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Impact of Interviewers' Personal Bias on Hiring of Law Enforcement Applicants

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Abstract

Individuals posing a risk to the community who pass preemployment interviews represent a problem for law enforcement departments and their communities. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the shared experiences of participants regarding hiring biases that may exist among individuals tasked with interviewing law enforcement applicants. Argyris's organizational learning theory provided the framework for the study. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with 4 participants who had experience interviewing applicants for placement in a law enforcement department. Data were analyzed to identify themes. Biases included participants' interpretation of applicants' appearance, body language, ability to handle stress/pressure, preparedness for the interview, problem-solving ability, and responses to questions that matched preselected answers applicant interviewers require for scoring purposes. Findings may be used to improve the law enforcement hiring process and to enhance relationships between law enforcement departments and their communities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Employment selection processes differ from field to field and organization to organization. Challenges for hiring personnel consist of selecting the applicant suited for the position open within an organization. Although differences within organizational hiring processes exist, employment interviews represent one of the common methods for applicant selection (Doll, 2018).However, hiring an applicant within the field of law enforcement who lacks the ability to perform necessary tasks poses a threat to other officers and the community. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the study addressing possible biases among hiring personnel during preemployment interviews with law enforcement applicants. This chapter also outlines the problem statement, purpose of the study, significance of the study, background, framework, research question, nature of the study, limitations, sources of data, and a summary.

Background

Hall, Hall, and Perry (2016) examined law enforcement biases and abuse in the illegal use of force against African Americans. Hallet al. examined the racial bias of law enforcement officers and the identification of common racial tendencies of the officers. This study addressed a current issue within the law enforcement community, which is racially biased officers are slipping through the screening process (Hall et al., 2016). Bhalla and Giri (2014)explored organizational stress placed on hiring personnel to locate and replace law enforcement officers who are leaving the department due to burnout created from job stress. Bhalla and Girinoted, that the screening process may be rushed. Hollis and Wilson (2015) also examined burnout rates among law enforcement officers,

which place stress on hiring personal and create situations in which law enforcement applicants are not screened thoroughly, resulting in individuals not suited to work as law enforcement officers finding positions in departments. This situation increases the potential for officer misconduct to continue. Nalla, Lim, and Demirkol (2015) explored the challenges large organizations experience when working toward a shared goal, which influence the quality of work of the organization. Understanding the objective of an organization allows each department to contribute to reaching that goal (Nalla et al., 2015). Lehman (2017) explored the relationship between individuals within an organization by examining the common goals toward which each employee works. Lehman analyzed the behavior patterns of individuals impacting the organization who are working toward a common objective.

Problem Statement

According to Stinson (2015), law enforcement officers have engaged in a variety of career-ending activities from accepting bribes to sexual assault and driving under the influence. Law enforcement agencies attempting to lower chances of misconduct have focused on the preemployment aspects of officer selection. According to Piraino (2017), law enforcement agencies attempting to reduce misconduct use polygraph screening to select more suitable officers. Preemployment screening methods also include interview portions similar to polygraph screening attempts to select officers fit to follow department policy. However, even with preemployment screening, individuals pass department screening processes to commit misconduct. A better understanding of hiring personnel's bias and behavior patterns could improve law enforcement screening processes.

Stinson and Liederbach (2016)explored law enforcement misconduct cases and found that the age of the officer engaged in the misconduct and the level of experience working in the department varied from entry level to 20plus years of experience. Stinson and Liederbach found that the possibility of officer misconduct can vary from individual to individual. According to Stinson (2015) although officers convicted of abuse and criminal action range in age, gender, religion, and location, all officers who engaged in misconduct passed their departments' screening process. Individuals posing a risk to the community who pass preemployment interviews represent a problem for law enforcement departments and communities. Analyzing the behavior patterns of hiring personnel responsible for conducting preemployment interviews with law enforcement applicants may reveal whether biases exist among hiring personnel, which allow unsuitable individuals to slip through the hiring process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to determine whether biases exist among hiring personnel and to determine whether these biases have any impact on their decision-making processes during preemployment interviews with law enforcement applicants. In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals in positions in law enforcement agencies who have responsibility for conducting preemployment interviews of applicants. Analyzing whether hiring personal biases exist during preemployment interviewers is important because preferences can negatively impact law enforcement departments and local communities. Determining whether personal biases

exist among hiring personnel during preemployment interviews may contribute to efforts to control possible negative effects of the hiring process.

Research Question

The intent of this study was to explore whether bias influences the decision-making process of hiring personnel in law enforcement departments. The following research question was used to guide the study: What biases if any exist that influence the decisions of hiring personnel during interviews with law enforcement applicants?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Argyris's (1976) organizational learning theory. The study's primary focus was the decisions of law enforcement officers and whether these decisions are based on valid information. Organizational learning theory was used to explore the possibility of resentment between law enforcement officers and administrators influencing the hiring process. According to Alarid (1999), organizational learning theory focuses on performance reviews of law enforcement officers and the administrative role during these reviews. During these reviews, the department determines the capability of law enforcement officers after spending time working within the community.

Organizational learning theory focuses on law enforcement officers learning new methods of policing in the community. However, Alarid (1999) explain that for new methods of law enforcement to occur throughout the organization, all divisions must follow shared goals for success. Mawdsley and Somaya (2016) analyzed law enforcement organizations to evaluate the impact of individual behaviors on law enforcement

departments. The ability of an individual to perform the job duties impacts others throughout the organization. According to Russell, Cole, and Jones (2014), positive impacts increase productivity while negative impacts slow the process, creating stress on employees. This follows the guiding principles of organizational learning theory.

Hiring personnel in law enforcement work toward a common goal of creating a safe environment for the community. According to Desmond, Papachristos, and Kirk (2016), abuse of authority from a single law enforcement officer affects community opinion of other law enforcement officers. The decisions of hiring personnel conducting law enforcement applicant interviews impact the organization. The quality of work conducted by the hiring personnel may allow unsuitable individuals to be placed in positions of authority in the community.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative phenomenological approach. I conducted in-depth interviews to gain an understanding of the potential biases that may exist among hiring personnel who work in law enforcement departments and conduct interviews with law enforcement applicants. Interview questions were constructed to determine whether biases impact the outcome of law enforcement applicant interviews. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), the phenomenological approach is used to explore the experiences of participants to gain greater clarity on the participants' understanding of the phenomenon. I wanted to determine whether biases exist among hiring personnel during the interview process with law enforcement applicants.

A qualitative phenomenological study was appropriate to determine whether participants have biases while conducting interviews with law enforcement applicants. This approach allowed me to make sense of the data collected from the participants as I explored the hiring personnel's potential biases during and after interviews with law enforcement applicants. I attempted to understand the experiences of hiring personnel by examining their experiences during interviews with law enforcement applicants to determine what factors impact their decision-making process in selecting applicants for employment in the department.

Source of Data

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the personal bias of hiring personnel during the interview process with law enforcement applicants. I used a phenomenological as approach because I wanted to understand the perceptions of hiring personnel conducting law enforcement applicant interviews. The design of this study required identifying a group of individuals who currently worked or had worked as hiring personnel for law enforcement departments within the last 5years. Participants selected for the study provided data that allowed me to gain an understanding of their perceptions of the hiring process. The geographical location for participant selection enabled me to conduct face-to-face interviews with individuals willing to take part in this research; however, other formats were available in the form of telephone interviews and email interviews if requested by the participant.

Limitations

The sample represented participants in law enforcement organizations responsible for conducting law enforcement applicant interviews. A possible limitation was recruiting participants willing to take part in the study because it addressed a sensitive topic in the field of law enforcement. Potential participants may have chosen not to participate out of fear for their professional careers. As a result, I included participants who may have recently retired.

Significance

This study filled a gap in understanding by focusing on the behavior patterns of hiring personnel during the interview process with law enforcement applicants. The goal was to determine whether any biases exist among hiring personnel that influence the interview process with law enforcement applicants. According to Denver, Siwach, and Bushway (2017), organizations use background checks to identify individuals with a history of criminal activity, but an interview's main purpose is to determine an applicant's ability to complete job-related tasks. Understanding possible biases held by hiring personnel during the interview process may provide insight into the ability of the hiring personnel to accurately evaluate an individual's capability to work in the department and the community. Identifying possible biases on the part of hiring personnel, which may influence the outcome of the hiring process, may provide insight into a weak point in the hiring process that allows unsuitable applicants to gain employment. I analyzed possible biases and behaviors that may influence hiring

personnel during preemployment interviews to further the understanding of the screening process used to hire an officer capable of fulfilling their duties in the community.

