensen, 2015). The social investment perspective ignored how the nuance of female experiences within the organizational processes that prevent and support them from taking advantage of accessible childcare and education opportunities. It had generalized the phenomenon to increase diversity in leadership roles while failing to recognize the specific experiences of women at reaching these positions (Fishman-Weaver, 2017). Equal educational opportunities for women addressed gender equality by providing equal educational opportunities for women to access roles that they had limited access to securing in their careers. The advantages of using Acker's gender organization theory as the theoretical framework for this study was two folds. The first it reintroduced the female experiences into the gender equality discourse, and secondly, it recognized the importance of challenging organizational processes.

Radical Feminist Perspective

From the 1970s to the 1990s, scholars with radical feminist perspectives supported deconstructing existing gender perceptions (Davies & Fink, 2015; Gabaldon et al., 2016). Radical feminist scholars did not believe how the inability of women to balance their family and career responsibilities was the cause for the limited number of women in leadership roles (Davies & Fink, 2015). For radical feminist scholars, the lack of career choices among women was not due to their inability to balance their home and career responsibilities. Davies and Fink (2015) refuted the notion that the lack of women in leadership roles stemmed from the lack of female candidates who could effectively

balance both career and home responsibilities. Women, unlike their male counterparts, held different skills and capabilities that did not fit into the norms of today's image of an ideal employee (Gabaldon et al., 2016). Women saw their work as extensions of their values and belief system that required different standards of measurement when deciding their qualifications for a job (Mainiero & Gibson, 2018). For women, their home and career obligations are similar because both obligations were manifestations of their values and beliefs of making a positive social impact on their communities.

In recent literature, scholars began challenging the perspective of women lacking the ability to balance or to use today's trending term to integrate their family and career obligations and responsibilities (Carrasco et al., 2015; Shaw & Leberman, 2015).

According to these career models, women altered their career paths according to their values and beliefs, unlike their male counterparts, whose primary career objective was to gain status and power (Carrasco et al., 2015; Shaw & Leberman, 2015). Women preferred challenges early in their career, followed by seeking a balance in their mid-careers and their family life; finally promoted a sense of self-fulfillment in their later career journey (Carrasco et al., 2015; Hurst et al., 2018; Shaw & Leberman, 2015). In contrast, men focused on current work challenges in early career, sought authenticity in mid-career, and celebrated a balanced life in a late-career (Carrasco et al., 2015). Based on this literature, professional training programs, and professional support network are vital resources at increasing the number of women interested in serving in leadership capacities.

Liberal Feminist Theory

Liberal feminist scholars believed as more women begin to fill leadership roles, the organizational culture would begin to shift to more inclusive and equitable gender policies (Fishman-Weaver, 2017). Policies such as *Roe vs. Wade* (1973), *Family and Medical Leave Act* (1993), and *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* (1961) improved the access of women to career opportunities that clashed with their family obligations. According to Seierstad, Warner-Soderholm, Torchia, and Huse (2015), these progressive policies helped empower women to shape their family commitments and career development, as well as, improved their employment prospects. However, like many other perspectives, the liberal feminist perspective failed to account for why women continued to lag behind their male counterparts in leadership even when supported by progressive policies (Jensen, 2015; Luanglath et al., 2019; Thams et al., 2018;). Acker's (1990) theory addressed this research problem by showing how a female voice in the decision-making process helps make sense of how these policies were impacting women using their practical experiences, insights, and thoughts.

Increasing the presence of women in the decision-making process provided an opportunity to observe significant experiences of how gendering organizational processes impacted their career choices. For example, gender symbols and images presented images and symbols of how men were more suited to serve in leadership roles than women (Davies & Fink, 2015). Men were being accepted in public as the decision-makers. Women continued to be described as less than capable of competing with men in leadership roles. Gender images and symbols in the media were noted by scholars to

reproduce and replicate existing gender perceptions (Davies & Fink, 2015; Gabaldon et al., 2016). As the media becomes more welcoming to showcase the accomplishments and capabilities of women in the public arena, women will be able to stretch their goals.

In another example, Davies and Fink (2015) described how the employment process put female candidates at a disadvantage based upon their career trajectories. Their solution was to replace current forms of employment applications with alternative application forms that do not expose employment gaps and focus on the applicants' availability to travel and work extra hours (Davies & Fink, 2015). The employment application did not touch on how female applicants would add to the complexity of the knowledge and information due to their experiences, educational backgrounds, and thoughts. The focus was on the employment gap in their experiences and career services that were a result of their family obligations and responsibilities (Davies & Fink, 2015). Women were penalized for their commitments to their families rather than celebrated for their skills, capabilities, and new experiences they built during their time serving their family (Davies & Fink, 2015). Gender quota policy plans challenged these practices by overcoming the history gap in the employment history of the employment application. The gendering organizational processes, like the employment application that inhibited the careers, were replaced with more holistic approaches when searching for potential employees.

According to Luanglath et al. (2019) and Renock (2017), progressive family-friendly policies undermined the accomplishments and achievements of women who do reach leadership roles. The authors noted how the word competence described male

leaders, but very rarely was it used to describe women in leadership positions. Women who took advantage of the family-friendly policies such as *Roe vs. Wade* (1973), *Family and Medical Leave Act* (1993), and *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* (1961) were often viewed as dependent on preferential treatment to reach leadership roles (Luanglath et al., 2019). This narrow definition of the word competence negatively sharpened the reviews against policies that support equality and diversity (Renock, 2017). Progressive female-friendly policies showcased female board members as not having the confidence, network, skills, or competence to reach leadership roles on their merit. The reiteration of women lacking the leadership abilities to lead was a further indication of the importance of challenging organizational processes not only through policy but also by challenging how organizations replicated and reinforced these gender perceptions from within their organizational practices.

Postmodern Perspective

Postmodern feminist perspectives sought to acknowledge the subjective, decentralized popular trends and patterns of thoughts of the female experiences (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). Similar to Acker's (1990) gender organization theory, postmodern feminists saw social constructs as multi-layered and complicated (Carrasco et al., 2015). The decentralization of power away from the gendered perspectives encouraged more literature that explores gender differences in behavior, values, and beliefs related to women (Carrasco et al., 2015; Luanglath et al., 2019). The social constructs that were defining gender equality based upon the male-dominated perspectives of privilege and power asymmetry did not apply to them in the same manner as their male counterparts

(Fishman-Weaver, 2017). An accurate account of the participants' experiences was vital because it underscored the importance of exploring the impact of gender quota policy plans from the perspective of the female board members.

Social Investment Perspective

Under the social investment perspective, knowledge, and information on the trends and patterns of gender equality shifted the focus onto education and general employment (Jensen, 2015). The central and defining feature of this policy shift was to change how public resources supported everyone's access to educational opportunities and employment (Jensen, 2015; Terjesen et al., 2015; Thams et al., 2018). In other words, the focus was on effective educational systems, universal childcare, and employment, regardless of their economic status, level of education, and skills (Jensen, 2015). According to this perspective, an adequate standard of living is the key to advancing gender equality, and equality among all women of different religions, races, ethnicities, educational levels, and classes.

The idea of the social investment perspective depends upon the general well-being of society. Social investment perspective rallied behind a concerted effort to support child-centered social investment strategies such as early childhood education, employment, and educational opportunities (Jensen, 2015). The social investment perspective, like the other perspectives, re-categorize women as like any other marginalized groups and, as a result, focused on the similarities between various marginalized groups rather than on their differences (Kanadli et al., 2018). In the previous liberal, postmodern, and radical feminist perspectives, the goal was to highlight

the differences between genders in areas of career aspirations, family obligations, and leadership styles. In the social investment perspective the diverse lived experiences of women were linked to increasing the general well-being of all citizens.

Acker's (1990) theory helped shift the focus of previous perspectives on gender from the influence of gender perceptions on public actions to how gendering organizational processes within organizations hindered and supported female leadership. There were insufficient explanations on how female members continue to fall behind in numbers compared to their male counterparts in leadership roles (Carrasco et al., 2015; Hurst et al., 2018; Shaw & Leberman, 2015). Acker's theory reclaimed the importance of the women's perspective from the framework of liberal, radical, and social perspectives of how to support their need to access leadership positions. Acker's gender organization theory established the theoretical framework on how to address the gap in the literature by exploring how gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of the participants with first-hand knowledge of their experiences. This study explored how the participants challenged the gender perceptions that were holding them back from reaching their potential as competent decision-makers within their organizations. According to Acker's theory, gender perceptions no longer played a part in defining the lack of numbers of female board members in all nonprofit organizations. Overarching gendering organizational processes continue to maintain the status quo among genders in leadership positions.

Concepts of Gender and Organization

Acker's (1990) gender organization theory was explored using concepts from the peer-reviewed journals. Acker's (1990) gendering processes helped identify concepts, themes, and thoughts that describe the experiences of women in leadership roles. The knowledge and information of how the concept of gender interacted with the four gendering processes helped explore how gender perceptions reproduce and replicate the existing status quo. To capture the authenticity of the descriptions and to ensure the definitions of the concepts do not change during the research process, a codebook was constructed during this study (see Creswell & Poth, 2016). The codebook helped understand how the definitions of concepts and themes were continually changing over time due to the context of the participants' environment. It is important for the results of this study to capture the complexity and diversity of different experiences with fundamental and well-defined concepts.

The preliminary codes from the literature review were from peer-reviewed journals that use Acker's gender organization theory to explore the question of how women did not have a comparable presence in leadership roles like their male colleagues. These preliminary codes and their definitions explored how specific changes within their organizational context replicated, reinforced, and challenged the gendering organizational process within their nonprofit organizations. These studies include, but were not limited to Chizema's et al. (2015) *Women on Corporate Boards Around the World: Triggers and Barriers*, Grosvold's et al. (2016) *Women on Corporate Boards: A Comparative Institutional Analysis*, Thams's et al. (2018) *Explaining Women's Presence on Corporate*

Boards, and Brieger's et al. (2019) *Empowering Women: The Role of Emancipative Forces in Board Gender Diversity*.

Relational Networks

Through Acker's (1990) gender organization theory, the concepts of gender divisions, professional development training, and gender perceptions were represented by the concept of relational networks (Grosvold et al., 2016). In this instance, women were more likely to be recognized for nourishing and building relationships with their male and female colleagues rather than focus competing with their peers and colleagues as a top priority. Relational networks were used by many scholars to explain how the leadership styles of women differed from their male colleagues because women sought to foster creative, warm, and independent working environments (Brieger et al., 2019; Hurst et al., 2018; Shaw & Leberman, 2015). Social interactions described the type of social interactions and networks between members of a group as essential for effectively nurturing an effective and efficient work environment through open-discussion and diversity of thoughts (Brieger et al., 2019; Grosvold et al., 2016).

Reciprocal Relationships

Female leadership style depicted the complexity of reciprocal relationships (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). Brieger et al. (2019) offered a new definition of relational networks by exploring how female role modeling impacts the career aspirations of women. According to Brieger et al. (2019), visible female role models motivated future female leaders to seek competitive roles in their organizations. Female sponsors, as well as female mentors, helped inspire and guide future female leaders to the next steps of their

journey. More importantly, \ reciprocal relationships created opportunities for women to be recognized for their transformational and visionary leadership characteristics (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). This concept tapped into how gendering organizational processes handled situations dealing with groupthink, relational networks, and the idea of critical mass.

Work and Life Balance/Integration

Labelle et al., (2015) and Metz and Kumra (2019) described how women between the ages of 25 to 35 expect their spouses to contribute to household chores equally, and child-rearing responsibilities. This concept complemented how radical feminist scholars saw how the perceptions of women being unable to balance their family and career opportunities as a reason why women continue to lack numbers in leadership roles. In progressive female-friendly countries, women expected their significant others to handle career and family responsibilities, women expected their spouses to carry half of the household chores and take on responsibility for the care of their children (Labelle et al., 2015). In today's generation of career builders, balancing work and career responsibilities was a dual effort (Metz & Kumra, 2019). Also, there was evidence to support how, when home obligations and responsibilities were shared between partners, children grow up to be socially competent, have better cognitive abilities, attain higher levels of educational and economic achievement, and lower delinquency rates (Labelle et al., 2015). In this concept, career and life responsibilities shifted to represent the integration of both sectors by partners in their everyday obligations of raising the children and running house errands.

With Generation Y women their belief in equal access to educational opportunities and employment aligned with the social investment perspective (Jensen, 2015). This type of behavior pattern was consistent with the social investment perspective on how improving the educational and childcare opportunities of the public may make an impact on equality between population groups. Educational opportunities provided women with the knowledge and experience to pursue their career goals without having family obligations and responsibilities limit their choice to the family (Jensen, 2015). In addition, employment opportunities that acknowledge the various experiences, skills, and knowledge female applicants bring to their jobs motivate them to challenge their ambitions for new career challenges (Jensen, 2015). The perspective of Gen Y was essential to consider in this study because it illustrated how gender perceptions continue to evolve until this moment.

Critical Mass

Kamalnath (2018) demonstrated the significance of maintaining a critical mass among women in leadership roles. According to Kamalnath (2018), women in leadership required a sum of three female board members to follow through on passing decision-making measures. Without the support of a fellow female colleague, women in leadership roles failed to overcome the existing male-dominated power dynamics (Kamalnath, 2018). Also, critical mass eliminated the possibility for female leaders to experience tokenism (Kamalnath, 2018). Brandth and Bjorkhaug (2015) explained how the male leadership elite often bypassed issues of diversity by appointing women when they were a minority among male colleagues, and they did not have the critical mass number to

influence the decision-making processes. The female board members did not have the necessary relational and reciprocal support systems with their colleagues to help their roles as leaders within their organizations.

Another concept to explore was tokenism. Tokenism portrayed minority members of a team as a symbolic representation of diversity rather than independent representatives among their group (Kamalath, 2018). The concept of tokenism suggested that the impact of the gender quota policy plans on the lived experiences of the female board members was minimal. However, with the limited number of female members of the board of directors, it was tough for many scholars to explore their impact on the governance of the board of directors (Brandth & Bjorkhaug, 2015; Kamalath, 2018). The power dynamics between the genders often sway to benefit the men when there were less than three women on the board. This concept of tokenism, as well as critical mass, is essential to review while exploring and describing how the gendering processes impact power dynamics between board members.

Groupthink

According to Kamalath (2018), the concept of diversity in leadership failed to explore the impact it has on eliminating groupthink. As a consequence, many studies failed to take into consideration the potential to improve the decision-making and performance of organizations (Kamalath, 2018). Researchers argued that homogeneous groups showed a tendency to foster over-optimism, lack of vigilance, and irrational beliefs in the group's morality (Kamalath, 2018). Diversity in leadership avoided issues arising from groupthink because women provided different insights and experiences to

the board's decision-making process. The broader range of data inputs, knowledge, experiences, and background from the female board members was more likely to generate viable discussions concerning the organization (Brandth & Bjorkhaug, 2015; Kamalnath, 2018). Gendering processes such as in relationships and gender divisions often involved concepts associated with groupthink, critical mass, and reciprocal relationships to improve the understanding of the impact of the gender quota policy plans on increasing the number of female board members on the board of directors of organizations.

Identity

The concept of identity was an evolving concept based on the realities surrounding personal experiences, thoughts, and beliefs (Kanadli et al., 2018). Scholars described how women within the organizations thrived on maintaining authenticity in their careers and the importance of their values to create a positive impact on the living standards of those less fortunate (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). Also, several scholars touched on the how many women felt alienated, invisible, and lost their confidence after leaving or opting out of careers that did not reflect their full potential as contributing members of their organization (Brieger et al., 2019; Gill & Orgad, 2018; Kanadli et al., 2018). Women often linked their job performance and self-worth together, which illustrates how female employees were more open to showcasing the outcomes of their work (Gill & Orgad, 2018). Women took pride in their work and felt devalued if their work did not represent their views and beliefs as professional experts in their field of work.

Women extended their career goals by incorporating service and civic projects, investigating social issues, and advocating for justice (Fishman-Weaver, 2017). Gill and Orgad (2018) described women who pursued a challenging and passionate career path were known to increase their decision-making ability, protect themselves in case of divorce, and boost their independence and confidence. Thus, the idea of social responsibility was often a high priority among female leaders to pursuit (Gill & Orgad, 2018). Women showed interest in nonprofit organizations that highlighted mission and vision statements that resonate with their values and beliefs (Gill & Orgad, 2018). They see their service to their organizations as a way to extend their impact on their communities. They want their work to have a positive impact on their communities' environment, educational, cultural, and societal institutions.

Organizational Interdependence

The most controversial concept introduced in the literature reviews was organizational interdependence. Grosvold et al. (2016) introduced the idea of how similar gendering processes were being replicated by various organizations without the research to support their effectiveness in combating gender equality. Board members only implemented organizational processes that ensured high-profit margins (Grosvold et al., 2016). There was no interest to follow-up on how these processes played on gender equality within the organizations. As long as the impact of the organizational processes improved profits, any impact on how these organizational processes impact the lived experiences of women seeking to challenge the status quo was not significant. Nonprofit organizations, in other words, replicated and reproduced similar organizational processes

that effectively and efficiently maintained the status quo. A status quo that had already determined that men excelled at leadership roles than their female counterparts.

The concept of organizational interdependence noted the importance of considering the experiences of the female board members when it comes to building relational relationships and reciprocal networks with their peers. This emerging concept added to the complexity and nuance of the findings by exploring the impact of relational relationships and reciprocal networks among female board members guide one another in their professional careers. The concept of organizational interdependence expanded the existing literature on gender diversity in the board of directors. Organizational interdependence showed how gendering organizational processes such as professional networking, professional development training courses, and seminars influence gender perceptions in each other's organizational cultures. Making sense of how organizational interdependence replicated and reinforced various gendering organizational cultures was an essential step at acknowledging the growing trend of sharing organizational culture as well as gendering organizational processes.

Organizational Branding

The most exciting concept was organizational branding because it reflected the values of female leaders to expand their professional identity among the public through educational outreach programs and social service projects. Nonprofit organizations with female board members showed an interest in marketing their vision and mission statements as a way to expand their brand or market value among a broader demographic community. The concept of branding underpinned the importance of connecting

organizational values and goals with supporters from diverse demographic backgrounds (Chapleo, 2015). Branding, besides, was a way to break from their financial dependence of nonprofit organizations from the limited donor pool they usually rely upon during fundraisers (Chapleo, 2015; Labelle et al., 2015). Branding highlighted the importance of maintaining the connection between the organization's values, beliefs, and, ultimately, branding to attract new supporters to the organizations from within the community diverse demographic populations.

It was important to note the advantages of this concept in the larger picture of how nonprofit organizations were beginning to redefine their vision and mission statements. This frame of reference from the marketing side of nonprofit organizations focused on effectively communicating their brand values and beliefs to the public in order to gain a competitive edge at recruiting financial donors and volunteers from a larger population pool (Labelle et al., 2015). The desire among female professionals to serve on board of directors was nurtured when their values and beliefs were represented in the services of the organizations (Labelle et al., 2015). The concept of organizational branding was trending among female leaders as they attempted to market the mission and vision statements of their organizations to the public and subsequently attracted new supporters who want to make a positive social impact on their communities.

Optimal Society for Positive Gender Perceptions

Optimal societies for changes in gender perceptions were the ones that had historical precedence in supporting progressive female-friendly policies that helped women make choices between their family and career obligations. Thams et al. (2018)

described a connection between the culture of the organization and the implementation of policies on family planning, equal employment, and gender discrimination to being more accessible to approving policies that improved the number of women in leadership roles. For example, in *Roe vs. Wade* (1973), women were able to increase their presence in professional occupations due to maternity leave and child-care privileges (Alexander & Welzel, 2015). Precedence of female equality policies indicated that there was a growing interest within a community to address the gender equality issue (Alexander & Welzel, 2015). Therefore, positive social changes in gender equality issues occurred in areas that show a history of pursuing gender diversity in the decision-making processes (Thams et al., 2018). These areas were prime locations to test out new policies and practices that exhausted all possibilities to improve the lived experiences of female board members on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations.

Agents of Change

Scholars referred to the concept of transformational and resonant leadership styles in the literature reviews (Arena et al., 2015; Baixauli-Soler et al., 2015; Stainbeck et al., 2015). Scholars established that female board members were exceptional advocates to pursue gender equality in the workplace (Arena et al., 2015; Baixauli-Soler et al., 2015; Stainbeck et al., 2015). Women in leadership positions used their positions on the board of directors to challenge long-established practices of gender division, relationships, and symbols and images, and identity development within the organizations. They used their experiences to convey a deeper understanding of how organizational processes impact gender differently on the sound stages of their implementations. Women had the potential

to advocate for changes in the organizational processes from a perspective of having lived experiences that made sense of how to support women seeking to serve on the board of directors.

Mainiero and Gibson (2018) lauded how the transformational leadership styles of women provided a participative and interpersonal working environment that fostered productivity and effectiveness in their work environments. As transformational leaders, women sought to develop and nurture their relationships from the center rather than from the top echelons of leadership or even among peers at the same level (Mainiero & Gibson, 2018). Similarly, this study described how women find it hard to find male mentors and sponsors. As a result, several female board members advocated for the development of mentorship and sponsorship programs that explicitly linked aspiring women leaders with female mentors (Arena et al., 2015; Arnold & Loughlin, 2019). Women had the capabilities and the abilities to maximize the benefits of diverse perspectives, ideas, methods, and motivations of diverse project teams (Arnold & Loughlin, 2019). The transformational characteristics found in female leaders rest on their ability to celebrate the strength of their colleagues.

Arena et al. (2015) and Mainiero and Gibson (2018) labeled women as resonant leaders because they possessed the ability to reflect their colleagues' values and reconnect them to the impact of their nonprofit organizations' mission and vision statements. Female leaders redirected their colleagues to harness the meaning behind their work by helping them visualize their contributions to the exceptional work they made within the communities (Arena et al., 2015). This type of resonant leadership style

was significant in underlining the impact it had on supporting relational networks and reciprocal relationships that contributed to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the services of nonprofit organizations (Mainiero & Gibson, 2018). The resonant leadership style of the female board members played a direct role in how concepts such as critical mass, groupthink, and identity development played out in the boardroom and thus helped increase and decrease the diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and views in the decision-making processes.

Leadership Characteristics

Leadership was not defined as an inevitable power play between colleagues, but a product of positive, nurturing relations known as reciprocal gender and cultural interactions (Arnold & Loughlin, 2019; Mainiero & Gibson, 2018). Mainiero's and Gibson's study on how women described their career experiences was significant because it introduced to the study the complexity and diversity of the concepts defining leadership experiences. The capabilities and abilities of female leaders were noted to present a new form of dynamic and flexible among employees (Arnold & Loughlin, 2019; Kamalnath, 2018; Mainiero & Gibson, 2018). Female leadership characteristics were described as warm, participative, and interpersonal working environment that was hugely compatible with the demographic diversity represented within today's communities (Kamalnath, 2018). Communities depended on female leadership styles to mitigate different cultural norms, values, and insights on how to address issues.

The board of directors that included underrepresented groups such as immigrants, women, and working-class were more effective at attracting the interest of members of

diverse communities. A diverse board of directors had a greater tendency to contribute to developing community service programs that represent the needs of the community as a whole (Thams et al., 2018). In addition, a diverse board of directors attracted more support from professional associations, educational, and cultural institutions (Thams et al., 2018). Thams et al. (2018) revealed how relational and reciprocal relationships that were associated with a diverse board of directors positively impacted the community with programs and training workshops that directly cater to the needs of that specific community. The findings were significant, as they tied the concept of this study into how the gender quota policy plans impacted the essence of the female board members' experiences of defining their professional identity through the services they promoted within the community.

The leadership styles of female board members promoted creativity in the organizations' management (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). Nonprofit organizations benefited from the independent nature of their employees to seek solutions to immediate problems (Stainbeck et al., 2015). The creative and practical brainstorming skills of female leaders improved the exchange of ideas between diverse groups of people across various social, economic, and political backgrounds (Stainbeck et al., 2015). In addition, female professional networks were noted to solve complex issues with greater creativity. Women nurtured a work environment that was open to working on developing new ideas in collaboration with various partners (Stainbeck et al., 2015). The collaborative style of women nurtured a team identity within the organization that dedicated their time to improving the services of their organization (Stainbeck et al., 2015). Female leaders had

the knowledge and experiences to acknowledge the diverse perspectives within a community and on how to approach complex problems using their intrapersonal relationships.

Social Responsibility

In addition to the concepts of leadership styles, women in the decision-making process spent a lot of their time advocating for social justice issues (Fishman-Weaver, K., 2017). The most significant concept worth pursuing was social responsibility (Baixauli-Soler et al., 2015). More organizations with female board members showed an increased interest in supporting communities through charitable contributions to educational and cultural programs (Baixauli-Soler et al., 2015). Policy-makers, directed by peer-reviewed literature, had a broader awareness of the capacity and skill of female leaders to make a positive impact on the living standards of the community as a whole. Organizations with female leaders expanded on their organizations' vision and mission statements beyond immediate goals and aims (Carrasco et al., 2015; Fishman-Weaver, 2017). For example, Amazon's *Amazon Women in Engineering* encourages girls from different socio-economic backgrounds to seek careers in science. Microsoft's *Digi Girlz* program offered girls from diverse background scholarship to attend their computer science camps (Fishman-Weaver, 2017). Social responsibility connected concepts such as relational relationships, reciprocal networks, critical mass, organizational branding with each other because it touched on the nuanced experiences of the female board members.

The Gap in the Literature Review

There is limited literature on the impact of gender quota policy plans on the lived experiences of female board members (Carrasco et al., 2015; Gill & Orgad, 2018). Even though there was literature on policies and their impact on a women's career advancement, most of the research focused on family planning policies and rarely on how the feminine point of views explained the impact of policies on their lived experiences from the angle of the gendering organizational processes (Carrasco et al., 2015). Acker's (1990) gender organization theory addressed this gap by highlighting how the gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of female board members from their perspective. Acker's (1990) gender organization theory laid the theoretical foundation of how to address the gendering processing within the organizations that maintained and reproduced inequalities within the organization as well as challenged and changed them.

Brandth and Bjorkhaug (2015) and Terjesen et al. (2015) recommended further studies on the reasons why women continued to lag behind their male counterparts in leadership positions. The findings of this study will equip decision-makers with the necessary information on how to allocate resources to gender processes that increased the number of female board members. The importance of how gendering organizational processes supported and challenged gender perceptions continued to be overlooked by scholars. Gender perceptions needed to be challenged by gendering organizational processes to help foster new perspectives on gender equality (Terjesen et al., 2015). This study addressed this oversight by using personal narratives, statements, values, and

beliefs of how gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female board members.

A qualitative method with a phenomenological approach was used to address the gap in the literature on how gender quota policy plans impacts the lived experiences of women. Female board members provided the needed insights and advice on the gender processes that promote gender equality (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). Post and Byron (2014) noted that by exploring organizational processes from the female perspective helped shed light on practical information and knowledge on how to increase their level of participation in leadership roles. However, Fishman-Weaver (2017), Shaw and Leberman (2015), Thams et al. (2018), and Post and Byron (2014) did not go beyond answering what, where, and who these legislative policies may impact women (Post & Byron, 2014; Thams et al., 2018). Scholars continue to ignore how legislation improved gendering organizational processes when the lived experiences of female board members were used in their analysis.

The lived experiences of the participants were used in the phenomenological approach of this study. Chizema et al. (2015) used this method to understand the impact maternity leave, flexible working hours, and reduced working hours had on their lived experiences. Creswell and Poth (2016) recommended a phenomenological approach to help me explore the lived experiences of participants from their perspectives, thoughts, and own statement on the phenomenon. The qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach enhanced the understanding of how gendering organization processes impact participants using their direct statements, descriptions, and views. This

study attempted to fill the research gap on how the gender quota policy plan impacted the female board members' lived experiences using practical examples from daily lives.

Impact of Gender Quota Policy Plans

The impact of the gender quota policy plans had yet to be thoroughly exhausted in current literature. Positive arguments for promoting women to board level positions focused on the diversity of opinions, thoughts, experiences, and background they brought with them. The positive financial impact women board members had on the organizations were highlighted as an advantage (de Anca & Gabaldon, 2014). The symbolic image of women leaders improved as their achievements become more publicized among the public (Seierstad et al., 2015). Most importantly, female-friendly policies were likely to be seen as an ideological commitment to recruit more women into leadership roles (Terjesen et al., 2015). Scholars acknowledged the presence of female leaders maximized the potential of organizations and improved the organizations' transparency among stakeholders (Jensen, 2015). The findings from this study add to the extant literature on advantages of the gender quota policy plans have on the lived experience of female board members.