Summary

This chapter focused on the purpose of the study to determine whether hiring biases exist among hiring personnel and to determine whether these biases influence their decision-making process during preemployment interviews with law enforcement applicants. This chapter also outlined the problem, purpose, significance, background, framework, research question, nature of the study, limitations, and sources of data.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

According to Stinson (2015), law enforcement officers have engaged in a variety of career-ending activities from accepting bribes to sexual assault and driving under the influence. Law enforcement agencies attempting to reduce likelihood of misconduct have focused on the preemployment aspects of officer selection. According to Piraino (2017), law enforcement agencies attempting to reduce misconduct use polygraph screening to select more suitable officers. However, even with preemployment screening, individuals pass department screening processes and commit misconduct. Hiring personnel's bias and behavior patterns represent an area that could improve the understanding of law enforcement screening processes.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to determine whether hiring biases exist among hiring personnel and to determine whether these biases have any impact on their decision-making processes during preemployment interviews with law enforcement applicants. I conducted in-depth interviews with individuals in positions in law enforcement agencies who have or had responsibility for conducting preemployment interviews with applicants. Determining whether personal biases exist among hiring personnel during preemployment interviews may contribute to efforts to control possible negative impacts of the hiring process on the community. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth review of the literature regarding employment decision-making in organizations, the theoretical framework, and the historical and current implementation of organization goal setting.

Literature Search Strategy

For this literature review, I used peer-reviewed journals located in Walden University's library. EBSCOhost was used with the following search terms: *decision making in organizations*, *law enforcement management*, *organizational theory*, *organizational theory* and *management*, *law enforcement organization hiring practices*, *law enforcement hiring standards*, and *application interviews*. Other peer-reviewed sources were found using ProQuest with the following search terms: *interview bias*, *employment application interviews*, and *human resources standards for law enforcement officers*. Google Scholar was used to locate additional peer-reviewed articles using the same search terms.

I was unable to locate any literature that addressed decision-making bias during law enforcement application interviews. However, I located literature from peer-reviewed journals addressing interview bias in other fields of study. These fields consisted of general management and behavior understanding. These studies provided insight into the importance of understanding interview biases during the preemployment applicant selection process. Although peer-reviewed journal articles were located in other fields, the literature gap was the lack of similar studies focusing on law enforcement hiring practices.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this qualitative phenomenological study was Argyris's (1976) organizational learning theory. Development of organizational theory began as concepts for management and administrative efficiency. With the intent of all

personnel within an organization to work toward a common shared goal, Taylor, Weber, and Fayol were credited with the development of classical organizational theories (Nhema, 2015).However, classical organizational theories excluded law enforcement management concepts. Argyris's organizational learning theory was developed from classical organizational theories for law enforcement management strategies.

Organizational learning theory was relevant to exploring how personnel responsible for conducing law enforcement interviews may overlook warning signs. Missing warning signs during the interview stage places strain on current officers. Organizational learning theory consists of the concepts of feedback and learning along with the concept that one department's/individual's work affects other departments/individuals in the same organization (Argyris, 1976).

Furthermore, multiple departments intertwined within organizations impacts the standards of the organization. The hiring process in law enforcement departments impacts law enforcement. During the hiring process, hiring personnel's responsibility is to identify applicants best suited for working in the field of law enforcement. Warning signs being overlooked affects the overall standards of the department because law enforcement officers follow mission statements to serve and protect the community (Xie, 2019). Hiring individuals who do not meet the standards set by the law enforcement organizations places strain on current officers to take additional time to train these new officers regarding the expectations of the department.

Feedback and learning make up the cycle of organizational learning theory. Employees who provide feedback on aspects of workplace duties, along with

organization goals, promote a workplace environment for learning (Xie, 2019).

Communication between departments and employees results in a management system

that allows employees to understand the specific needs of the organization. According to

Kit Fai Pun and Man Yin Rebecca Yiu (2017), individuals understanding workplace

responsibilities allows for increased support and ability to assist while working with other

departments in an organization.

Organizational learning theory's main concepts include individual learning within

an organization along with receiving proper feedback (Alarid, 1999). Argyis (1976)

argued that lack of feedback within a law enforcement department results in a slower

learning process. Creating an environment within law enforcement departments for

relationships between law enforcement officers and administration may reduce the

likelihood of conflict (Harvey, Morris, &Muller Santos, 2017).

Although organizational learning theory focuses on law enforcement performance

and reviews, the influence of feedback on performance also includes hiring personnel.

Wareham, Smith, and Lambert (2015) claimed that law enforcement departments' use of

recourse in hiring, training, and educating law enforcement officers creates problems

within departments with high involuntary turnover rates. This indicates a

misunderstanding within department regarding the needs of the organization. According

to AbdussalaamLyandaLsmail, Abdul-Halim Abdul-Majid, &Hammed

OluwaseyiMusibau (2017) organizations depend on employees to possess knowledge of

expectations and the ability to perform within standards.

Law enforcement culture consists of an exclusionary concept with administration departments viewed as impeding law enforcement officers (Cohen, 2018). King (2014) argued that the exclusionary values of law enforcement officers place strain on departments within the organization. Law enforcement officers' resistance to administration concepts along with administration lacking a complete understanding of law enforcement officers' daily activity impedes learning between departments (Neubert & Dyck, 2016) and prevents administration and law enforcement officers from working toward a common goal.

Argyis's work has been used in organizations to improve department learning and efficacy (Alarid, 1999). Furthermore, organizational learning theory provides a method to improve workplace understanding through use of communication. Feedback on performance and the needs of an organization allows for solutions to emerge (Malbašić, Rey, & Potočan, 2015).

Literature Review

Employment Interviews

Employment interview processes rely on the judgment of the applicant and the interviewer; as the interviewer explores the ability of the applicant to perform job duties, the applicant forms initial opinions of the organization from their contact with the interviewer (Nikolaou & Georgiou, 2018). Doll (2018) noted that organizations use a structure for the interview process to find the applicant best suited for the position. DeLong and Elbeck (2018) argued that interviews consist of performance on the part of the applicant demonstrating confidence and skills to the interviewer.

Tan, Teoh, and Tan (2016) found that the performance of the applicant determines the response given from the interviewer, and interviewers' decisions are based more on the manner of the applicant's response than the information in the response. According to Culbertson, Weyhrauch, and Waples (2016), interviewers find it challenging to determine whether an applicant is truthful, resulting in dishonest individuals earning passage to the next stage in the hiring process. Powell and Bourdage (2016) argued that the identification of dishonest applicants increases the likelihood that organizations will hire qualified employees, and training individuals for the interviewer position increases their ability to identify dishonest applicants.

Although first impressions for the applicant are important, interviewers learn methods of detecting deception cues (Huss, Jhileek, &Butler, 2017). Schneider, Powell, and Roulin (2015) found that applicants instructed to lie during the interview showed signs of less smiling along with appearing less anxious during the interview. The possibility of deception and the ability to detect deception calls into question the validity of employment interviews, because more qualified applicants can be overlooked (Roulin, Bangerter, & Levashina, 2015). However, organizations trust interviews in the applicant selection process based on stricter interview scoring methods.

Organization Decision-Making

Decision-making within any organization requires in-depth thought and understanding of the operation, situation, or choice presented to the organization (Kahneman, Lovallo, &Sibony, 2019). Luoma (2016) noted that although organizations use the information to narrow the choice for optimal outcomes, reaching complete clarity

is a difficult process. Fulthorp and D'Eloia (2015) observed that organizations use different methods to reach clarity in decision-making when hiring applicants.

According to Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, and Thatcher (2016), one method to gain clarity that organizations turn to is social media sites to gather information on the capability of applicants; however, organizations risk placing trust in the information while ignoring other possibilities for reaching a decision. Kausel, Culbertson, and Madrid (2016) argued that misplaced trust increases the chance of hiring personnel making an error in judgment during the process of hiring applicants. Derous, Buijsrogge, Roulin, and Duyck (2016) noted that reaching clarity requires time; however, interviewers place too much confidence in their ability to create quick judgments about applicants upon initial interactions.