On the flip side, the disadvantages of the gender quota policy plan that continued to perpetuate questions around the competence and abilities of the women who benefit from the policies. Luanglath et al. (2019) noted how female-friendly policy presented women as less deserving and lacking the leadership skills to hold leadership roles on their merit. Gender perceptions of men as being able to successfully obtain positions of leadership due to their abilities to lead effectively and wisely persisted in explaining why

men excel in leadership roles (Renock, 2017). There was a gap in the literature that ignored how gender-friendly policies impacted the experiences of women. The literature on gender equality lacked the knowledge of how to design organizational processes that support women gain access to decision-making positions in their organizations. This study explored how gender quota policy plans were seen by female board members to inhibit and support their aspirations to serve on the board of directors.

Summary

Radical feminist perspectives involved deconstructing gender roles, gender stereotypes, and, most importantly, gender divisions of labor as a way to provide women a flexible and transient route to leadership positions (Fishman-Weaver, 2017; Gabaldon et al., 2016; Labelle et al., 2015). Subsequently, liberal feminist scholars sought legislative reforms as a way to address unique career routes and gendering processes that hindered and supported women in their journey to decision-making positions within their organizations (Fishman-Weaver, 2017). Then, the postmodern feminist perspective illustrated the need to divert organizational resources into supporting female employees with access to leadership opportunities through mentoring programs, sponsors, family-friendly policies, and flexible work hours to accommodate their family responsibilities (Labelle et al., 2015). Lastly, scholars of the social investment perspective took a drastic turn by treating equality as a general national goal achieved through universal childcare, educational opportunities, and employment. Unfortunately, the gap in the literature continued to persist on how gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of the female members of the board of directors headquartered in the United States.

Interest in the impact of the gender quota policy plans on the lived experiences of female members of the boards of directors was growing. It was evident that relational and reciprocal relationships nurtured by female board members through organizational training, mentoring programs, and community outreach programs had left a positive impression on the contributions of women in leadership roles (Hurst et al., 2018; Terjesen et al., 2015; Thams et al., 2018). There was a continued interest in how organizational branding and social responsibility played a role in understanding women in leadership positions (Chapleo, 2015; Stainbeck et al., 2015). As more organizational leadership saw the potential advantages of gender diversity within its leadership, the findings of this study maintained this positive momentum on the impact women have on organizations as they seek more leadership positions.

The gender organization theory was an appropriate theoretical framework to address the impact of the gender quota policy plans on the female board members' experiences. Unlike studies with a quantitative methodology, the qualitative methods avoid controlling certain factors of the participants' life (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The inability to control concepts such as critical mass, groupthink, and identity development that lent credence to the trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Acker's (1990) gender organization theory aligned well with how the qualitative methodology with the phenomenological approach addresses how gender perceptions impact of the gender quota policy plans. Also, the findings of this study highlighted the potential new trends from the transformational and resonance leadership styles of the female board members had on the positive social changes in gender perceptions. Lastly, this study

expanded on new concepts such as how social responsibility and organizational branding expanded future literature on the role of diversity in the board of directors.

Chapter 3 covers the following topics: research methodology, the rationale for the phenomenological approach, data collection procedures and instruments, data analysis, ethical consideration, trustworthiness, credibility, and research bias. The use of qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach addresses the lack of literature on how the gender quota policy plans may impact the lived experiences of female board members. The gap in the literature is addressed by giving meaning to the lived experiences of female board members using their in-depth description of how the gender quota policy plans impact them.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to address how the gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. The social implications of this study may help female board members identify areas within the organizational processes that addressed how to increase the number of female members on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. The results of this study can help female members on the board of directors allocate resources to effectively and efficiently improve the gendering processes of nonprofit organizations. I addressed the gap in the literature by exploring how gender quota policy plans impact the experiences of female board members.

I used a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of female members of the board of directors on a nonprofit organization. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), previous researchers have depended upon qualitative methods to explore the participants' views, statements, and thoughts on a phenomenon. The qualitative methodology provided first-hand knowledge and information on how the gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of the participants from their point of view (see Creswell & Poth, 2016). In addition to the broad and open-ended interview questions, the data analysis process assisted me in conducting a credible analysis and synthesis of the data findings (see Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Davies & Fink, 2015; Moustakas, 1994). The sample size was six participants, and the participant's experiences reached a data saturation level where their experiences have

begun to become familiar. The results covered six different nonprofit organizations. I used snowball sampling to recruit participants for the written interview.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology of the study and how it is consistent with the purpose of the study. In this chapter, I review the qualitative method and phenomenological approach of the study and how the triangulation of sources leads to validity and credibility.

Research Design and Rationale

The phenomenological approach of the study allowed me to acknowledge the experiences of the female board members of nonprofit organizations by using their experiences, thoughts, and values to explore how gender quota policy plans impact the number of women on the board of directors.

Research question: How do the gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations?

Central Phenomenon

The central phenomenon of this study was women having less opportunity to serve as members on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. The goal was to introduce statements, perceptions, and views that explored the lived experiences of the female board members that inhibited and supported their choices to serve on the board of directors. I categorized the preconfigured and emerging concepts according to themes and concepts that helped me explore the essence of the female members on the board of directors' lived experiences. These categories answered the research questions by describing the overall impact of the gender quota policy plans on the gendering processes

within the organization. The gendering organizational processes include gender division, gender symbols and images in the media, gender identity development, and gender relationship between colleagues.

Qualitative Methodology

The chosen research methodology was qualitative with a phenomenological design. The qualitative method of this study addresses how processes, patterns, and trends impact the lived experiences from different perspectives and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To explore the phenomenon with limited knowledge and information, a qualitative methodology is recommended because it organizes the data into a comprehensive set of themes from concepts (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Patton, 2015; van Manen, 2014). A qualitative methodology provided the necessary data to address the research questions of how the gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of female members of the boards of directors using their direct experiences. A qualitative study allowed for the collection of in-depth data to understand the complete pictures of the problem by exploring multiple perspectives on the impact of the gender quota policy plans had on the experiences of the female board members.

Qualitative Rationale

Quantitative methodologies were not pertinent to the study because I could ignore the diverse experiences of the participants in the study. Qualitative method concentrate on how processes impact a phenomenon. A qualitative study addresses the in-depth and rich experiences of the participants to describe a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). A qualitative analysis of the data did not reiterate and reinforce existing concepts,

themes, and patterns from the literature review. Qualitative studies are not only focused on research questions that expand on what and where a phenomenon exists in the study. Qualitative studies expand on answering questions on how and why by incorporating new and emerging experiences into the study and exposing new and divergent experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). For example, Post and Byron (2014) noted how qualitative methodology focuses on dynamic processes that exist outside of controlled variables often associated with a quantitative method. As a result, a qualitative method offered the methodological foundation to answer the research question of how gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of female members.

Phenomenological Rationale

The phenomenological approach of the study allowed me to analyze significant statements, perceptions, and views that emerged during the interview by exploring the complexity behind the experiences of the female board members (Seierstad et al., 2015). The phenomenological approach of this study increased the diversity and complexity of narratives and experiences of the participants (see Creswell & Poth, 2016). For example, Brandth and Bjorkhaug (2015) noted how interviews are a valuable instrument in providing insights into the various dynamics of their relationships between board members. In another example, Thams et al., (2018) lauded the value of the phenomenological approach to explore how the different interpretations of the term competence within the media impact the preconceived gender perceptions on their participants' aspirations to pursue leadership roles. More specifically, in this study, I used the statements, insights, and experiences of the participants to examine, describe, and

interpret the phenomenon from the perspective of the female board members. As a result, the phenomenological approach supported Acker's (1990) gender organizational theory that emphasized how genders are impacted in different ways by organizational processes within their organizations.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary instrument for this study. During the research process, descriptive data emerged from the participants' interview transcripts. As a result, I used an inductive data analysis to build themes by working back and forth from the data to look for descriptive examples, statements, thoughts, and beliefs on a phenomenon (see Creswell & Poth, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). The primary goal was to gather information and understand the impact of the gender quota policy plans on the experiences of the participants. The gendering processes introduced by Acker's (1990) gender organization theory provided the theoretical framework of understanding how gender quota policy plans replicate, reinforce, and support the aspirations of women to serve on the board of directors. The gendering organizational processes included examples of gender processes in gender divisions, gender relationships, gender identity developments, and gender symbols and images in the media.

Researcher's Role

I presented the analysis of the study without bias and prejudice to the readers. In other words, it was my responsibility to keep the focus on learning the perspectives of the participants and not sway one way or another at defending and supporting Acker's (1990) assumption that organizational processes were not gender-neutral. My role was to bring

forth the essence of female board members' experiences, thus enhancing the focus of the study on the experiences of the participants (see Creswell & Poth, 2016). In qualitative research, it was paramount to maintain the authenticity of the participants' voices throughout the study. The premise of this qualitative study was to empower the female board members' experiences and not my thoughts on the impact of gender quota policy plans on their lived experiences. The reason this study stood out among other studies on gender diversity and female leadership was how to make sense of how the gender policy plans impact the lived experiences using the composite experiences and thoughts of the participants.

Researcher Biases

I did not have any professional or personal connection with the participants. However, this did not eliminate unconscious bias from shifting the findings of the study to a particular perspective. Therefore, I used bracketing or *epoche* to limit any biases, beliefs, or assumptions from interfering with developing evidence-based conclusions (see Creswell & Poth, 2016). Bracketing or *epoche* is a process that limits unconscious biases, prejudices, or expectations from impacting the study (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). The key is to limit personal bias from interfering with the findings to focus on the perspectives of the participants and acknowledge any unusual or new experiences that appear irrelevant to the findings (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). Also, the trustworthiness of the study's findings was increased through the triangulation of literature reviews, keeping a journal, and construction of a codebook (see Friesen, Oelke & White, 2012). A journal provided the means to distinguish between my thoughts and the experiences of the female board

members (see Friesen et al., 2012). Credibility and trustworthiness in the findings, analysis, and discussion of the results of this study was ensured with journal writing.

Methodology

The Population of the Study

The scope of the study was limited to the impact the gender quota policy plans had on the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations in the United States. In addition, the participants must have knowledge of the gender quota policy plans of their nonprofit organizations. It was imperative to increase the potential for other scholars to replicate this study by writing a detailed journal on the context of the study, methodology, and interview questions. The triangulation of the observations from the information from the journal, the interview questions, and knowledge from literature reviews increased the generalizability of the study (see Creswell & Poth, 2016). Even though nonprofit organizations do not have the same goals as for-profit organization, both types of organizations are defined as practitioner-oriented organizations and can benefit from the findings of this study (see Cabeza-Garcia et al., 2019). In other words, both types of organizations can benefit from the results of this study on how to understand the impact of the gender quota policy plans on the experiences of their female board members.

Delimitations were the targeted population, objectives, and research questions that I have some control over during the study. The criteria of the participants in the study included female members of the board of directors who work for nonprofit organizations headquartered in the United States. The initial selection of participants was from reading

the biographies of various female board members of nonprofit organizations among my acquaintances off *LinkedIn* using their profile pages. I continued to use the snowball sampling method to recruit more participants from the list of acquaintances from off *LinkedIn*. I used the snowball sampling method to recruit participants until I felt that the responses from the interview questions were repeating similar concepts and experiences. The research question was used as a guideline to keep the participant focused on the purpose of the research and prevent them from going on irrelevant tangents of their experiences and thoughts on the phenomenon (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). During the data collection and analysis processes, I was completely aware of the assumptions that the participants had control over what they wanted to divulge in their answers. Therefore, information may be eliminated or exaggerated by the participants. In addition, I refrained from interjecting my own bias on the impact gender quota policies may have had on the number of female board members serving on the board of directors.

Sampling Method

The logic of the snowball sampling process was to increase the diversity and complexity of the female members of the board of directors' experiences using background checks and recommendations on the diversity of their experiences. With the snowball sampling method, I was able to recruit female board members with experience working with gender quota policy plans that increased the diversity of perspectives within the study. The snowball sampling was used in this research because many of the participants' possessed the background to contribute to the complexity and richness of the study's data (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The snowball sampling process used a professional

network of relationships between female members of the board and nonprofit organizations to enhance the diversity of the experiences covered in this study. At the same time, by using the snowball sample method, I risk recruiting participants with the same experiences, background, and knowledge of the phenomenon as I do because of our similar professional relations. The snowball sampling method provided me with the opportunity to recruit participants based upon known characteristics that enhanced the findings of the study (Patton, 2015). As a result, I was able to increase the diversity of perspectives within the study on the impact of gender quota policy plans on the lived experiences from different marginalized groups of female board members.

Sample Size

The sample size was six female board members from six different nonprofit organizations. The sample size was not in any way representative of the overall experiences of the female members of the board of directors. The goal of the sample size was dependent on how well I was able to explore how the participants make sense of the phenomenon using their experiences and thoughts (see Creswell & Poth, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). However, if the sample size failed to reach a satisfactory level of saturation, more participants would have been recruited to help increase the depth of the responses. I felt a satisfactory level of saturation was reached when all themes covering the experiences of the female board members became redundant. It was essential to note that phenomenological approaches often generated a large quantity of data due to the in-depth and diverse descriptions of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). It, therefore, is not surprising that 6 participants were enough to reach a comfortable data saturation level.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I sent an interview invitation to female members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations located in the United States to participate in my study. I obtained the names, emails, and qualifications of each participant from *LinkedIn*. Once the participants agreed to the written interview, I asked her to recommend other female members of the board of directors whose experiences would add depth and originality to the study. In the case, the participant offered no recommendations or was hesitant at recommending someone I started the process again by picking the name of a female board member off *LinkedIn*. I emailed them the invitation form to participate in the study on October 11, 2019, until December 16, 2019. I gave the participants one week to respond to the invitation with consent or denial to participate. I sent the consent form immediately after the participants agreed to participate in the study. The consent form included the purpose of the study, the nature of the study, the risk and harm of participating in the interview, issues of privacy, and the social impact. After I received the consent form, I emailed interview questions (Appendix A) to the participants.

Written interviews had many merits. First, written interviews eliminated subject reactivity or awareness of being in the study (Al-Yateem, 2012). Written interviews helped avoid disrupting the daily routines of the participants. Written responses decreased the amount of time required to produce transcripts (Tessier, 2012). During recorded interviews, participants often forget they are being recorded and become very open with their responses increasing the depth of their responses (Tessier, 2012). Written interviews avoided the problem of misunderstanding the participants by allowing the participants the

opportunity to review and reflect on their responses before submitting them. Finally, written interviews limited my bias and prejudice from entering into the transcriptions (Tessier, 2012). Written interviews provided the participants with their own private space to fill out the interview questions at their own pace and on their own time.

Data Collection

I was the primary instrument for collecting, examining, and analyzing the data for new, divergent, old, and emerging concepts and trends from the statements and experiences of female members board of directors provided in the written interviews. I kept a journal for reflexive purposes and to write down thoughts that need to be clarified by the participants with follow-up replies to the written interview. I used *LinkedIn* to recruit participants to female members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. In the written interview stage, the participants had full control to direct their responses to the interview questions and the freedom to approach the questions with any experiences they felt relevant to the question.

I developed the interview questions. The interview questions were built on Acker's (1990) gendering processes. The gendering processes offered me insight into how gender quota policy plans impacted their lived experiences. The interview questions reflected the organizational gendering processes explored in this study. All of the interview questions referenced Acker's gendering organizational processes such as gender divisions, gender symbols, and images in the media, gender relationships, and gender identity development. For example, the interview question that referred to mentoring experiences highlighted how gender relationships impacted the lives of female

board members seeking to serve on the board of directors. The question that focused on the organization's press releases linked gender symbols and images in the media to how the public hindered and supported female board members. Lastly, the question of how the mission and vision statements of their organizations shifted over time underscored the style of the governance of female board members.

The second data collection process was to keep a journal and codebook to help separate personal views from the participants' views, thoughts and experiences. The journal was used to make notes of any unclear and ambiguous thoughts that might require further clarification by the participants (van Manen, 2014). The journal helped document modified procedures introduced to the study during the data collection process in the case future scholars attempted to replicate the study (van Manen, 2014). Journal writing kept my thoughts, and ideas, and the participants separate from one another to focus on the experiences of the participants (van Manen, 2014). Overall, journal writing was an essential tool for increasing the dependability of the study among the readership. The trustworthiness of the analysis of the study was credible because future scholars can replicate the study by using the codebook, journal, and following Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam analysis method.

I honored all ethical guidelines imposed by Walden University's Institutional Board Review (IRB), and the approval number is located in Appendix C. The regulatory oversight of the study procedures adhered to IRB oversight during the entire study. Guidelines included notifying the participants of the study's rationale in the consent forms. The participants understand that it was within their rights to withdraw from the

study at any time without penalty. In addition, the consent form ensured the participants understand that their identity and the identity of their nonprofit organizations were held in confidence. All of the data collected was stored in a safe in my office at my residence, where only I knew the access code for the computer. Numerical codes, like P-1, P-2, P-3, were used to ensure the participants' confidentiality, and A, B, and C were used to identify the location of nonprofit organizations. Therefore, P-1 was linked to location A, P-2 is associated with location B, and so on.

According to Le Blanc (2017), for me to introduce more complexity and rigor in their narratives, I must have the necessary technological skills to organize and categorize information. I, therefore, opted to use Microsoft Excel in the study as a means to manage the data from the interview questions. I used Microsoft Excel to section off the responses of the participants under their corresponding interview questions onto a spreadsheet. A search of specific key terms, words, and thoughts helped underline the similarities and differences among the experiences of the female board members. Microsoft Excel, at this time, was the more suitable alternative because of the ease of capturing overlooked themes in the transcribed data using alternative vital terms and concepts across multiple participants. Also, an Excel spreadsheet organized the information in a way that helped me locate specific concepts and all of the descriptive derivatives of the concepts between the participants. For example, the descriptions of how each participant used concepts such as social responsibility, social justice, and financial sustainability identified everyday experiences, thoughts, and ideas on the role of gender quota laws on the impact of female board members. Another example included how gender quota laws impact the

identity of the female board members by using alternative keywords such as mother, caregivers, and work and life integration.

Data Analysis

Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method of data analysis helped determine the concepts, themes, and the essence of the experiences related to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas's method of data analysis added a crucial additional step to van Kaam's data analysis method to emphasize the need for me to master self-reflexive techniques to avoid any bias in the analysis process of this qualitative process. These self-reflexive techniques were described under the sections of *Researcher's Role* and *Researcher's Biases*. Moustakas (1994) data analysis process offered systematic and coherent steps on how to categorize statements, thoughts, and views into categories of themes in order to provide the study the most credible, transferable, and trustworthy analysis. I used this data analysis method to capture the essence and composite descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants. I listed Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam data analysis steps in the following paragraphs and table.

Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method of analysis was used in this study because its purpose was to explore the experiences of participants as it relates to a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The iterative process of the inductive process helped me uncover the experiences, statements, perceptions, and thoughts of how participants made sense of the gender quota policy plans (Creswell & Poth, 2016). I incorporated all information and knowledge from the literature reviews, codebook, and journal writing in the data analysis process to ensure the credibility, transferability, and

validity of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Moustaka's method of analysis also provides me, a novice researcher, with detailed guidelines to assist me in my study (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The first step of the analysis was to understand the features of the phenomenon using a process known as horizontalization. This process includes me reading the written interview numerous times as I sort through the different concepts introduced by the participants' responses to the interview questions (Moustakas, 1994). Through the process of preparing and organizing the transcripts, I was allowed to gain familiarity with the general sense of the information and knowledge from the participants' perspectives. The goal of this process was to reflect on the participants' experiences as it pertained to the gendering organizational processes of the organization. At this stage, it was crucial to look for how the participants' experiences complemented the interview questions in the study. Bias was limited from interfering with the findings of the study with the triangulation of sources from the participants and the literature review. Figure 1 shows the relationship of how the interview questions touch on how the gendering processes impact the lived experiences of female board members.

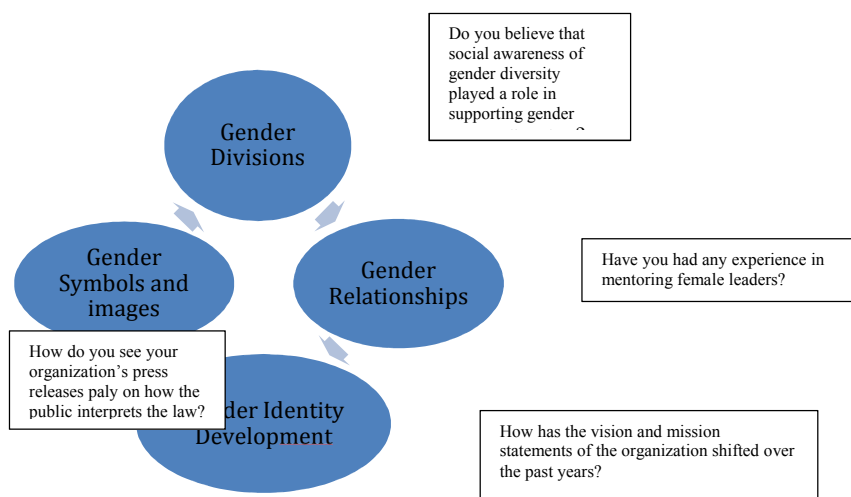


Figure 1. Relationship between interview questions and gendering organizational processes.

In the second step, I put a list of significant statements into categories that do not overlap and repeat with one another (Moustakas, 1994). During this second step, care was given so as not to shuffle new information and experiences into predetermined themes using the literature review. I was aware of starting new concepts for any outlining experiences and particularities that arise within the interview transcripts (Moustakas, 1994). Also, I recognized all discrepant and outlining cases that highlighted future trends in how gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female members of the board. When no emerging concepts from the interview transcripts emerged, I constructed a preliminary codebook to maintain consistency throughout the research process. I used the codebook to keep the descriptions of experiences accurately linked to their concepts.

The third step of the data analysis was to understand the participants' ideas and overall descriptions that define the experiences through reducing, combining, and eliminating descriptions as concepts begin to emerge (Moustakas, 1994). During this step, all of the statements, thoughts, and perceptions of the participants were defined in the form of concepts. This process included selecting significant statements, thoughts, and opinions voiced by the participants that provide knowledge and information on how the gender law may impact the lived experiences of female board members. Some of the concepts from the literature reviews on gender diversity and board of directors that were included but not limited to were relational networks, reciprocal relationships, work, and life integration, critical mass, groupthink, identity development, organizational branding, and organizational interdependence.

In the fourth stage, the descriptions of the concepts were thoroughly exhausted by listing all detailed descriptions, thoughts, multiple perspectives, and statements that explore the holistic nature of the participant's experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). At this step of the data analysis, the knowledge from the interview session, information, and knowledge from the journals, and literature reviews added depth to the concepts located in the codebook. This codebook provided me with the in-depth and complex experiences of the female members of the board of directors to start the analysis process (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). Constructing a codebook and writing a journal were part of the inductive reasoning before answering the research question of the study.

The fifth step of the data analysis was to combine the similarities and the differences of the female board members' experiences defined by the concepts into broader and complex themes. I mapped out the multiple interpretations of the lived experiences of the female board members transforming concepts into themes that give an extra layer of complexity to the participants' experiences. It was in this stage of the data analysis that the answers to the research question using the themes of what described the female board members' experiences began to develop. It was in this step of the data analysis process that my inductive reasoning informed the discussion section of the study. The table below was a preliminary visual representation of the initial steps of data analysis on how to connect the concepts to the themes using the literature and experiences of the participants. The *Preliminary Codes* table displayed the codes that emerged from the literature review and its significance to the study. As indicated by Table 1: *Preliminary Codes*, the literature review provided me with the necessary background information to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. My assumptions were also under control from interjecting personal views into the data collection and analysis process of this study by utilizing the literature review in establishing credibility and transferability within the study.

Table 1

Preliminary Codes

Preliminary code	Literature	Analysis
Agents of change-transformational leaders	Perryman, Fernando, and Tripathy, (2016). Arnold and Loughlin, (2019).	Women are agents of positive change due to their abilities to work as a group
Agents of change-resonance leaders	Baixauli-Soler et al. (2015), Stainbeck et al., (2015;).	Women are agents of positive change due to their ability to forecast future trends
Critical mass	Kamalnath (2018)	Gender quota law is not enough because there must be at least 3 women on the board to be a proactive member
Democratic ideals	Kamalnath, (2018), Brandth and Bjorkhaug, (2015), Shaw & Leberman (2015)	Diversity, discrimination in the workforce
Diversity		Democratic ideal to represent all experiences, backgrounds, gender, and race equally
Education	Jensen, (2015)	External factors such as education is the cause of gender equality on the board of directors
Gendering processes	Brieger et al. (2019)	Organizational culture is not neutral there are inherent gender bias in their processes such as employment application, succession planning, work hours
Human right	Fishman-Weaver, (2017)	Women have the right to be represented in all segments of the workforce
Integration/Balance of lifestyle	Croft et al. (2014), Hurst et al. (2018)	A reason why women continue to lack number in the workplace is their duty to their family, gender perceptions they are better caregivers
Legislation (con)	Terjesen et al. (2015), Thams et al., (2018).	Policy does not touch on the root causes of the gap between genders in the workforce, it only masks the practical realities of the women
Legislation (pro)	Seierstad et al. (2015)	Policy is a step to open opportunities for women to change the system from within, symbolic gesture that challenges gender roles
Organizational branding	Labelle et al., (2015), Chapleo (2015)	Social consciousness, and community building projects

In the sixth step, I captured the essence of the participants' experiences from the analysis of the research findings. I addressed the essence of the participants' experiences by answering how the gender action policy plans may impact the experiences of the participants experiencing the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I incorporated the themes used to answer the research questions to synthesis of the female board members' experiences concerning the gender quota policy plans. The research question of how the gender quota policy plans may impact the lived experiences of the female members of the board of directors was analyzed using both the literature reviews and the participants' experiences. The *Themes* table introduced below was a visual representation of the data analysis of how I developed the themes from the concepts within the study.

Table 2

Themes From the Literature Review

Theme	Concepts	Representation
Democratic ideals	Human Rights, Critical Mass, Diversity	The increase of diversity in the boardrooms gives a voice to everyone in the decision-making process
Leadership style	Resonance leaders, transformational leaders, Identity development, mentors/sponsors	These types of leaders shift the mission and vision statements of the nonprofit and public organizations to adopt more holistic community awareness programs and projects
Gendering processes	Legislation (con), integration of lifestyle, leaning in	Organizational processes are not neutral because avoid addressing the practical experiences of women at home and follow-up on existing policy.

In the seventh step, I developed the themes from the data analysis into composite descriptions of the impact of the gender quota policy plans. I used the gendering organizational processes introduced by Acker's theory, such as gender divisions, gender symbols, and images in the media, gender relations, and gender identity development processes, to analyze the overall impact the gender action policy plans have on the lived experiences of the female board members. The data provided by the participants provided with the information on how the female board members made sense of how the gender quota policy plans impacted their lived experiences. At this stage, I presented the final

analysis of how the female participants made sense of how gender quota policy plans challenged or supported female board members in their leadership roles.

Table 3

Moustakas' (1994) Modified van Kaam Method of Data Analysis

Steps	Purpose	Representation
Step 1	Transcribe interview questions while gaining familiarity with the knowledge and reflecting on the meaning of the experiences	Taking notes while transcribing the interview
Step 2	List significant experiences into categories that do not overlap or repeat while accommodating new experiences	Reading the transcripts and making (blue) index cards of each experience, initiate developing a codebook
Step 3	Reducing, combining, and eliminating experiences as concepts emerge or identify patterned and irregular experiences	Identify concepts onto (yellow) index cards using (blue) experience index cards as examples, continue developing codebook
Step 4	Concepts from the interview, journals, memos, and literature reviews are incorporated into concepts or contextualize in the framework of the literature and practice in reflexive thinking	Applying (yellow) concept index cards and (pink) experiences index cards to fully capture the saturation data level of experiences, continue constructing codebook
Step 5	Concepts are arranged into broader themes to reflect essence of the experiences and practices in reflexive thinking	The (yellow) concepts index cards are organized into (purple) thematic index cards, finalize codebook
Step 6	The themes are arranged to make sense "create meaning" of the experiences from the participants' point of view	Developing the (purple) thematic index cards into the theoretical framework
Step 7	Answering the research question by developing a composite description of the experiences	Creating a point of view of the phenomenon using the (purple) thematic index cards, answer the research question

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Qualitative credibility referred to how confident the participants find the results accurate. One way to increase the credibility of the research was through the triangulation process. In the triangulation process, I examined the evidence to justify the concepts that described the experiences of the participants through themes. Second, I developed broad

interview questions to offer the participants the opportunity to approach the questions from the experiences they prioritize as making sense of the phenomenon. Third, I respected the experiences, thoughts, and insights of all of the participants by keeping a journal on how my personal views may interfere with the interpretations of the findings. These strategies established trustworthiness in the results and discussion sections.