Frieder, van Iddekinge, and Raymark (2016)stated even in organizations where interviewers take time to decide on applicants during the interview process, the process is sped up as more applicants are included. Bahar, and Hewertson (2015) observed that organizations with high hiring standards may improve the process by creating an interview environment that allows the applicant to organize and respond to questions. The process involves the possibility of organizations misjudging the applicant during the interview; organizations either pay to correct the behavior or terminate the employee and start the hiring process again (Kurian, Ribeiro, &Gomes, 2016).Lambert (2017) argued that organizations are slow to develop new decision-making strategies because the process requires funds and time.

Interview Bias

Bias in hiring interviews exist within both the interviewer and interviewee; however, at times unknown to those taking part in the interview (Chamberlain, 2016). According to Devine, Forscher, Cox, Kaatz, Sheridan, &Cames (2017), common bias during the hiring process for positions with high male employment includes gender and race bias. Carlsson, and Sinclair (2018), argued individuals interruptions differ during application interviews; individuals will interrupt a situation as possessing high bias even if others determine low bias rates represent the norm.

Unconscious biases exist in part to the physical demands of the position or views of the interviewer on the group from which the applicant is included. Law enforcement departments also include age restrictions which limit the age at which an individual enters the field. Although age discrimination is illegal in the United States, age restrictions can influence interviewers while interviewing an older individual for physically demanding positions (Barrington, 2015).

Biases within the interview process still exist; however, methods exist to lower biases from interviewers while conducting interviews with applicants (Merritt, Gardner, Huber, Wexler, Banister, & Staley 2018). Derous, Buijsrogge, Roulin, & Duyck (2016) further continued the responsibility for implementing bias checks during the hiring process falls on the employer to ensure the interviewer was trained to limit biases and uses biases checks strategies during the interview. Benitez, Luis Padilla, van de Vijver, & Cuevas (2018) argued although bias checks limit the possibility of interviews biases

responses provided from applicants still posses the possibility for unconscious bias when interviewers lack understanding in the response from applicants for specific questions.

Applicants use a verity of methods to improve their interview performance to improve their chances of employment further; these methods include test interviews where an applicant interviews with an individual who provides feedback on weak areas the applicant requires improvement (Smith, Boteler Humm, Fleming, Jordan, Wright, Ginger, & Bell 2015).While Kulig, and Blanchard (2016) found interviewers with additional training were able to improve the interview process along with interviewers gaining more knowledge of the applicant through fewer interviews.

Wolthoff (2018) argues the purpose of the interview is to demonstrate the applicants' productivity and ability within the position. Lowes, Omrin, Moore, Sulman, Pascoe, McKee, &Gaon (2016) argued interviewers seek specific answers to the questions asked during the interview. Although used to gain insight into the applicants' ability for the position, applicants learn what interviews want and provide those answers.

According to Decker, Ortiz, Spohn, & Hedberg (2015) regardless of the applicant's background or qualifications the interview or first face to face meeting with hiring personnel either increases or decreases applicants chances of employment. Reynolds (2017) continued employers rating applicants often rate other applicants lower after coming into contact with a perceived outstanding applicant. Additionally, employers use the first contact with an applicant as the deciding factor for accepting the applicant to the next stage in the hiring process.

Pinto, Patanakul, & Pinto (2017) found an aspect of the hiring decision process for applications resorts to the likeability of the applicant throughout the interview process. Hiring personnel perception of the applicant possesses an effect on the outcome of the hiring process. Social stigma influences the unconscious bias of applicants' likeability, either placing the appearance of the applicant as likable our unlikeable (Scrivano, Sciso, & Giumetti, 2017).

Law Enforcement Management

Duties of law enforcement department's primary organizational goal are to respond and protect the community the law enforcement department resides (Schuck, 2014). Inal, (2015) argued depending on the location, size, and type of law enforcement department, the organization secondary goals/objectives differ. Furthermore, the differences and type of department impact the management aspects of the organization (Perez, Bromley, & Cochran, 2017).

Willits (2014) explained the size and location of a law enforcement department impacts organizational influence and outcomes. Larger departments located within large cities possibly house an administrative staff responsible for dealing with hiring officers; along with overseeing the management of the department (Jurek, and Matusiak, 2017). Smaller rural departments depend on county or city governments to manage similar administrative aspects of the organization.

Depending on where management resides within a law enforcement department either with an in house administrative staff, county, or city government influences the management style of law enforcement departments (McCarty, and Dewald 2017).Terrill,

and Paoline (2017) argued in house administrative staffs bridged between local governments and law enforcement officers possibly provide these administrative personnel with a greater knowledge of law enforcement department responsibilities and needs. While Kasner (2017) argued rural governments possess direct control over their law enforcement departments, a full understanding of the responsibilities and requirements of the department could be lacking in these locations.

Understanding where management control resides impacts law enforcement officer hiring standards and process (Yu, 2018). Depending on the department administrative personnel either oversee the entire process or the process shifts between administrative personnel to law enforcement officer oversight and back to administrative decisions depending on the stage in the hiring process (Hilal, and Densley, & Jones 2017). Furthermore, differing hiring practices for law enforcement officers' results in departments with high standards and departments with lower standards (Shjarback, and White 2016).

According to Wood (2017) different hiring standards for law enforcement departments potentially provide a law enforcement applicant who was found to be unfit for hire in one location to find employment in a different department. Lim, and Sloan (2016) argued rejection from hire from one law enforcement department does not automaticity mean the applicant should be unable to work with a different department. However, the reason for the rejection matters and departments with lower standards risk the possibility of missing the quality of the applicant which caused their rejection from the other department (SanjaKutnjakIvkovic, and Haberfeld, 2016).

Fan (2015) found that even with law enforcement departments with higher hiring standards risk hiring applicants who would otherwise be rejected during the hiring process. According to Jolicoeur, & Grant (2018) a lack of an understanding of official duties, interviewer bias, or interviewee deception represents possible means for unfit applicants to find employment within a law enforcement department. While a law enforcement department with lower hiring standards potentially encounters a greater risk of hiring an unfit applicant (Giblin, and Galli, 2017).

Summary and Conclusions

Research on interviewer biases exists within other fields of study, such as business, behavior understanding, and general organization management. However, there is lacking research on similar issues within law enforcement hiring practices. The implementations of understanding interview hiring biases within law enforcement organizations are necessary for ensuring quality applicants are working within the community.

While the research was found supporting the concept of interviewer hiring biases, a gap exists within law enforcement organizations exploring similar concerns. The information available on the topic of interview hiring biases explored potential causes and the damage from interview hiring biases. The same level of in-depth exploration has yet to explore if similar damaging effects exist within law enforcement hiring practices.

The objective of this qualitative study is to analyze the impact of personal bias on the decision making of hiring personnel during pre-employment interviews of law enforcement officers. This study contributed to the current body of literature by analyzing

similar interview hiring biases within law enforcement hiring practices; by analyzing

individuals responsible for conducting pre-employment interviews with law enforcement

applicants.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to determine whether any hiring biases exist among hiring personnel and to determine whether these biases have any impact on their decision-making processes during preemployment interviews with law enforcement applicants. The design for this study included identification of a small group of individuals within law enforcement agencies who are responsible for interviewing law enforcement officer applicants. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology for this study. I also include the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and ethical procedures for the study.

Research Design and Rationale

I used a qualitative phenomenological design to explore hiring personnel's perception of the interview process for law enforcement applicants. The qualitative phenomenological design allowed me to understand hiring personnel's experiences with law enforcement applicant interviews. A qualitative phenomenological design provided a method to recognize the importance of the responses from participants to answer the research question: What biases if any exist that influence the decisions of hiring personnel during interviews with law enforcement applicants? Collecting data from participants and analyzing the data aligned with the phenomenological design (see Creswell, 2013). I used a phenomenological design to collect data from participants, analyze the data, and identify the shared experiences of participants. The

phenomenological design allows the researcher to understand shared life experiences of participants regarding the phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004).

The phenomenological design provides a method of understanding complex social science phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In the current study, the phenomenological design involved the identification of participants who have experience in interviewing law enforcement applicants. I chose a phenomenological design because I wanted to understand the decision-making process of law enforcement applicant during interviews. The phenomenological design allowed me to understand participants' experiences regarding the phenomenon under study (see Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Role of the Researcher

The purpose of this study was to determine whether any hiring biases exist among hiring personnel. Furthermore, I explored how potential relationship biases and hiring personnel's decision-making may influence the outcome of law enforcement preemployment interviews. My role as researcher was to analyze the participants' experiences related to the topic of this study. My role was a researcher and interviewer. A researcher's role is to remain objective and open to the experiences of the participants (Hatch, 1996).