Transferability

Transferability referred to how well the research was generalizable to all female members of the board of directors in the nonprofit organization. To capture the nuance of the phenomenon, I focused on the broader implications of the phenomenon on the female board members serving on the board of directors. Secondly, I secured the transferability of the results of the study by recruiting a well-rounded and diverse group of participants to the study to explore as many different experiences as possible (Yin, 2013). Incorporating previous literature within the study established consistency in the results (Yin, 2013). In addition, documenting the data analysis steps, providing a list of interview questions, and keeping records of all communications increased the generalizability of conducting the research. The interview protocol is located in Appendix C. Lastly, the triangulation of data from the journals writing, literature review, and interview transcripts increased the understanding and depth of the experience of the female members of the board of directors and transferred the results of the research to all board of directors (Yin, 2013).

Dependability

The qualitative dependability of the research determined the consistency of the study findings. I accomplished a consistency within the results with well-documented interview questions and responses. The second procedure was to use a codebook to keep the definitions of the concepts and themes from evolving with time, experiences, and context (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). The third procedure was to provide of outline of the data analysis steps used in the study. Lastly, member checking ensured that the transcriptions of the interview were accurate (Yin, 2013). Future scholars can replicate the study because the dependability of the study was ensured using codebooks, journals, and *Moustakas' (1994) modified Van Kaam Method of Data Analysis*. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Confirmability

The confirmability of the research was ensured by bracketing techniques that limit me from interjecting their personal views, biases, and prejudices into the analysis of the findings. I used reflexivity to ensure biases, prejudices, and values that did not taint the result section of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Examples of reflexive methods include constructing a codebook, journal writing, triangulation of literature reviews, and reaching a data saturation level that would increase the validity of my analysis of the findings from the study. In addition, a codebook and journal writing helped inform me of the accuracy of the definition used during the study. Also, separating the views of the participant from my point of view. It was, therefore, essential to acknowledge the experiences, thoughts, and views of the participants on how gender quota policy plans

impacted their lived experiences as female board members. The study explored the experiences of the marginalized participants on the board of directors and did not want to factor in the perspectives of the dominant members of the board or reiterate knowledge from existing literature. The findings of the study were based solely on the perspectives of the participants.

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality

In studies involving human participants, there were ethical concerns about the interactions between the participants and me. The ethical guidelines of this qualitative phenomenological study followed Walden University's Institutional Review Board expectations. I include a copy of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) proposal letter in Appendix C. Walden University's Institutional Review Board were regulated by federal guidelines and requirements about how to research with human subjects. In the case of this study, the three concerns were respected by not pressuring the participants to disclose information they uncomfortable revealing to me (see Creswell & Poth, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). My primary concern was to keep the participants' privacy and comfort my top priority.

The proposed study was to pose minimal risk to the participants. The participants' names and all identifying markers were masked within the study using codes to protect the confidentiality of the participants. I used numerical codes to identify the six participants and six nonprofit organizations. I am the only person with the information to identify the participants and the locations of the organizations. I saved all of the files in a

locked cabinet in my home office, and all electronic files are saved on my laptop that has a passcode only I know.

Dissemination of the Results

I will disseminate the results of this study to various gender and organizational journals such as the *Journal of Women Studies, Business, & Society, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Career Development, and Management Research Review*. I handed out a summary of the results of this study to the participants to reference on the impact of gender quota policy plans on the lived experiences of female board members. In addition, the results of the study were available to disseminate to communication venues such as blogs, podcasts, and presentations to reach a wider audience of decision-makers who do not have time to access scholarly journals on a regular and timely basis. Previously tested and proven practices, such as gender quota policy plans, have not gained attention in popular media outlets (Cabeza-Garcia et al., 2019). The results from this study expand the knowledge and understanding of how gender quota policy plans may impact the lived experiences of female board members. In the long-run, decision-makers would be more inclined to consider the voices of the female participants on how to support female board members serving on the board of directors.

Summary

This study was to adopt a qualitative method with a phenomenological lens regarding gender organization theory. The purpose of the qualitative methodology was to explore how gender quota policy plans may impact the lived experiences of female board members. Gender organization theory provided the theoretical framework for me to

explore how the gender quota policy plans may impact the lived experiences of female board members. The results from the research expanded existing knowledge and information regarding how gendering organizational processes hindered or supported female leaders. The qualitative phenomenological approach of this study prompted meaningful discussions regarding why women continue to lag behind men in leadership roles in nonprofit organizations by adding perspectives, thoughts, and experiences of female board members to the existing literature. The snowball sample allowed me to recruit a diverse number of participants in the research.

Chapter 4 presented the results of the study. Also, Chapter 4 focus on the review of the background, group demographics, analysis of the findings, evidence of trustworthiness, and finally exploring the themes and concepts that emerge from the interviews. I present the results of the written interviews in Chapter 4. Also, I present the results in the form of how the emerging themes and gendering processes impact the lived experiences of the female board members of nonprofit organizations.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to address the gap in the literature on how gender quota policy plans impact the female members of the board of directors in nonprofit organizations. The phenomenon was women having less opportunity to serve on the board of their nonprofit organizations. This study intended to explore how the participants described the impact of gender quota policy plans on their lived lives of female board members using Acker's (1990) gender organizational theory. Through the phenomenological approach used in the study, the experiences of the female board members provided the knowledge and information on how the gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of the female members. Hence, the experiences, thoughts, and insights by the female board members helped me explore how the gendering processes of organizations that replicated, challenged, and reinforced existing gender perceptions inhibited and supported women's access to the board of directors of their organizations. The significance of the findings of this study increases the information on how to increase gender diversity in the board of directors. The social implications of this study revealed potential areas within the gendering organizational processes that can increase the number of female board members of their nonprofit organizations.

The qualitative phenomenological approach of this study provided the participants with the venue to narrate their experiences, thoughts, and insights with gender quota policy plans. I used Acker's gender organizational theory to explore how the gender

quota policy plans impact lived experiences of female board members within four gendering organizational processes. These gendering organizational processes are gender divisions, gender identity development, gender relationships, and gender images and symbols in the media. The research question addressed in this study is as follows: How do gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors?

As active members on the board of directors of their organizations, female members of the board of directors have the knowledge to add and expand upon how gender quota policy plans impact the gendering processes within their organizations. Their insights were valuable for determining how gendering organizational processes that included gender divisions, gender relationships, gender symbols and images in the media, and gender identity development have continued to undermine the number of women as members on the board of directors. The goal of the phenomenological study was to bring the female board members' voice into how to support women on the board of directors using their perspectives. I use Acker's gender organizational theory to explore female board members' experiences, thoughts, and insights on how the gender quota policy plans have impacted their lived experiences using four gender organizational processes.

This chapter includes the research setting and demographic characteristics of the participants that were relevant to the context of the research study. The data collection and the data analysis sections provide the guidelines on collecting and analyzing the in-depth statements, experiences, and perceptions of the female board members. The

trustworthiness of the research study and results are presented, followed by a summary of the findings.

Research Setting

The interviews were conducted in the written format with six female board members on the board of directors of six nonprofit organizations. The written interviews allowed the participants to fill out at their discretion. Participants avoided spending money on travel expenses and helped the participants prevent travel time that may cause disruptions in their daily routines. Written interviews gave the participants time to reflect on their responses before submitting them (see Al-Yateem, 2012; Tessier, 2012). In addition, participants who filled out the written interviews were given the discretion to complete the form at their own time and pace (Tessier, 2012). The participants filled out the written interviews at their own pace and at the time most convenient for them. Participants who are required to fill out a written interview have the flexibility to work around their schedules and do not feel the pressure to meet deadlines (see Tessier, 2012). These research settings provided a comfortable environment for the participants to contribute to the study.

I sent out the email invitations on October 11, 2019, and the data collection process took until December 13, 2019. I gave the participants 1 week to reply to the invitation to participate in this study. The consent forms were emailed when I received a response from the participants to volunteer in the study. Once I received the signed consent form, I emailed the written interviews to the participant. Six participants agreed to participate in the study from 6 different nonprofit organizations. Seven female board

members responded to the invitations by stating they did not know gender quota policy plans. Eleven female board members requested I forward them an electronic link to the consent form and the interview questions to complete the interview questions. These 11 female board members did not respond to the written Word format of the consent form. The interview questions were open-ended and took 30 to 60 minutes to complete.

Demographics

The participants of the research were female members of the board of directors of nonprofit organizations in the United States. The recruitment process began with the use of female board members listed among my connections. Each participant worked at different nonprofit organizations. The demographic characteristics of the participants were female board members of nonprofit organizations between the ages of 40 and 59, with between 0 and 10 years of service, who held post graduate degrees. The participants identified themselves from four different marginalized races. From these data, it was evident from the demographic characteristics of the participants that they had similar educational backgrounds. In addition, they were in the minority because they occupied positions that were often filled by board members that helped maintain the status quo. Finally, they were all women who rarely shared responsibilities with their male counterparts when it came to showcasing their accomplishments to the public.

Data Collection

The participants in this research study were six female members on the board of directors of six different nonprofit organizations. I contacted the participants by surfing for female board members. There was no initial response to my invitation, so I expanded

my search of female board members serving in nonprofit organizations in California to other states. I, thereby, increased the demographic region of the recruitment to the study to include all American states. I emailed them an invitation to participate in the study, then the consent form, and lastly, the interview question form. The data collection process started on October 11, 2019, and continued until December 13, 2019. My initial request to the IRB was to send out five consequent invitations a week after the initial twelve invitations to the participants the first week. However, because of the lack of responses, I began to send out 30 invitations in a week. In total, I sent out 81 invitations to female board members.

I removed all identifying information from all documents, and numerical codes were used to identify the participant and the location of their organizations in the United States. I was the only individual who knew the identity of the female board member and nonprofit organizations represented in the study. I applied these encrypted codes during all of the stages of the process. I used a black sharpie to conceal the signatures of the participants who signed their names instead of responding with “I consent” to honor their confidentiality. The removal of all identifying markers and descriptions of the participants helped the participants feel comfortable to be concise and free with their descriptions, thoughts, and experiences on the gender quota policy plans.

Data Analysis

The first step of the analysis was to understand the phenomenon. This step included taking notes of any common concepts and experiences between the participants. In this case, I noticed how all of the participants used specific concepts to describe their

experiences. All participants saw the benefits of having gender quota policy plans and saw them as a way to move women in leadership positions. Participant 6 described how she saw gender quota policy plans as a means of reaching an all-female board. Participant 1 believed that gender quota policy plans had the potential to provide female board members with the opportunity to gain access to seats on the board of directors. Participant 5 noted that gender quota policy plans provided female board members with the opportunity to prove their ability to effectively and professionally perform their duties and responsibilities on the board. Participants 2, 3, and 4 saw the gender quota policy plans as an opportunity to increase the diversity to thoughts, insights, and perspectives in board meetings. Secondly, there was a trend in how the mission and vision statements of the organizations were expanding their services to attract diverse groups of people within the community. None of the participants touched on concepts such as organizational interdependence experiences, work and life balance issues, and groupthink. These concepts were prevalent in the literature review process but not in the responses of the participants.

The second step included listing significant experiences by categories that did not overlap or repeat and most significantly stand out within the interview transcripts. In this step, all of the experiences were written on blue index cards to help visualize the data. All of the concepts that emerged from the transcripts indicated how the participants responded to the interview questions. Examples of concepts that were written on the blue index cards to describe gender quota policy plans include quality, diversity, advancement, social consciousness, impact communities, privilege, emotional, and succession planning.

Experiences related to the gender quota policy plans were written on the blue index cards include how Participant 5 established herself worthy with her male colleagues. Another experience includes how Participant 4 believed the gender quota policy plans encouraged collective discussions and how rewarding their efforts were when they worked together. Participant 6 did not see the value of the gender quota policy plans because members of her board of directors were female. I wrote all of the participants' insights on blue index cards. The blue index cards included statements such as how the gender quota policy plans helped challenge the boy's club mentality, notions of privilege, and quality of female board members.

Step 3 included the process of reducing, combining, and eliminating experiences as concepts emerged to identify patterned or irregular experiences. I wrote these concepts on yellow index cards. I then linked the corresponding thoughts, insights, and experiences on the blue index cards into categories that described specific experiences, thoughts, and insights onto the yellow index cards. The sorting of the concepts helped me visualize repeating concepts to conclude the data saturation level of the study was complete. For example, terms such as diversity, diversify, perspectives, and inclusive were grouped together to describe how gender quota policy plans improve the rigor and quality of the discussions on the board of directors.

In Step 3, I compared and contrasted how the definitions of socialization, branding, inclusive mission and vision statements, and press releases related to the experiences of each participant. The concept of socialization was grouped with terms such as emotional, privilege, and traditional parameters to describe how gender

perceptions dictate our views on women in decision-making roles. I noticed the responses of the participants of how press releases replicated, reproduced, and challenged gender perceptions formulated three different perspectives. These perspectives included insights as to how the press releases were not necessary because no one reads them, how they helped advance women leaders among the public, and finally how press releases were to fact-driven to have an impact on how the community saw female board members.

Step 4 included incorporating the various literature reviews, journal writings, and initiating the construction of the codebook into the concepts on pink index cards. In this process, the rigor and in-depth descriptions of the experiences continued to grow as additional sources are triangulated with previous literature to describe the experiences. The literature review asserted the importance of female board members at mentoring women to adjust to their roles as members of the board of directors (Hughes et al., 2017; Kamalnath, 2018). There were several articles on the importance of succession planning at increasing diversity on the board of directors (Brieger et al., 2019). In addition, there was ample evidence of how gender perceptions increase gender discrimination of women in leadership roles (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Pedulla, 2016). In addition, Brandth and Bjorkhaug (2015) referenced how gender quota policy plans increase the number of female board members helps motivate women to seek seats on the board of directors. The scholarly voices from the literature reviews lend support to the insights, thoughts, and experiences of the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Step 5 included broadening the concepts into themes on how gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female board members. I wrote themes on purple

index cards. According to the results, succession planning increased the role of women on the board of directors because it was a useful tool to increase the diversity of thoughts within the board meetings, help members accountable for their responsibilities and uphold creativity within the organization when maintaining the services to the public. The widening of the vision and mission statements of the nonprofit organizations to incorporate social responsibility and organizational branding showed evidence of the participants' branding the public values, social consciousness, and social awareness of the public within the goals of the organizations. Lastly, the participants saw mentoring programs as a critical theme in addressing how gender perceptions change as more female board members become more prominent in their roles on the boards.