I did not have any personal or professional relationship with the participants in this study, and I avoided biases by not leading participants during the data collection stage. It was my role as the researcher to remain neutral during this study and accept data from participants as factual. Although I have not undergone or conducted a law enforcement interview, I have taken part in other interviews in the field of criminal

justice, notably security officer, probation officer, and corrections officer. To limit researcher bias, I selected law enforcement organizations with whom I had no prior personal or professional connections.

My role as a researcher also included allowing participants to review their responses. I remained open to the participants by answering questions and providing details of the process before data collection commenced. I explained participant confidentiality and the procedure for collecting data for the study.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The population for this qualitative phenomenological study consisted of individuals in law enforcement organizations with experience interviewing law enforcement applicants. Purposeful random sampling was used to select participants for this study. Inclusion criteria included employment in a law enforcement department and experience conducting preemployment interviews with law enforcement applicants. To participate in this study, participants had to meet the selection criteria.

I contacted individuals with law enforcement experience to locate the participants for this study. To ensure a credible and reliable sample size, I intended to interview 10 participants with experience conducting law enforcement applicant interviews. I attempted to make contact with individuals with law enforcement applicant interviewing experience by informing potential participants who I am and what the research entails. I repeated this process until I obtained four participants who met the selection criteria and who agreed to take part in the study.

Selecting the research design narrows the researcher's method for obtaining credibility, reliability, and saturation from the population sample (Small, 2009). The research question and research design determine the number of participants needed to obtain data saturation. Phenomenological studies can obtain data saturation from a population sample of 10 participants (Creswell, 2013).

Instrumentation

The goal of this study was to explore the decision-making process of hiring personnel during law enforcement application interviews. Collecting data for this study consisted of interviewing participants who had experience interviewing law enforcement applicants. The instrumentation followed qualitative methods for data collection using interviews and analysis of observations (see Chenail, 2011). Interviews allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words regarding the decision-making process. These steps were used for data collection:

1. I obtained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB # 12-11-19-0743526)before collecting data.

2. I contacted individuals with law enforcement applicant interviewing experience through telephone calls and emails.

3. I met with each participant face to face or via telephone before the interview and provided a consent form for the participant to read and provide consent.

4. I collected data via face-to-face interviews, either, telephone interviews, or email.

The data collection instrument during the interview process was a digital audio recorder. All information collected on the digital audio recorder was used for analysis of the responses provided by participants. Recording the interview can be an essential tool for researchers for analyzing the data (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection

The target population for this study consisted of hiring personnel with experience interviewing law enforcement applicants. Depending on the participant's availability, I conducted interviews with participants through face to face interviews or telephone. I recorded the interview on a digital recorder along and took notes during the interview. To remain within the frame of qualitative interview parameters, I scheduled interviews to be a minimum of 30 to 45 minutes (see Gill, Steward, Treasure, &Chadwick, 2008).I provided participants with a consent form to read and consent to before the start of the interview.

I conducted the interviews using open-ended questions to gain insight into the decision-making process of hiring individuals during preemployment interviews with law enforcement applicants. The locations and method of the interviews were chosen by the participants along with times that best suited the participants. During the conclusion of each interview, I asked whether the participant had any further questions, and I asked whether I could contact the participant if I had further questions regarding the data.

After the interviews were completed, I transcribed the recordings for analysis. Each participant was assigned a code (P1, P2, P3, P4). The data were saved on a password-protected computer along with hard copies of the information stored in a

locked filing cabinet. I ensured that participant responses would bekept confidential and would be destroyed after 5years per Walden University guidelines.

Data Analysis

Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed the digital recordings for analysis. I conducted several reviews from the digital recordings to ensure all information was transcribed and to limit mistakes and biases. During data analysis, researchers structure the information from participants for comparison and to identify themes shared by the participants (Burnard, Gill, Steward, Treasure, &Chadwick, 2008). Once I transcribed the participants' interviews, I hand coded the data for analysis of common themes. I organized the codes into categories and themes. I used Microsoft Excel for coding the thematic analysis.

I analyzed the data for common themes in hiring personnel's decision-making process. I also took note of relevant ideas or concepts shared from each participant. I extracted statements to understand how participants perceive decision-making within an interview setting for law enforcement applicants. I identified all relevant information that addressed the research question.

<center>**Issues of Trustworthiness**</center>

Credibility

To ensure credibility, I applied for and obtain approval from the Walden University IRB before collecting data. Due to the potential harm caused to the participants for taking part in the study, I recommended that the interviews take place at neutral sites, but I also allowed participants to have the final choice in interview location.

Allowing participants to choose the interview site increases the accuracy of participant responses (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). All participants were provided a copy of their transcribed interviews for transcript review. This ensured accuracy by allowing participants to review their statements and make changes.

Participants had experience interviewing law enforcement applicants, which ensured familiarity with the phenomenon being studied. Ensuring participants' familiarity with the phenomenon interviewing them in neutral sites increased the accuracy of the information provided. Accurate responses increases the credibility of the study (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 199).Following IRB requirements also increases credibility because the participants have the option of continuing the interview if the interview passes the maximum set time, of refusing to answer questions, of making changes to responses after the interview, and of dropping out of the study at any time. Allowing these options to the participants increases accuracy and credibility of the study.

Transferability

I used a strategy to select participants who had knowledge and experience with law enforcement application interviews. Transferability was obtained through participant selection and in-depth data collection. The data collected from the interviews depicted the perceptions of the participants for this study. Results may be transferable to similar law enforcement hiring practices.

Dependability

Dependability was reached on the part of the researcher through the process of having detailed records of the interviews conducted, recording of the interviews,

transcribing the interviews, participants reviewing the transcripts, and data analysis. Also, I reviewed the data multiple times to ensure mistakes and biases are kept in check throughout the process. I also used bracketing to reduce biases further to ensure the reliability of the study.

Confirmability

Bracketing ensured that my biases are kept in check and exclude any personal opinions during the interview process. I documented the entire research process and review the process multiple times to ensure all necessary steps and measures are in place per Walden University policy. Confirmability was established through the process of documenting the research process and following Walden University and IRB policies.

Ethical Procedures

Before any data collection, I applied for Walden University IRB approval of the research study. Once I obtained approval by Walden University IRB, I begin data collection. I contacted individuals who have worked within law enforcement agencies for the study participants. Before taking part in the research study, each participant was provided a copy of the consent form, which explained the participants' rights within the study and agreement to take part in the study.

As the researcher, I had to ensure the safety of the participants taking part in the study. To minimize any harm to the participants, the participants had control over the location of the interviews for data collection. Multiple methods for data collection were options for the participants; face to face interviews, telephone, or electronic methods.

These options provided a method to minimize harm to the participants taking part in the research study.

I did not promise or provide any compensation to the participant for taking part in the study. I did not force participants to take part in the study or force participants to answer questions they chose not to respond. Before the interviews, participants were informed again they have the option to refuse questions, end the interview at any time, and request their participation be removed from the study at any time. The information provided is kept for five years on a secured computer and in a locked filing cabinet. At the end of the five years, the information will be destroyed per Walden University IRB standards.

Summary

In this chapter, I covered the methodology to be used in this qualitative research study. Areas covered include the research approach and design, the role of the researcher, the methodology, sample size and selection, the instrumentation to be used for the study, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness and ethical strategies of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to determine whether any hiring biases exist among hiring personnel and to determine whether these biases have any impact on their decision-making process during preemployment interviews with law enforcement applicants. Four participants agreed to join this study. Participant selection was based on the criteria of having prior experience in interviewing law enforcement applicants. The research question for this study was the following: What biases if any exist that influence the decisions of hiring personnel during interviews with law enforcement applicants? To explore the phenomenon, I designed five interview questions (IQs) to ask participants:

IQ1: What is the hiring process for law enforcement applicants?

IQ2: What is the purpose of the interview?

IQ3: What decisions take place during the interview process?

IQ4: What factors are considered during the interview?

IQ5: Does the interviewer have final decision-making authority?

Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed and analyzed the audio recordings. Data were hand coded using Microsoft Excel to assist with categorizing and identifying themes.

Setting

I used a phenomenological design to identify a small group of participants with experience with law enforcement applicant interviews to gather their perceptions regarding the biases of interviewers during law enforcement applicant interviews. I

randomly selected four participants for face-to-face, telephone, and email interviews based on their specialized knowledge of law enforcement applicant interviews. Participants selected the method of data collection that was favorable for conducting the interview. Two participants selected telephone interviews, one selected a face-to-face interview, and one selected an email interview. Participants selected the date and time of the interview based on their schedules. Participants were informed of the criteria for participating in this study before agreeing to take part in the study. The participants responded to the interview questions, and I was not aware of any conditions that influenced the participants' responses.

Demographics

The participants who agreed to volunteer for this study were provided an explanation of the study and the criteria for agreeing to the study during the initial contact. Four participates agreed to volunteer for the study; the four participants had experience working in a law enforcement organization as law enforcement officers and conducting law enforcement applicant interviews. Demographic questions addressing age, gender, race, and ethnicity were not included in this study.

Data Collection

Prior to collecting the data, I contacted individuals whom I knew who worked as law enforcement officers. During the initial contact with these individuals, I explained the purpose of the study and the participation criteria. Four participants volunteered to participant in this study and understood the criteria for participation. Participants were assigned codes P1, P2, P3, and P4.

Once a participant agreed to volunteer for the study, I provided the participant with the options for data collection (face-to-face interview, telephone interview, email interview) and informed the participant that that interview would be audio recorded. Participants were also provided a consent form. I obtained written or verbal consent before collecting data. One participant agreed to a face-to-face interview, two agreed to telephone interviews, and one agreed to an email interview.

Participants selected the dates and times of the interviews. Prior to collecting data, I read the consent form to participants taking part in face-to-face and telephone interviews, and I provided a written copy to the participant taking part in the email interview. Participants taking part in the face-to-face interview and telephone interviews were asked whether they would like a copy of the consent form to keep for their records. The interviews consisted of five questions. The first question was designed to gain an understanding of the hiring process for law enforcement applicants. The other four questions were designed to explore the interview process for law enforcement applicants, including the purpose of the interview, decisions made during the interview, and factors that influence the interviewer during the interview process.

During the interviews, I asked additional questions to explore concepts or gain an understanding of a term or phrase the participant used. Three of the four of the participants were asked additional questions during the interview, but I did not ask follow-up questions once the interviewers were concluded. The collection of data for each participant was completed without any unusual circumstances.

Data Analysis

Once the interviews with the participants were completed, I first transcribed each interview verbatim. I listened to each audio recording and read along with the transcript to confirm the transcript matched the audio recording. Each participant stated that they did not want to make any changes to the interview responses. I then used Microsoft Excel software to assist in the data analysis and coding. Hand coding allows researchers to structure information from participants to allow comparisons and similarities to emerge along with themes shared by participants (Burnardet al., 2008).

Participant responses were grouped by question asked during the interview. I sorted participant responses by analyzing repeated responses from participants along with extracting concepts unique to the participant's experience. I organized the data into codes, analyzed meaningful statements, and placed statements into categories. From Question 1, the first category I identified was the steps law enforcement applicants follow until dismissed or hired as a law enforcement officer. Responses are shown in Figure 1.
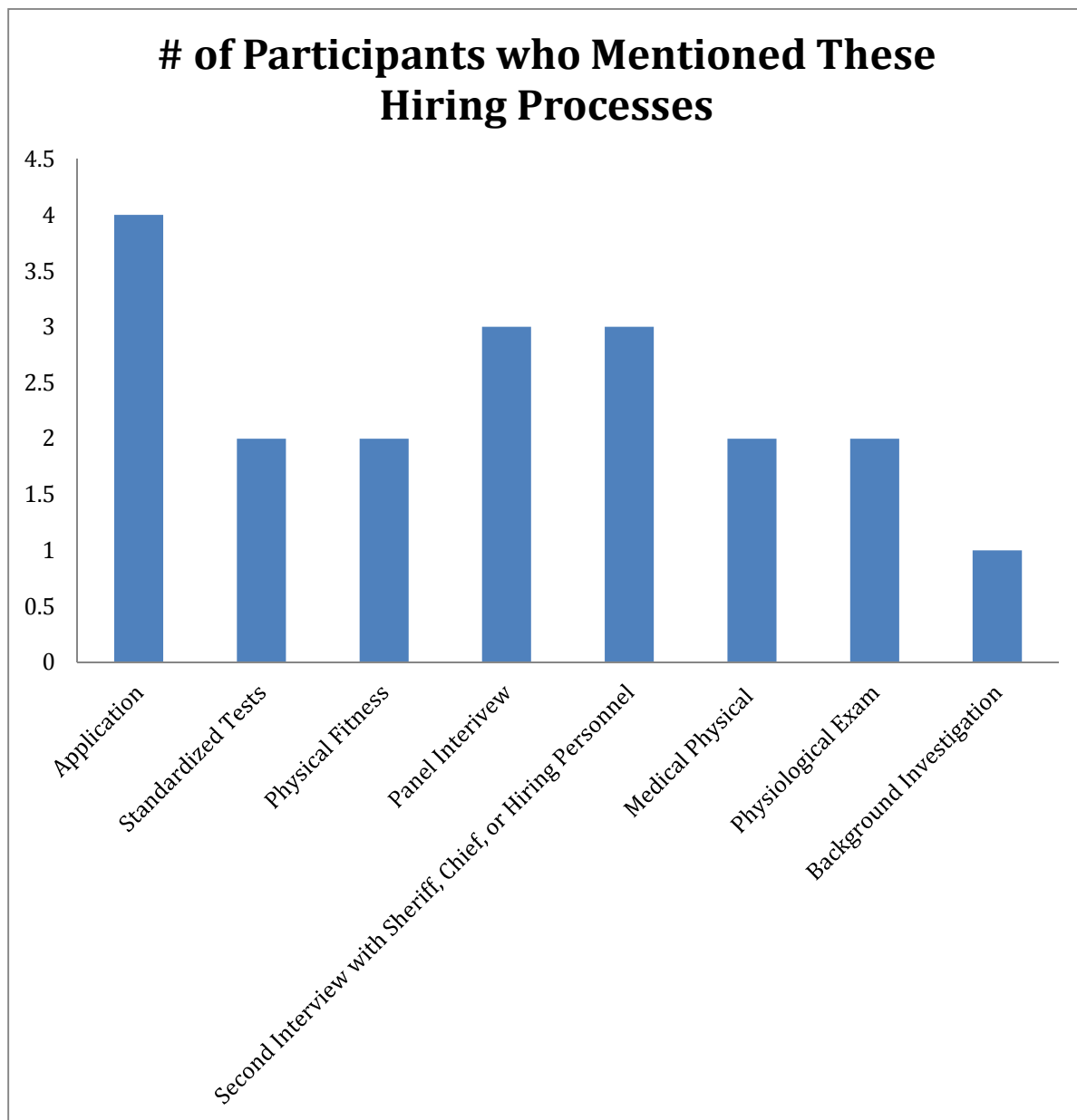
of Participants who Mentioned These Hiring Processes

Figure 1. Question 1 responses.

P1 responded

Typically the hiring process starts with the initial application phase. Depending on

how large the agency is and how many applicants are applying for the job, Human

Resources narrows down the qualified candidates for a testing. In my experience

it typically is a written test, maybe some standardized tests law enforcement agencies use to determine where that persons reading level, writing, math, language levels are. Those who pass the written test, then complete a physical fitness exam. If the candidates pass that test, then an oral board interview is completed. Then another interview maybe completed with a Sheriff or Chief of that agency and a conditional offer maybe offered. The job offer is contingent on the passing of a physical exam and a physiological exam.

P3 responded

There's the initial application then and included a resume from there the department narrows it down to applicants who meet the initial interview; and then after that the applicants who pass the interview that's a panel interview after you pass that interview you are selected for a background investigation. That's a four week investigation, then after you pass the background you are selected to move on for a chief's interview. Which is a one on one sit down with the chief and than if you have the chiefs interview and were selected to move on from that we had a medical evaluation done, a physical evaluation to make sure you are fit for duty and also a mental health evaluation were you sit down with a psychiatrist.

The aim of Question 2 was to gain an understanding of the participant's perceptions of the purpose of the interview for law enforcement applicants. Two categories emerged from the responses of Question 2. Figure 2.1 shows the participants' responses to the purpose of the interview for law enforcement applicants. Figure 2.2 shows additional topics interviewers examine during the interview.

of Participants Response of Purpose of Hiring Interview

Figure 2.1. Question 2 responses.