In Step 6 the themes were arranged to make sense of the participants' experiences from their specific point of view. I achieved this by incorporating the thematic purple index cards into the theoretical framework of Acker's (1990) organizational gendering processes. I represented Acker's theoretical framework using green index cards. Gendering relationships were represented by the strong, creative, and challenging relational networks and reciprocal relationships the participants nurtured with their colleagues. Gendering divisions were described by how socialization processes have hindered women from serving in leadership roles because of their reputation as too emotional to serve in a decision-making role. I noted how the inclusiveness of the vision and mission statements recognized the need for the public to see their beliefs and values resonate with the organizations. Participants saw how their vision and mission statements

attracted financial and manual support from the community when they saw their values being shared by the non-profit organizations.

Lastly, in step 7, the research question was answered through the composite descriptions of the themes as they pertain to Acker's (1990) gender organization theory. According to the findings, gender quota policy plans played a role in increasing the number of female board members. The three gendering organizational processes describe how the gender quota policy plans introduced new diverse thoughts into the gendering processes of the organization. The emerging themes significantly support Acker's (1990) gender organization theory. Gendering organizational processes did have an impact on replicating, reproducing, and challenging gender relationships, gender division, gender identity development, and gender symbols and images in the media processes within an organization. Mentoring, succession planning, and inclusive vision and mission statements illustrated how female board members were able to challenge gendering organizational processes. By using their own experience, thoughts, and insights to explore how to support the gender quota policy plans with effective practices, the female board members were able to advocate for proactive practices that supported female board members. The *Data Analysis* table indicated the analysis process with a visual presentation of the purpose of the stage, the corresponding color scheme, and the representation of the concepts.

Table 4

Data Analysis

Stages of data analysis	Purpose	Color of index card	Representations
Stage 1	Read through to find flow of responses	n/a	diversity, inclusiveness, resonance
Stage 2	List significant experiences and concepts	Blue	succession planning, diversity, strong relationships, creative responses, emotional to lead, collective ideas, opens opportunity, equality, resonance, encourages perspective, challenges privilege (boys' club)
Stage 3	Reduce overlapping concepts	Yellow	diversity of board members, inclusive mission and vision statements, provides opportunity, fact-driven, based on services, resonance of beliefs, role models, transparency, social awareness,
Stage 4	Literature reviews	Pink	resonance governance: Brieger et al. (2019); diversity of governance: Grosvold et al. (2016); diversity of governance: Millesen, & Carman, (2019); social awareness: Shaw and Leberman. (2015); gender perceptions on women: Gill and Orgad (2018); role models/mentoring: Brandth and Bjorkhaug (2015).
Stage 5	Broader themes	Purple	Vision and mission statements, branding such as accountability, social awareness and social consciousness, diversity such as in role models, mentoring, diversity such as inclusivity, creativity, rigor of decision-making, experiences
Stage 6	Creating meaning	Green	Gender identity development with an inclusive mission and vision statement, diversity by challenging gender perceptions of gender division in the workplace and succession planning where skills and abilities are primary markers to hire board members
Stage 7	Answer research question	Chapter 5	Gender quota policy plans have a positive impact on the number of female board members because their perspectives and experiences support other women interested in serving on the board

I supported Moustakas' modified van Kaam method of analysis by using Microsoft Excel to manage the data from the interview questions. The participants answered the interview questions. I used the search engine within the Excel spreadsheet to locate similar and different definitions of the concepts. For example, the question on the expansion of the mission and vision statements indicated the concepts of diversity, inclusiveness, and accountability were gaining momentum within the culture of the nonprofit organizations. Gender perceptions showed how definitions such as privilege, opportunity, and role models described the same experiences among participants in the study. In addition, relationships among the female board members were identified as strong, challenging, and rewarding at the same time. The Excel spreadsheet helped locate specific experiences and concepts within the transcripts.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The triangulation of sources helps establish credibility in the participants' experiences. In this case, the triangulation of the sources happened at multiple stages during the research study. The first time the triangulation of sources occurred was through the processes of writing down insights and thoughts that arise during the analysis of the interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In the second round of triangulation of sources all personal biases and prejudices that may impact the analysis and synthesis of the results were noted and controlled through journal writing and self-reflection (see Creswell & Poth, 2016). Journal writing allowed to pinpoint further the need to expand

the literature on gender quota policy plans. The third source of triangulation was through the literature review of existing concepts that describe the experiences of women in leadership roles. In this case of the study, the literature reviews supported all of the concepts, insights, and the experiences introduced by the participants in their responses.

Transferability

The composite descriptions of the experiences were thick and dynamic to duplicate by other scholars in similar settings and contexts. The open-ended interview questions prompted thick and in-depth descriptions of the experiences from the participants. The open-ended question offered the participants the opportunity to describe experiences that enriched the data collection processes. The saturation level of the data increased the transferability of the research study to other studies (Rahman & Yeasmin, 2012). In this case, the experiences of the participants touched on some of the preconfigured and emerging concepts. For example, scholars can compare themes such as diversity, social justice, the development of gender identity, and relationships over time with other similar studies. These themes had the potential to make sense of how gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of all-female board members, regardless of the demographic composition of the board of directors.

Dependability

To establish the dependability of this research study, I used the literature review to evaluate the consistency of the research study's findings (Rahman & Yeasmin, 2012). The triangulation of the results from this study with previous similar studies increases the trustworthiness of how to increase the number of women in leadership positions. The

literature review was used to authenticate the consistency of the participants' experiences with other female experiences with gender quota policy plans. In addition, a codebook was constructed to guarantee the consistency of the experiences with their corresponding concepts, insights, and experiences. All of the concepts were consistent with previous literature on the subject of gender diversity, female leadership, and board of directors. The only concept that was not consistent with the literature was the concept of organizational dependency.

Confirmability

The journal helped obtain a level of reflexivity that was necessary to put the focal point of the research study on the participants' experiences. Keeping a journal on the written interviews ensured objectivity because it refrained from introducing personal biases and prejudices on gender quota policy plans into the findings of the study. A codebook with the definition of the concepts ensured similar and different experiences are categorized and interpreted in a way that was consistent throughout the study. I used the participants' experiences to shape the analysis of how gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female board members. All of my biases on the impact of gendering organizational processes were limited through self-reflection tools mentioned in the study.

The Final Results

The female board members were straightforward to provide their insights and experiences on the impact of gender quota policy plans on the lived experiences of female board members. There was considerable thought put into the level of knowledge

the participants have of gender quota policy plans. All participants used concepts in defining their experiences with gender quota policy plans. They were relevant concepts that helped elaborate on the concepts introduced by the literature. Several participants indicated their lack of knowledge of the gender quota policy plans. For example, four of the participants recruited for the study described their experiences in general terms such as diversity and inclusivity and rarely touched on specific experiences that were influenced by the gender quota policy plans. Only two participants were able to directly mention succession planning, mentoring programs, and inclusivity of mission and vision statements as outcomes of the gender quota policy plans.

In addition, the color-coded concept map using the index cards was beneficial at identifying the variations of how the participants identified the benefits of the gender quota policy plans. All of the participants were equally willing to use the term diversity and inclusivity to describe the impact of the gender quota policy plans on their lived experiences. However, very few of the participants correctly identified specific experiences and thoughts that were directly linked to how the gender quota policy was to be implemented in their organizations. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 6 saw the gender quota policy plans as a way to increase diversity and inclusiveness. Only participants 1 and 5 indicated in their responses proactive steps in defining and shaping the definition of equality and inclusivity. Participant 1 reflected on how to challenge the boy's club with succession planning. Participant 5 linked the benefits of gender quota policy plans, increasing the potential for mentorship among women. I needed to recommend extending

further research into how gender quota policy plans impact the concept of diversity among female board members.

This qualitative phenomenological study intended to identify key concepts of how the gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of the female board of directors. The study provided the female members of the board of directors the venue to describe their experiences using concepts from the literature review and emerging concepts from their own experiences. All of the participants mentioned the outcomes of gender quota policy plans as enhancing diversity among the board members and inclusivity in the organizational goals. All of the participants said outlining experiences and thoughts of the gender quota policy plans that were not frequently mentioned but were just as meaningful as the common concepts associated with gender quota policy plans. Participants 1 and 4 said how succession planning and mentoring were meaningful experiences on how the gender quota policy plans impacted female board members.

Utilizing the qualitative phenomenological approach helped extend Acker's (1990) gender organizational theory to how the gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of the female board members. The study provided the participants with the opportunity to tell how the gender quota policy plans impacted the agenda planning of the board of directors. The processes of inductive reasoning were used to categorize the concepts and subsequently develop the themes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). All concepts were cross-references with either existing and preconfigured concepts from the literature reviews and the primary experiences of the participants. I used Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam data analysis of inductive reasoning to look back on the perceptions,

statements, and experiences of the participants to support each theme. The goal was to be explicit about how these themes shaped the lived experiences of the female board members to increase the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.

Symbols and Images in the Media

The participants answered a question on their press releases to determine the impact of gender symbols and images in the media had on promoting and hindering female board members within the board of directors. Participant 1 described the press releases of her organization as clearly supporting the advancement of women. Participant 5 did not see press releases as a vital tool in promoting the image of a female leader because no one reads them. Participants 2, 3, and 4 described their organization's press releases as fact-driven and only showcasing the impact of the services on their community. In this case, the press releases were not considered a tool to challenge gender perceptions of female board members. The press releases were a way to showcase the impact of female board members on the governance of the board of directors. The knowledge and information on gender quota policy plans were located in scholarly people would not be able to fully appreciate the benefits of female board members from reading the organization's press releases.

Reciprocal Relationships

Participants answered the interview question on their relationships with their colleagues. Participant 5 described how her relationship with her female colleagues as a positive working environment, but it was her male colleagues that she had to spend time

proving her worth as an active board member. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 described their relationship with their female board members as positive, strong, challenging, and rewarding. Participant 4 used the term collective to describe her relationship with other female board members. These types of descriptions supported Acker's (1990) theory on the importance of developing strong gender relationships among female leaders. These strong, creative, and challenging relationships described the unique way women collaboratively interact with one another through intrapersonal relationships. Unlike their female counterparts, men usually worked with a competitive spirit and uncovered a trend of how the leadership styles of women differed from men (Mainiero & Gibson, 2018). The results from the responses indicated that the female board members had different skills and abilities to effectively and creatively lead a nonprofit organization.

Relational Networking

All participants were involved in mentoring programs. This experience among all the participants tapped into Acker's (1990) theory on how gender relationships and gender identity development viewed role modeling as an essential part of their career journey. As role models, the female board members were in the position to interject their voices on how to increase the number of women on the board of directors by promoting practices such as succession planning, mentoring programs, and inclusive mission and vision statements. Participant 5 mentioned how her mentoring experiences were due to how her business connections allowed her the opportunity to mentor others. In other words, the importance of making networking evident, so women gain the necessary experiences to feel comfortable serving on the board of directors. The mentoring

experiences of all the participants were very telling on how important female role models were at introducing female board members to their duties and responsibilities on the board of directors.

Vision and Mission Statements

When asked about any changes in the vision and mission statements of their nonprofit organizations. The participants agreed that their organizational mission and vision statements were becoming more inclusive to the demographic composition of their community. The vision and mission statements represented a desire to help the less fortunate and marginalized groups by gaining firsthand knowledge of the group they service. Participants 1 and 3 saw how the inclusiveness of the mission and vision statements helped expand their organizational goals to social issues that move beyond demographic groups. Participant 5 cited a concept of resonance in their mission and vision statements that symbolized the inertia among the board members to address social issues across groups. Participant 6 noted how her organization's vision and mission statements directly state their goals were to increase women in higher education positions. Five of the six participants noted the importance of their values and beliefs being represented within the mission and vision statements of their organizations.

Succession Planning

Participant 2 was the only participant to directly referred to the importance of succession planning in creating gender diversity on the board of directors. Participant associated gender quota policy plans as a turning point in the succession planning within their organizations. However, the other participants remarked on elements of how

succession planning improves the number of women on the board of directors. Using the descriptions of Participant 6 indicated a level of understanding of how succession planning contributed to diversifying the board of directors. Participant 3 saw succession planning as a way to increase for female board members to act as role models for aspiring female leaders interested in serving on the board of directors. She saw how female board members increased the creativity and the collectiveness of the decision-making process to include multiple perspectives. She saw gender quota policy plans as an acknowledgment for the importance of providing the opportunity for women to serve on the board of directors.

Education

Participant 1 tackled the issue of education as a primary driving force behind social, economic, and political change when she said that the gender quota policy might not provide the best quality of people for the position. She touched on the significance of the study and the type of criticism it provoked on the leadership skills of the female board members. The findings addressed the importance of education at opening opportunities for women to access leadership positions. However, in this instance, all of the female board members who participated in the study held post graduate qualifications and showed their expertise in their fields of study. It is recommended that gender quota policy plans be examined further to understand the impact it has on female leadership.

Themes

Three overarching themes emerged from the results to describe how the gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of the female board members. The

themes were succession planning, mentoring programs, and inclusive mission and vision statements. The first theme focused on succession planning. This theme incorporated many concepts such as diversity and inclusivity at recruiting board members with the skills and abilities to bring new thoughts to the organizations. The participants were focused on establishing a consistent stream of members of the board who showed social consciousness and have values that resonate with the public. These protocols involved establishing mentoring programs to fully educate potential members on their duties and responsibilities as board members. Most specifically, the female board members were very aware of the advantages of addressing the diverse skill and needs the board of directors required to remain competitive in the nonprofit sectors. All of the participants recalled having experience in mentoring women in their careers. The participants described how the recruitment process of board members as the reason there are limited numbers of women on the board of directors.

The second theme was mentoring programs. In this case, the female members of the board were becoming role models and symbols for women who were planning on seeking seats on the board of directors. Female role models helped scaffold women in the decision-making process. Mentoring programs proved to be a popular trend to challenge existing gendering organizational processes among all of the participants. Mentoring programs were a way to develop familiarity between the female board members and their roles on the board of directors. Female mentors described how supportive, strong, and creative relationships often defined how they perceived networking with other females. However, only participant 5 was able to link the opportunity mentoring programs had on

opening up opportunities for women to excel in their ways. Participant 5 noted how it remains a privilege for women to find this type of guidance among board members. She was only able to provide her assistance through her business connections.

The third theme emerged within the theme of mission and vision statements. All of the female members of the board saw their nonprofit organizations as consistently addressing the complex nature of their services. All participants recognized the inclusivity of their mission and vision statements rely on representing the values and beliefs of their supporters. However, few of the participants other than Participants 2 and 5 described how their organization's mission and vision statements had begun to expand to address several issues at the same time. Their organizational mission and vision statements no longer cater to a specific group but more to the general welfare of all community members. Participant 5 recalled how mission and vision statements must resonate with the supporters for them to donate to the organizations. Participant 2 described how the mission and vision statements need to provide supporters with the transparency to make them comfortable to buy and donate to the organization. The female board members showed a sense of duty to their respective organizations by making sure the goals of the organizations met with the changing needs of the community they upheld to serve.