Interviewer Preferences: Participants Mentioned Interviewers Also Look At
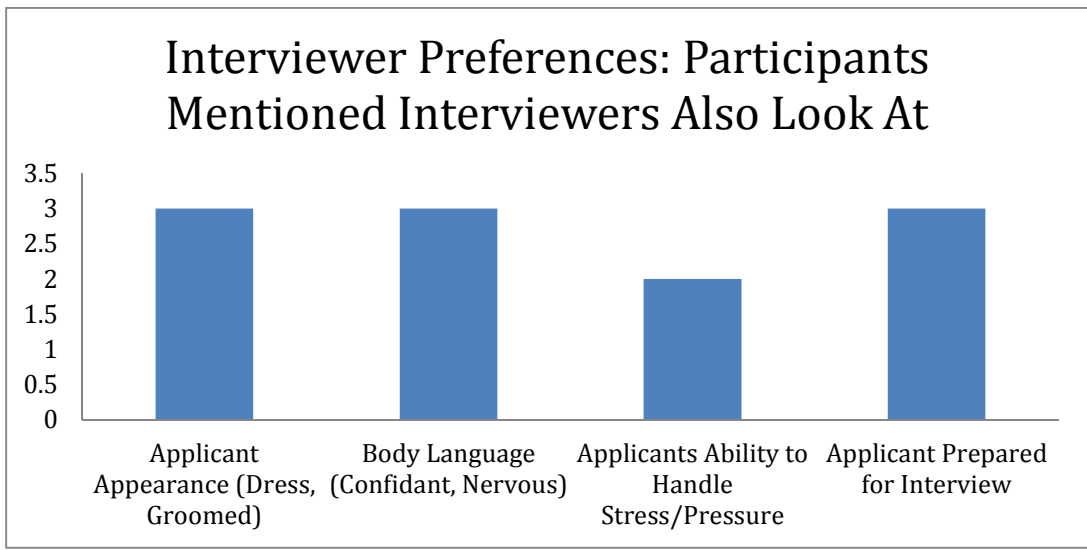
Figure 2.2. Question 2 responses.

P1 responded

To determine what the applicant is like in person. On paper they can look good or

bad, but seeing them in person and speaking with the candidate you can get a feel

for how they are as a person. Determine if that person is a good fit for your agency. You can also see how a person does under stress. What the appearance of the person. Did the person dress appropriately for the job interview? Did the candidate take the interview seriously?

P2 responded

The purpose of the interview is to be able to keen the knowledge, a little bit of a background of the candidate applying for the position. The knowledge question pretty generalized to see if the applicants have a good grasp of the law enforcement, to possible done a little bit of research of the department; for the specific position that application is applying for. Whether it's a specialized area in narcotics, investigation, regular portal, or any other specialized area in law enforcement. Umm to be able to see if the candidate qualifies to be able to be brought on board for a possible second round of interviews and continue with the process from there.

P4 responded "the purpose of the interview is for the interviewer to look at the repor of the person they are interviewing to see how they are postured to see if they are paying attention to."

Question 3was designed to explore the decision-making process during law enforcement applicant interviews. Responses are shown in Figure 3.
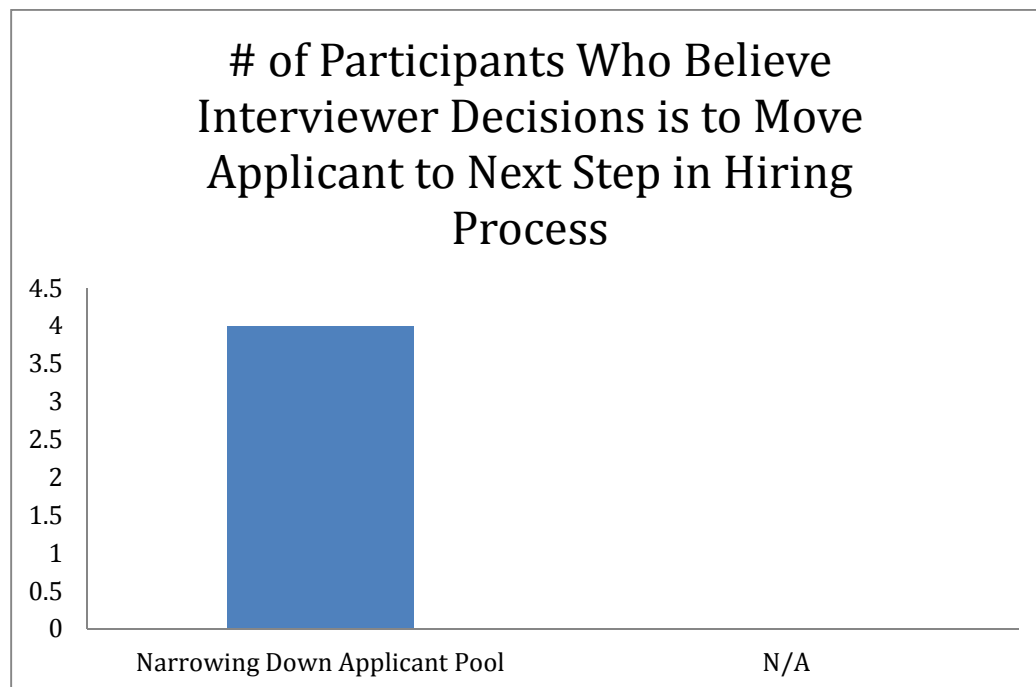
of Participants Who Believe Interviewer Decisions is to Move Applicant to Next Step in Hiring Process

Figure 3. Question 3 responses.

P2 responded

The decisions that takes place in the interview process are going to be basically

from the applicants that have applied obviously starting with a you know the

qualifications, the schooling, the amount of years of maybe prior service they may

have somebody with prior experience, and also whether they are going to be

selected on based upon on their answers to questions being asked and also the

panel that is interviewing the candidate will more than likely have a scoring

system that they use and than once the interview is completed with all of the

candidates that were selected for that first round of interviews. Than would

probably you know depending on the department how many officers they're

looking to hire; which could be you know narrowed down to 10 to 5 based upon

the answers and the you know the scoring they gave their answers to the

questions.

P3 responded

There's several hundred applicants or only 20 submissions so based on your

answers to the questions and a full level of agreement with the interview panel

they would select who would move on their based on the pre selected types of

answers that they are looking for.

Question 4was designed to explore the possible factors that influence the decision
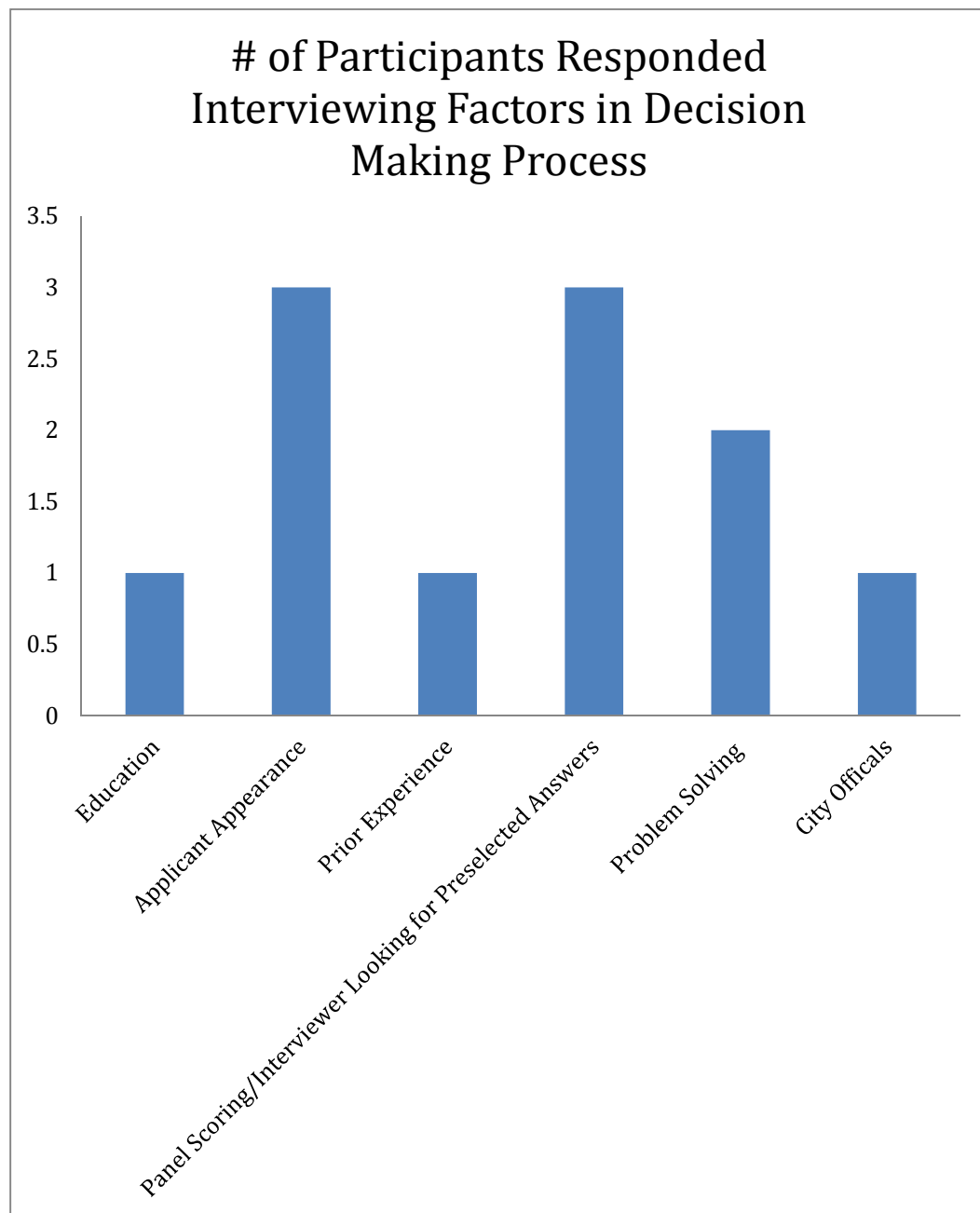
making process of law enforcement applicant interviewers.