All of the themes that emerged were compatible with the themes that emerged during the literature review. The themes that emerged through the literature review, as described in Table 2: *Themes from the Literature Review* were democratic ideals, leadership style, and gendering processes. The themes that emerged from the findings

were diversity, succession planning, and inclusive vision and mission statements. As indicated by the table, democratic ideals were the force behind advocating for more diversity in the board of directors. In addition, the leadership styles of the female board members to want to express their values and beliefs in a collaborative, strong, and rewarding environment were well-identified by their advocacy for mentoring programs. Vision and mission statements that reflect their social awareness of the root causes of societal ills. Lastly, gendering processes, as indicated in this study's findings. Succession planning highlighted the importance of seeking practical means using the perspectives of female board members to explore how female board members continue to have limited representation on the board of directors.

The results of the research study indicated the gender quota policy plans had a positive impact on the lived experiences of the female members of the board of directors. The female board members saw the advantages of gender quota policy plans to give the perspective of how the gendering processes with regards to mentoring, mission and vision statements, and succession planning support female board members. Their responses to the interview questions documented how mentoring programs, addressing succession plans, and expanding the inclusiveness of the mission and vision statements helps increase the number of women on the board of directors. The responses showed how Acker's (1990) gender organization theory proves valuable at interpreting the values of the female perspective of making sense of the gendering organizational processes within the organization that has relied on electing men to the board of directors.

Table 5

Results

Themes	Experiences/Insights	Gender organization theory processes	Recommendations
Succession planning	provide quality board members diversify, pay gap, equality, attuned to public populace	Gender divisions	Diversity
Vision and mission statements	Social consciousness, transparency, social awareness, inclusive, resonates	Gender identity development	Inclusiveness of goals
Mentoring programs	role models, challenging, creative, provides opportunity	Gender relationships	New skills and perspectives

Summary

The experiences of the female board members described a move to become experts in their fields of nonprofit organizations. The participants showed a growing social awareness and social consciousness to tackle the root causes of problems from diverse points of view rather than from a simple equation of cause and effect. All of the participants showed interest in conveying the inclusivity of their organizations' mission and vision statements. Participants described their interest in seeking alternative opinions, views, and thoughts from colleagues and employees on issues involving the organizations. The findings of this study revealed the tendency of the female board members to see their evolving identity as consistent with diversifying the board of directors. The female board members strived to strengthen relational and reciprocal relationships among their colleagues by advising potential female leaders on how to reach

their career goals. Female board members showed a tendency to welcome diverse voices into the discussion of how to effectively and efficiently address the goals of the nonprofit organization. Thus, three themes summed up the impact of the gender quota policy plans on the lived experiences of the female members of the board of directors.

Chapter 5 explores the impact of the gender quota policy plans on the lived experiences of the female members of the board of directors. I analyze and interpret the findings in the context of Acker's (1990) gender organization theory and, more specifically, the gendering organizational process. I call on recommendations for further research on the impact of gender quota policy plans on the number of female board members in nonprofit organizations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how gender quota policy plans have impacted the experiences of female board members using their statements, experiences, and thoughts. The central phenomenon was the limited number of female board members. The qualitative phenomenological approach of the study helped address the gap in the literature on how gendering organizational processes had hindered and supported the career aspiration of the female board members. According to Acker's (1990) gender organization theory, these gendering processes include gender divisions, gender symbols and media representation, gender identity development, and gender relationships. The results of the study helped understand how gender quota policy plans have improved the number of women in decision-making roles on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, the significance of this study is that it expanded the knowledge and information on how policy impacts gender policy plans and how it impacts gender diversity on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations.

Using the composite descriptions of the participants, I was able to explore how gender quota policy plans have impacted the lived experiences of female board members. The responses from the interview questions directed the findings of the study of how gender quota policy plans impact the number of female board members. The qualitative phenomenological approach provided the study with the framework to analyze the perspectives of the female board members' experiences, thoughts, and insights on the

impact of the gender quota policy plans on their lived experiences. The phenomenological approach with the theoretical background of Acker's (1990) gender organization theory provided the background of how to make sense of the impact of gender quota policy plans on female board members. The results of the study are presented on how gendering organizational processes challenge, replicate, and reproduce gender perceptions that impact the number of female board members. The female board members participating in the study were familiar with how gender quota policy plans were implemented in their nonprofit organizations. Their experiences with the gender quota policy plans added a new perspective to the existing theoretical paradigms on gender equality and female leadership in the literature. The results of the study provide new perspectives on how gender equality has impacted the number of female board members serving on board of directors.

Summary of Key Findings

The key findings from the study revealed three themes that described how to increase the number of female board members on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. The three themes included vision and mission statements, succession planning, and mentoring programs. These three themes were used to develop an analysis of the findings on how the gender quota policy plans have impacted the lived experiences of female board members.

Interpretation of the Findings

Confirming the Literature

The gender quota policy plans had an impact in increasing the opportunity for women to increase their numbers on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. The presence of female board members in the decision-making process of the board of directors challenged gender organizational processes that hindered them from seeking positions as board members. As more women took on visible leadership roles on the board of directors, the more the populace have reshaped their gender perceptions. The gender perceptions of the public that associated women with positions of authority begun to shift with them (Jensen, 2015; Thams et al., 2018). It was, therefore, not unusual for the participants to describe how mission and vision statements had shifted to a more inclusive decision-making process during their board meetings. For example, over time, the mission and vision statements of their nonprofit organizations indicated a concerted effort to tackle the wellbeing of the whole individual instead of focusing on specific problems. It was clear that there was an affinity for nonprofit organizations to address the diverse needs and wants of their organizations' services to diverse demographics.

Disconfirming Existing Literature

The findings challenged the impact of gender quota policy plans had on the access of women to the board of directors (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Hughes et al., 2017; Pedulla, 2016). The perception that female-friendly policies such as Roe vs. Wade (1973), Family and Medical Leave Act (1993), and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1961) had gradually been able to challenge gender perceptions but not to the extent to make a

difference in gender equality on the board of directors. The results of this study suggested that to increase the number of women on the board of directors, there needed to be required gender quota policy plans. In essence, for the decision-making to be genuinely representative, there had to be an increase in the number of female board members. The implementation of the gender quota policy plans from the perspective of the female board members' experiences, thoughts, and insights helped make sense of how the gendering organizational processes impacted their lived experiences. The female board members were able to model ways they wanted to nurture relationships with their colleagues with mentoring programs. The participants showed how they fostered their personal beliefs and values regarding improving the lives of the less fortunate with inclusive organizational mission and vision statements. In addition, one female board member wanted to develop succession planning protocols that maintained gender diversity among board members.

Acker's (1990) gender organization theory was able to provide the theoretical backbone to explore the impact that gendering organizational processes had on female board members. The findings of the study indicated the importance of interpreting the gender quota policy plans from the perspective of the female participants. The participants highlighted the importance of addressing the lack of female board members on the board of directors of their nonprofit organizations from the lens of gendering organizational processes. Succession planning, mentoring programs, and the inclusiveness of the mission and vision statements were concepts that tried to make sense of how gender quota policy plans reshaped new experiences. The knowledge of the

participants defined their experiences about how the gender quota policy plans impacted the quality of their lived experiences. It was essential to acknowledge how the experiences, thoughts, and insights of how gendering organizational practices within the organizations gave new meanings to the impact of the gender quota policy plan on their lived experiences as female board members.

Extending the Literature

I recommend extending the study to include more nuance of how female board members define diversity. Increasing the diversity of the board of directors not through the physical classification of gender but experiences, background, and thoughts increased the level of diversity with the board of directors. They also provided the necessary gendering organizational processes to increase the number of female board members. It was important to note that the power dynamics of how members of the board of directors interacted with each other helped define the level of diversity among members of the board of directors. To understand how the participants in the study define the outcome of the gender quota policy plans, how diversity was interpreted by the participants needed to be explored further by scholars. According to the findings, the female board members held post graduate degrees and therefore have a similar level of expertise in their fields of study. It was, therefore, imperative to dig deeper at learning how to define diversity when it comes to accessing a broader range of experiences, thoughts, and values from other female board members who come from diverse backgrounds.

Brandth and Bjorkhaug (2015) and Terjesen et al. (2015) noted how important it was to explore the definition of diversity within genders. More literature on the outcome

of gender quota policy plans on the diversity of the board of directors made sense when analyzing the responses of the participants to the interview questions. Participant 1 described the role of gender quota policy plans as favoring the less qualified female board members. In this case, the outcome of the gender quota policy plans did not necessarily help the vigor of the decision-making processes. A symbolic representation of a diverse board of directors that did not necessarily promote rigorous discussions around the board table. Participant 6 described gender quota policy plans as an all-female board of directors that did not require members from the opposite gender to add to the inclusiveness of the decision-making process. Exploring how the participants visualize the outcome of gender quota policy plans helps understand the nuanced interpretation of diversity among the participants. The power dynamics between female board members need to be fully appreciated to a growing number of female board members on the board of directors of their nonprofit organizations.

This study brought Acker's (1990) gender organizational processes to the forefront on the impact of gender quota laws on the lived experiences of female board members of nonprofit organizations. I showed that female board members who were in the position to contribute to the decision-making process used their knowledge to challenge existing gendering organizational processes that hindered their ability to seek seats on the board of directors. Female board members advocated mentoring programs because they understood the importance of nurturing a professional network of supporters. Participants advocated for succession planning protocols because they were seen as an important step for seeking and recruiting female board members that enhanced

the rigor of the boardroom discussions. Finally, female board members encouraged new trends in organizational cultures to link personal beliefs and values to career goals. As a result, more women were able to find meaning in their careers that helped them grow at a professional level and a personal level.

Once the findings were analyzed, three developing themes emerged as defining descriptions of the female board members' lived experiences. These themes were succession planning, mentoring programs, and inclusive mission and vision statements. These themes were consistent with the trend of linking personal beliefs and values with the overall organizational practices of nonprofit organizations. All of the themes affirmed that using a phenomenological approach to explore the impact of gender quota policy plans helped make sense of the lived experiences of the female board members from a new angle. How the impact of the gender quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of the female board members helped implement a plan that challenged existing gender organizational process that hindered female board members from seeking seats on the board of directors of their respective nonprofit organizations.

The first theme focused on the gendering organizational processes of succession planning because it was the duty of the participants to put their interests before their values and ambitions. In this situation, succession planning helped recruit board members who had perspectives on how to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of nonprofit organizations over time. Participants saw how adapting professional job descriptions was an efficient way to recruit members on the board of directors while at the same time diversify the demographic composition of the board of directors. Based upon Acker's

(1990) gendering processes, succession planning challenged gender divisions within the nonprofit organizations and encouraged board members to hire members with their professional expertise and skills in specific areas that improve the services of the nonprofit organization.

The second theme that emerged from the findings touched on the gendering organizational processes of mentoring programs. The relational networks and reciprocal relationships that were nurtured by the female board members helped make the process of serving on the board of directors more transparent with mentoring programs. In this case, Acker's (1990) gendering organizational process reshaped the relationships and gender identity development processes in favor of women because it validated their ways of creating supportive, creative, and challenging work environments. The work environments described by the participants in the study showcased their skills and abilities to y serve on the board of directors effectively. The mentoring programs allowed potential female board members to make informed and educated decisions on how they will complete their duty to make informed decisions. The reciprocal and relational relationships favored by women created the space to share information on how to reframe social interactions to helped attract more women to serve on the board of directors.

The third theme to emerge was the inclusiveness of mission and vision statements. The mission and vision statements were harnessing the diversity of needs and wants from the diverse demographic population to become a goal. As an example, all of the participants were seeking ways to promote services that resonate with a broader audience. With diversity, Acker's gendering organizational processes of gender

relationships, identity, and divisions were replaced with new thoughts, insights, and experiences that depended upon the precedence of other individuals other than their male predecessors. The female board members sought to present social responsibilities as a general good for the general wellbeing of the public community. Acker's gendering organization theory exemplified the need to look at ways to support organizational processes from the female perspective.

Overall, the female board members saw the advantages of gender quota policy plans as a way to open doors to future female board members by contributing their voices on ways to improve the gendering organizational processes. The decision-making responsibility that comes with being a member of the board of directors enabled them to direct resources to gendering organizational processes that help women make sense of their career journey. Programs such as mentoring programs, succession planning, and making sense of the definition of diversity supported the impact of the gender quota policy plans on the number of women on the board of directors. These mentoring programs helped women overcome challenging moments in their lived experiences on how to balance their family and career obligations (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). The way female board members incorporated the diversity of their views among the board members and the experts was very important in creating an open atmosphere and constructive work environment that fully appreciated the various perspectives analyzing organizational issues.

The results of the research study indicated the gender quota policy plans had positive impacts on the lived experiences of the female board members when

implementing the policy plans. Mentoring programs, succession planning protocols, and inclusive mission and vision statements were all ways female board members interpreted implementing the gender quota policy plans to help support gender diversity on the board of directors. Without the decision-making powers of the female board members to contribute to the rigor of board discussion, the female board members would have had limited access to challenge gender organizational processes with proactive practices. Acker's gendering organizational processes would have continued to reproduce and reinforce gender perceptions that women did possess the capabilities and abilities to lead nonprofit organizations. The *Result* table linked the themes that emerged during the data analysis with the insights, experiences, and thoughts of the participants regarding how the gender quota policy plans impacted their lived experiences.

Limitations of the Study

Several methods addressed the limitations of the study. These methods included the triangulation of sources and constructing a codebook. I used the triangulation of various sources to increase the trustworthiness of the results in the study. Second, my personal thoughts were logged into a journal in order to maintain neutrality on the impact of gender quota policy plans on the female board members. The journal was used to separate personal thoughts from the participants on the impact of gender quota policy plans on their lived experiences. The journal prevented any personal bias from being incorporated into the analysis of the findings.

I used a codebook to write down the concepts and their defining experiences and the themes with their defining experiences, thoughts, and insights to avoid shifting their

meanings throughout the study. I was willing to discuss all the discrepancies and outlining concepts from being addresses in the result and discussion section of the study. All experiences were acknowledged in the discussion section. I noticed that the only shift in the definition was in regards to how the participants interpreted diversity during the analysis process. Participant 1 defined diversity as a way to advance women issues, Participant 6 described it as an inclusive definition that empowers women, and the other participants viewed diversity is a way to address various social ills within the community.

A second limitation was the limited number of participants and, as a result, attracted participants with similar educational backgrounds and social experiences. The participants held similar impressive educational backgrounds; they were between the ages of 40 to 59, served on the board of directors between 0 to 10 years, and represented three races. The participants knew of the importance of gender quota policy plans due to their marginalized status and thus helped provide the perspective to explore the gender quota policy from a different angle. Their experiences as marginalized female impacted the results of the study in two ways. First, the participants had previous experiences on how gendering organizational processes impacted their lived experiences. Second, the rich composition of experiences of the participants would be hard to replicate in another study because the participants were not representative of the experiences, thoughts, and insights of most of the female population. As a result, there was further need for research on the impact of gender quota policy plans from the perspective of a diverse group of female board members.

Lastly, the lack of widespread knowledge of gender quota policy plans among the female board members decreased the rigor of the findings on how gender quota policy plans impacted their lived experiences. The participants' responses reflected their optimism at increasing the number of female board members using gender quota policy plans. Participant 1 was the only participant to comprehend the impact of gender organizational processes on sustaining the impact of the gender quota policy plans. She was the participant to describe the need for succession planning protocols. The rest of the participants touched on their ability to promote mentoring programs and inclusive mission and vision statements as members of the board of directors. The responses to the interview questions called attention to the overall outcomes of the gender quota policy plans of increasing the number of female board members on the board of directors.

Recommendations

The findings brought up several instances where gender quota policy plans helped challenge the gendering organizational processes of the nonprofit organizations by promoting an increase in the number of female board members serving on the board of directors. However, the study had two key areas that need to be further examined by scholars. It was important to study the characteristics that define diversity from the perspective of the board members. As indicated by the demographic profile of the participants, the female members of the board of directors had similar social experiences and educational backgrounds. Secondly, a deeper understanding of how to use practical practices to help support female board members will be useful to support their career journeys.

Even though the gender quota policy plans increased the diversity of the experiences and insights on the board of directors the experiences, the responses from the participants to the interview questions helped expand on how the gender organizational processes hindered and supported the lived experiences of female board members. The participants reported having an extensive academic background and experiences. It was evident that the new insights, perspectives, and experiences of the female board members were important at recognizing the gendering organizational processes of the recruiting methods of the board members. Board members had to understand the connection between how the vision and mission statements of the organization correspond to providing the necessary services to the less fortunate. Incoming board members had to have strong, supportive, and challenging relationships with various demographic groups within the community. Lastly, new board members had to be willing to take precedence of incorporating new knowledge and information in the decision-making processes.

The educational levels of the female board members were similar because they all hold post graduate degrees. An educational background helped decrease the gender equality gap because it added to the abilities and capabilities of women to look at issues from new perspectives (Kanadli et al., 2018). The gender quota policy plans supported providing women with access to decision-making positions as a way to challenge existing gender divisions and perceptions, but it did not address whether or not their skills and capabilities played a role in the decision-making processes. Educational opportunities supported investing in education as a way to increase the number of women on the board of directors. The diversity of the female board members allowed them to look at the

gender quota policy plans as a steppingstone to challenge gendering organizational processes with practical measures such as succession planning, mentoring programs, and inclusive mission and vision statements.

Second, I recommend further studies on how new gendering organizational processes promote the number of female board members based upon how the concept of diversity is practiced by the participants. These concepts include branding, cultural interdependence between organizations, and press releases. Acker's (1990) gender organization theory helped to address the impact of how gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female board members by exploring how they make sense of the gendering organizational processes within their nonprofit organization. The findings of the study indicated challenging gendering organizational processes by using the experiences and insights of the female board members to extend the knowledge and information on how to make sense of female-friendly policies on women.

Two cases from the literature review supported the findings of the study. The first study conducted by Brieger et al. (2019) using Acker's gender organization theory showed how building and fostering relationships between schoolgirls and female science and math teachers helped increase female enrollment in sciences and math courses. The second study based upon Acker's gender organization theory indicated how fathers contributing in household chores and raising their children showed a heightened interest to pursue math and science-related courses (Carrasco et al., 2015; Croft, Schmader, Block & Baron, 2014). Both of these studies supported gendering organizational processes as ways to increase the number of women pursuing the sciences and math fields of study.

The studies indicated that an increase in the role models and mentoring programs helped women gain experience and knowledge of their roles as board members.

However, there continued to be a need for more studies that explore how the participants interpret the ideal outcome of the gender quota policy plans. The findings support the increase in the number of women on the board of directors, but they fail to take into consideration the differences within the female population. However, questions continued to emerge on how to make sense of the mentoring programs. As indicated by Participant 5, it was only because of her connections in the business area she was able to build up a network of female mentees to mentor over the years. There continued to be a lack of knowledge and information on how these mentoring programs were manifesting themselves under the gender quota policy plans.

The findings of this study indicated that female board members favored gender quota policy plans in conjunction with changes to the gender organizational processes of their nonprofit organizations. The literature review touched on the gender organizational processes such as succession planning, mentoring programs, and mission and vision statements that were considered by the participants as important ways to support women interested in serving in leadership roles. Acker's gender organization theory helped explore how gender organizational processes impact the lived experiences of women in two ways. The theory shed light on how the participants made sense of the gender quota policy plans using their experiences, thoughts, and insights. Secondly, the participants were able to shift gender perceptions in favor of female board members by making their presence visible to the public. Even though I found it very surprising to notice the

importance of the mission and vision statements in attracting female board members. The literature thoroughly addressed the importance of mentoring programs and succession planning in supporting women considering serving on the board of directors. Overall, the findings of the study supported Acker's theory of how important it is to explore the impact of female-friendly policies from the perspective of how the women make sense of the policies on their lived experiences.

I will recommend further studies on the impact of gender quota policy plans on how the gender diversity of the board members and the gendering organizational practices impact the number of female board members on the board of directors. Gender quota policy plans, as indicated by the six respondents to the invitation to participate in the study, had no considerable knowledge and information on gender quota policy plans. The participants in the study did not have a clear understanding of how a diverse board of directors helps maximize the rigor of the decision-making. The participants held their own views on how to define diversity among the female board members. Whereas, the participants noticed the advantages of the gender quota policy plans on increasing the numbers of female board members. The participants failed to appreciate how to make sense of their diversity. It will be important for future studies to explore how gender diversity impacted the outcomes of the decision-making processes of the board members. To reach a level of creativity and capabilities among female board members, the power dynamics between board members need to be fully explored in future studies.

Implications

Implications for Positive Social Change

This study expanded the knowledge and information of how to benefit from gender quota policy plans in a way to promote gendering organizational process that helps sustain an increase in the number of female board members. The increased number of female board members opened up the opportunity for them to make sense of their experiences in a way that promotes practices that challenged gender organizational processes that hindered their access to positions on the board of directors. For the gender quota policy plans to make a positive impact on the lived experiences of the female board members the gendering organizational processes had to be changed through proactive practices. There had to be organizational practices in place to support female board members on the board of directors. These practices included succession planning, mentoring programs, and inclusive mission and vision statements. These three themes explain how female board members might increase their numbers on the board of directors using gender quota policy plans.

Knowledge and information on how quota policy plans impacted the lived experiences of female board members expanded existing literature on how to increase gender diversity on the board of directors. Acker's (1990) gender organization theory on the impact of gendering processes on replicating gender perceptions continued to be relevant in the current literature on gender diversity in leadership roles. Additional exploration of how gendering organizational processes was critical at committing to positive social change with a diverse composition of experiences and background among

the members of the board of directors. The findings from this study focused on the gendering organizational process and not only on gender quota policy plans and gender perceptions. The perspective of the female board members helped address how to increase the number of female board members on the board of directors of their respective nonprofit organizations.

Legislation not only addressed gender equality but also put women in a visible position of power to make practical changes to support the policy. The gender quota policy plans were only one of several policies that hope to provide the solution to a lack of female members on the board of directors (Brandth & Bjorkhaug, 2015; Terjesen et al., 2015). According to the findings, solid succession plans, mentoring programs, and inclusive mission and vision statements addressed the phenomenon. Policymakers, who took into consideration how gendering organizational processes continued to replicate and reproduce a similar status quo, would be able to increase the number of women in decision-making roles on the board of directors. Succession planning allowed board members to seek board members that enrich the effectiveness and efficiency of the decision-making processes among the board members. An inclusive mission and vision statement for nonprofit organizations attracted a diverse number of individuals seeking to serve on the board of directors. In addition, mentoring programs helped familiarize potential female board members by increasing their awareness of the necessary abilities and responsibilities of a board member. Mentoring programs helped female board members feel less apprehensive and more comfortable pursuing a seat on the board due to the guidance they received from their mentors.

The findings of this study aligned with Acker's (1990) gender organization theory that described existing gender organizational processes as gender bias. The three overarching themes, succession planning, mentoring, and inclusiveness of vision and mission statements, expanded on the literature on how gendering processes shape the career trajectories of women. Gender quota policy plans were reinforcing and create momentum with sustainable emancipative inertia to consistently increase the number of female board members on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. When gender quota policy plans were seen from the perspective of the female board members there were several instances needed to be addressed for the policy to maximize the number of female board members. Policymakers and decision-makers were able to make a better sense of how gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female board members. Not only create a better sense of their experiences, but they had the power to act upon those experiences that supported the number of female board members on the board of directors through proactive practices. Participants indicated how nurturing relationships and encouraging diversity among board members increased their chances of challenging the gender organizational processes that replicated, reproduced, and reinforced the gender perceptions in leadership roles.

Recommendations for Practice

The gender quota policy plans had the potential to increase the number of female members of the board. The findings of the study pointed to how this gender quota policy plans differed from former female-friendly and progressive policies. Gender quota policy plans ensured female members of the board of directors had the power to provide

personal insight on how the gendering processes of organizations that continued to limit the number of women on the board of directors. It was in this frame of perspective that future gender policy addressed how to provide women with access to opportunities to act on those insights and thoughts like succession planning, professional mentoring programs, and inclusiveness of the mission and vision statements. The study's findings showed how to challenge the existing status quo using the perspectives of the female board members of how gendering processes impacted their aspiration at serving on the board of directors.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study's conclusion regarding how gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of female board members. The analysis of the findings indicates a definite impact of gender quota policy plans on increasing the number of female board members. Three important gender quota policy plans include succession planning, mentoring programs, and inclusiveness of the mission and vision statements of the organization to a broader public population. Gender quota policy plans put female board members in the role of decision-makers that helped them transform their thoughts and experiences to practical responses to gender equality issues. The implications of this study address the female board members' experiences from their perspectives and experiences on how to increase their number of female board members on the nonprofit organizations.

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Appendix A: E-mail Invitation Letter

Gender Quota Policy Plans and Female Members of the Board of Directors

My name is Saidah Traish. I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am inviting you to participate in a study. This study explores how gender quota policy plans may impact the lived experiences of female members of the board of directors. The goal of the gender quota policy plans is to increase the number of women on the board of directors. Some examples of gender quota policy plans include succession planning, professional training programs, female mentoring programs, press releases lauded the contributions of female board members, and social awareness extension programs that tend to attract the support of potential female constituents. I am looking for female board members who work in nonprofit organizations headquartered in the United States and have knowledge of the gender quota policy plans. The purpose of these participants is to gain an understanding of how gender quota policy plans may impact the lived experiences of female board members. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 30 to 60 minutes written interview in your free time and at your discretion. All the participants will be given the opportunity to member check your transcripts for any inaccuracies or misinterpretations. Finally, we will be given a one-to-three pages of an executive summary of the research findings to share with your organization as you wish.

I anticipate the findings of the research may help contribute to positive social change by providing knowledge on how legislation may impact the visibility of women on the board of directors and in leadership roles in general.

If you are interested please reply to the email within one week or sooner so I can send you a consent form and soon after the interview questions. I will appreciate if you can recommend female board members who will be interested in participating in this study by providing them with my information located below. I am at the final stages of my dissertation process and any help at completing my dissertation journey is greatly appreciated.

Best Regards,

Saidah Traish

Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Questions

Gender Quota Policy Plans and Female Members of the Board of Directors

Introductions: Hello, my name is Saidah. I am a graduate student at Walden University. I am at the stage of my research where I am gathering data on the impact the gender quota policy plans on your experiences on the board of directors of nonprofit organizations. More specifically, I am interested in exploring your experiences with gender quota policy plans as a way to increase the number of female members on the board of directors. Gender quota policy plans are designed to increase the number of women on the board of directors, and subsequently help increase their access to the decision-making processes of their organizations. Some examples of gender quota policy plans include succession planning, professional training programs, female mentoring programs, press releases lauded the contributions of female board members, and social awareness extension programs that tend to attract the support of potential female constituents. The findings from the result may help increase awareness of how to allocate organizational resources to support women interested in serving on the board of directors.

As a participant you have the right to refuse to participate in the interview at any time with no negative repercussions. All information from the interview will remain confidential and your identity is anonymous. All of the transcribed transcripts will be held in a safe in a locked cabinet I only know the combination of. The cabinet is located in my place of residence. I am the only person with access to the passcode to the files on my laptop so no one is able to access any information.

I like to start this interview by stating that the credibility of the findings is based on your knowledge of gender quota policy plans within your organization. It is highly recommended that each response to the questions is linked to your experiences with gender quota policy plans to increase the visibility of women on the board of directors

Secondly, I like to start with a few background questions like your current title, description of your responsibilities on the board, how long in the position, educational background, ethnicity/racial identification and age.

Central Research Question: How do gender quota policy plans impact the lived experiences of the female members of the board members on their nonprofit organizations?

Interview questions are listed below:

1. How many years have you served on the board of directors?
2. What is your title?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your ethnicity?
5. What is your educational background?
6. What is your marital status?
7. How do you believe will the gender quota policy plans impact the governance of the board of directors?
8. Have you had any experience in mentoring aspiring female leaders?
9. How do you see your organization's press releases play on how the public interprets the law?

10. In what ways has the gender quota policy plans hindering women who are hoping to serve on the board of directors?
11. Do you believe social awareness on issues of gender diversity played a role in supporting the gender quota policy plans?
12. In what ways has the gender quota policy plans supporting women who are hoping to serve on the board of directors?
13. How has the vision and mission statements of the organization shifted over the past years?

Appendix C: Institutional Review Board Confirmation Number

Walden University's approval number for this study is 10-11-19-0164959
and it expires on Oct. 10th, 2020.