Figure 4. Question 4 responses.

P1 responded

Was the candidate prepared, how well were they able to think on their feet, where they able to problem solve, did they think about the question and give well thought out answers.

P2 responded

I would say a lot of the factors basically specifically what the department in general is looking for whether they're looking for an experienced officer based on the posting and how it is written. Whether they're looking to hire a person who's been in a specialized area whether investigations, or narcotics, or basically you know it could be a specialized court bailiff which could be a licensed officer that they want in there. So depending upon what the agencies needs are and what has been requested to fill whether it's a upcoming retirement, extra officers being added to the department because the city has expanded the population growth or the need extra coverage in higher crime areas. Obviously of course approval goes through county commissioner or city council will determine staying on budget also.

P4 responded

 To see how they look to see if you believe there physical appearance will be adequate for the job. If there hygiene is good enough if they look professional if there posture good if they speck in full sentences they don't use slang terms that could be a beneficial thing.

Question five was designed to explore the final stage in the hiring process. Figure 5.1 shows Participant Responses to the question what factors are considered during the

interview? Figure 5.2 shows similar themes participants responded with while responding to question five.
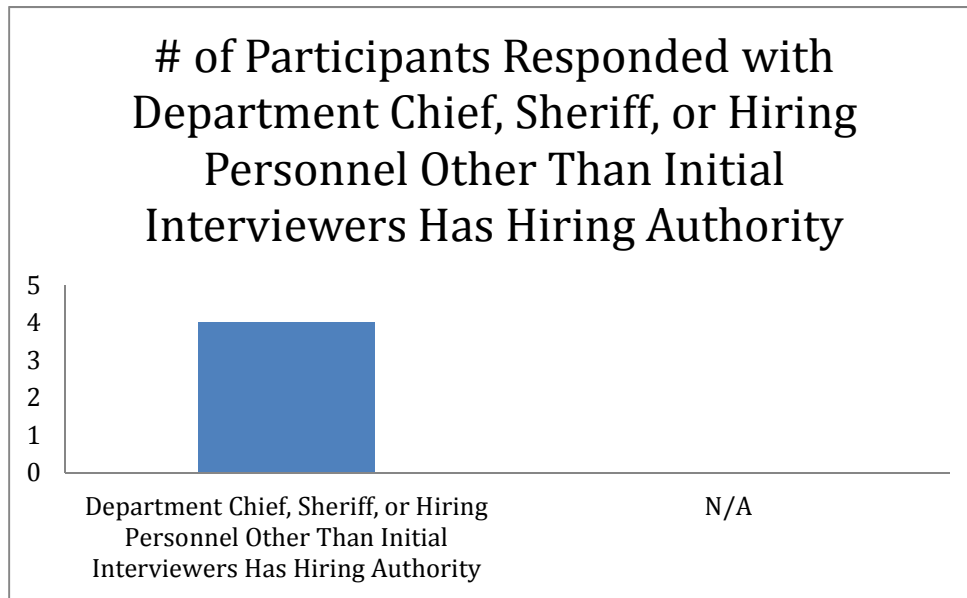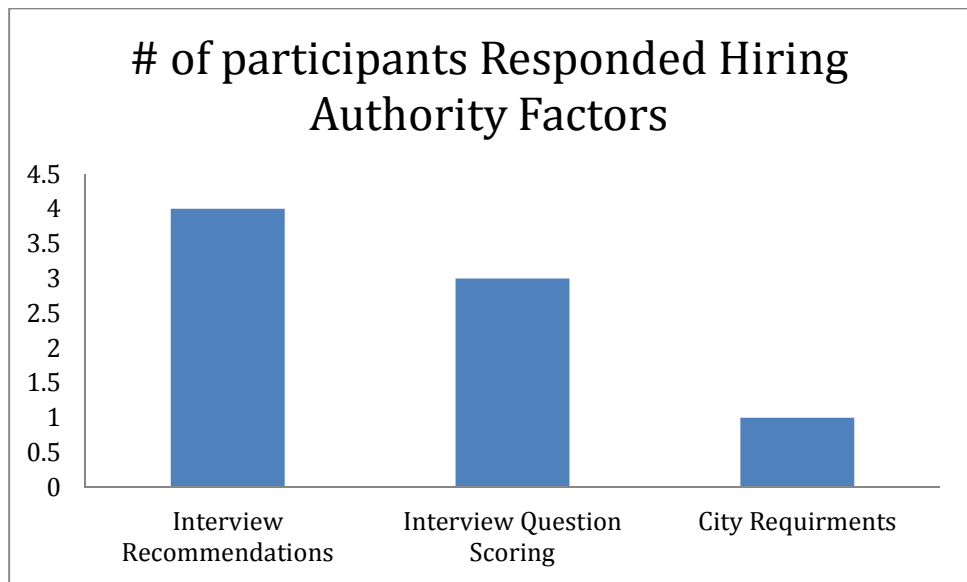

Figure 5.1. Question 5 responses.

Figure 5.2. Question 5 responses.

P1 responded

The interviewer typically has some say in the matter of how well they believed

the candidate did. Typically in oral board interviews where there are multiple

interviewers, there is a score sheet on how well they believed the candidate did on

the interview and score each question that is asked. Typically the scores are tallied

up and averaged out to determine that candidate's overall score. This typically

determines if that person is good enough to be interviewed by the chief or sheriff

and they ultimate have the overall final decision making authority if that

candidate is hired or not.

P3 responded

The interviewers are suppose to looking for whether the applicant says a specific

word or reference to a specific key phrase or something along those lines. So

there're kind of hard and fast rule on whether you score like a one through three

or one through five, but the other part of the recommendations that they use to

make is how you sound when you made the answer whether it sounds like you're

confidence in your answers or whether you appear to be confidant for the job.

Things that it's a hard and fast number one in three people don't get it.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Attaining credibility I applied and obtained approval from the Walden University

Institutional Review Board (IRB) before contact with participants. During the initial

contact with participants I explained the criteria for the study along with explained the

purpose of the study. Once a participant agreed to take part in the study I provided the

participant with the methods for data collection; face to face interview, telephone interview, and email. Additionally, during the initial contact I informed the participant they have the option to choose the location, date, and time of the interview; along with an outline of their rights as a participant in the study. Participants were informed they can refuse questions, change answers, or asked to be removed from the study.

Transferability

Selecting participants for this study I utilized a strategy to select participants in positions with current knowledge of law enforcement application interviews. Transferability was obtained through participation selection and in-depth data collection. The data was collected and presented in a method to allow my audience the opportunity to transfer the results of this study to examine and explore similar practices within law enforcement hiring practices.

Dependability

Dependability was reached on the part of the researcher through the process of having detailed records of the interviews conducted, recording of the interviews, transcribing the interviews, participants reviewing the transcripts, and data analysis. Also, I reviewed the data multiple times to ensure mistakes and biases are kept in check throughout the process. I also used bracketing to reduce biases further to ensure the reliability of the study.

Confirmability

Bracketing ensured that my biases were kept in check and excluded any personal opinions during the interview process. I documented the entire research process and

reviewed the process multiple times to ensure all necessary steps and measures are in place per Walden University policy. Confirmability was established through the process of documenting the research process and following Walden University and IRB policies.

Results

Once participant interviews concluded and the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, I reviewed each transcript and analyzed the data using Microsoft Excel and was able to identify the themes within the data. The following subsections were organized as Research Question asked to participant.

IQ1 revealed a finding that all 4 participants experienced different levels of employment through their law enforcement agencies. The one shared experience of all participants was the initial application phase of the employment process. The remaining categories were mixed between the four participants with 75% stating the hiring process requires a panel interview and a second interview with the Sheriff, Chief, or Hiring Personnel with final hiring authority. Other categories reveled 50% of participants stated the law enforcement department requires additional testing in the areas of reading, writing, communication, and math. Additionally, 50% of participants responded the department requires physical fitness checks, medical physical, and a meeting with a Psychologist before placement in the agency is granted. Only one participant responded with the agency required a background investigation during the hiring process.

IQ2 revealed a finding all participants feel the purpose of the initial interview is to meet the applicant in person. Additionally, 75% of participants responded an additional purpose of the interview is for hiring interviewers to knowledge check the applicant by

providing the applicant with scenarios. Participants also responded the purpose of the

hiring interview is to collect additional information from the applicant. All participants

responded with additional areas interviewers consider during the applicant interview.

These were categories as interviewer preferences. Participants responded with 75% of

participants believe the purpose of the interview is to consider applicant appearance,

body language, and if the interviewer believes the applicant is prepared for the interview.

Additionally, 50% of participants believe the purpose of the interview is to determine the

applicant's ability to handle stress and pressure.

IQ3 revealed a finding all participants believe the decision which takes place

during the initial hiring process is to narrow down the applicant group and to move

applicants to the next step in the hiring process.

IQ4 revealed participants believe factors influence the decision making process of

law enforcement applicant interviewers. Participants responded with 75% of factors

include applicant appearance and the interviewing panels scoring to preselected answers

provided from the applicant. Additionally, 50% of participants believe applicants ability

to problem solve influence the decision making process. Additional factors include

applicants education with 25% of participants believe education influence the decision

making process. One participant also responded with outside factors including city

officials requirements influencing the decision making process of law enforcement

applicant interviewers.

IQ5 revealed all participants shared experience indicate the initial applicant

interviewer makes recommendations, but final hiring authority belongs to the law

enforcement departments Chief, Sheriff, or Hiring personnel with hiring authority. Additionally, all participants responded the hiring authority considers factors based on interviewer recommendations, 75% responded applicant responses to interview questions and scoring are factors the hiring authority considers. One participant also responded with city requirements are factors hiring authorizes also consider during the decision making process.

Summary

In this chapter, I covered the data collection process, data analysis process, and results. Additionally, I covered participant interview setting, and evidence of trustworthiness of this study. This chapter also contained figures presenting the data from the participants group by interview question. Furthermore, the figures are categorized to present the results of the study to analysis the research question of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore biases that influence the decision-making processes of law enforcement applicant interviewers. This study provided insight into the decision-making factors of law enforcement applicant interviewers through analysis of the shared experiences of participants with knowledge of the phenomenon. Participants were asked to share their experiences, which formed the bases for the findings of this study. This chapter includes the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future studies, and social change implications.

Interpretation of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to identify whether any hiring biases exist for law enforcement applicant interviewers. Several interviewer biases were revealed in this study, including law enforcement applicant interviewers interpretation of applicants' appearance, body language, ability to handle stress/pressure, preparedness for the interview, problem-solving ability, and responses to questions that match preselected answers applicant interviewers require for scoring purposes. Prior studies of interviewer biases in other fields indicated that biases affect the applicant's progress through the hiring process. According to Reynolds (2017), an employer's opinion of an applicant changes after a first face-to-face meeting; the opinion of the applicant either improves or diminishes based on the first face-to-face meeting. Participants in the current study shared similar experiences, stating that an applicant's appearance is one of the deciding factors for the interviewer.

Furthermore, participants shared that an applicant's body language and appearance are considered during the initial interview. According to Pinto, Patanakul, and Pinto (2017), interviewers evaluate applicants regarding likeability, which is influenced by appearance and body language. This places interviewers in a position of possible bias. The interviewer also attempts to determine the applicant's ability to handle stress, pressure, and preparedness for the interview. This situation has the potential for the interviewer judging the applicant based on their likeability.

Participants in the current study also shared their experiences with the hiring process for law enforcement applicants. Although participants reported a wide range of methods for hiring applicants, not all participants expressed similar experiences with their departments. According to Hilal, Densley, and Jones (2017), hiring bias can have an impact on the decision-making process of interviewers. To increase the likelihood of reducing hiring bias, multiple methods can be used to give the applicant an overall score that not depend on the impressions of interviewers. A multilevel hiring process increases the likelihood of hiring applicants best suited for performing in the field with an increased understanding of department requirements.

Participants shared a belief that their recommendations influence the final decision-making process. Future studies could address final hiring authorities to improve understanding of this aspect of the process; findings from the current study indicated that the interviewer's decision-making factors influence the decision to hire a law enforcement applicant.

Limitations of the Study

The sample for this study represented a small portion of law enforcement hiring interviewers. Furthermore, access to participants with final hiring authority was not granted. Additional areas that influence the decision-making process for final hiring were exposed, but findings were limited to the shared experiences of the participants. These additional influences include city officials, physical fitness, medical examinations, and physiological examinations.

Recommendations

Future researchers could increase the sample size. Additionally, researchers could include individuals with final authority in the hiring process. A larger sample along with experiences of law enforcement chiefs, sheriffs, and personnel with final hiring authority would expand the understanding of the phenomenon.

Throughout the data collection process, additional areas of interest were exposed but were not fully understood. Participants described decision-making factors outside of the law enforcement organization that were not considered during this study. The influence of city officials on the hiring process of law enforcement applicants is one such area. City requirements and restrictions were factors that were not anticipated during the course of this study. City official factors were not fully explored because participants had little or no experience with these factors. Future studies could address city officials' placing requirements and restrictions on law enforcement departments that influence the decision-making of the final hiring authority.

Implications

Connecting law enforcement applicant interviews and positive social change implications may not be apparent. However, law enforcement organizations have a direct connection to communities in which the department is located. Law enforcement departments work within and with communities to create a bond between law enforcement departments and the community.

A community's perception of their local law enforcement departments influences the department's outlook toward the community. Community perceptions influence the law enforcement officers working in the community, and officer conduct in the community is an influence on the community (Jolicoeur & Grant 2018). Placing law enforcement officers in the field to build or maintain the community perception of the department starts with the hiring process of law enforcement applicants.

Understanding law enforcement interviewer bias provides insurance to departments with multilevel of hiring phases so that only officers best suited to work in the community are selected. Additionally, allowing departments to recognize the possible shortcomings of single-phase interviews may improve the hiring process. Recognizing issues or possible issues allows law enforcement departments to look for additional improvements to their hiring methods to increase community bonds (BaharHewertson 2015).

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to explore how law enforcement interviewer biases may impact the decision-making process. To understand this phenomenon, I recruited

participants with experience in law enforcement applicant interviews to take part in this study. The insight of the participants allowed me to understand the components of the law enforcement hiring process and uncover possible interview biases.

Furthermore, the shared experiences of the participants led to the understanding that hiring interviewers exhibit bias that may influence the outcome of the hiring process. I also uncovered additional factors that may influence the decision-making process, which were not explored due to the participants 'lack of knowledge in these areas. Recommendations for further studies include addressing these factors to obtain a fuller understanding of the decision-making process.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

IQ1: What is the hiring process for law enforcement applicants?

IQ2: What is the purpose of the interview?

IQ3: What decisions take place during the interview process?

IQ4: What factors are considered during the interview?

IQ5: Does the interviewer have final decision making authority?

The schedule time for participant interviews is 30 to 45 minutes long. Although, there are only five primary interview questions I anticipate follow up questions for more clarification during data collection.