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Leadership Strategies to Prevent Unethical Employee Behavior

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

Leadership Strategies to Prevent Unethical Employee Behavior

by

Gregory P. O'Donnell

MA, American Military University, 2018

BA, American Military University, 2016

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2023

Abstract

Preventing unethical employee behavior in the workplace is a key concern of business

leaders. Business leaders are concerned that their businesses cannot prevent employee

unethical behavior in the workplace. Grounded in the transformational leadership theory,

the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore leadership strategies

that business leaders use to prevent unethical employee behavior in the workplace.

Participants in this study comprised three business leaders from private sector

organizations in the surrounding areas of San Antonio, Texas, who used strategies to

prevent unethical behavior in the workplace. Data were collected from semi-structured

interviews and company documents. Thematic analysis yielded four emergent themes:

inspirational influence, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual

stimulation. A key recommendation is for business leaders to focus on the individual

needs of employees, motivate employees to heed ethical guidelines, and be strong ethical

models. The implications for positive social change include the potential to prevent

unethical employee behaviors where employees contribute to a positive public perception

that extends community outreach and influence.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my daughter, Erin. Words cannot describe what you meant to me the first time I laid my eyes on you. I want you to know that you are never to old to have a goal and go after it. You will forever be the greatest joy of my life. I love you! Lastly, I dedicate this to my first civilian boss within the federal government, Liz. As I have gone through this doctoral journey, you have defined not only what it means to be a great leader but have overqualified yourself as an amazing friend, phenomenal coworker, and the best mentor a person can have. Thank you for putting up with me.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my doctoral study chair, Dr. Ron Black, for his guidance, mentorship, and patience during my DBA journey. I could not have asked for a better chair. Thanks again for everything.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Misconduct is a common occurrence in U.S. workplaces and one that poses ethical issues for employees and business leaders. A 2013 study of over 6,000 working Americans from various occupations and industries found that 41% had observed misconduct within the workplace and 9% felt pressure to compromise their ethical standards (Johnson & Umphress, 2018). In many public organizations there is a problem of unethical behavior and serious integrity violations, such as breaches of moral norms and values, that are a detriment to organizations (Ripoll & Ballart, 2019). Organizational leaders face a daunting task of correcting these behaviors and heeding their moral obligations while balancing internal or external stresses to sustain their organization.

Several theories attribute unethical behaviors in an organization to the employees themselves and/or lack of leadership in the working environment. There is mounting evidence that employees thrive when top management implement organizational values through policies, practices, and procedures (Kuenzi et al., 2019). Likewise, when employees share perceptions of these policies, practices, and procedures, they contribute to the development of a positive organizational climate and engage in fewer unethical behaviors diminish (Kuenzi et al., 2019).

A positive organization climate hinges on how effective leaders are in the organization. Sudsakorn and Rattanawibonnsoom (2018) identified leadership effectiveness as a characteristic of top management. These leaders embody ethical values in their own behavior and demand ethical conduct at every level of the organization.

Addressing misguided behaviors necessitates having the right leadership that not only embodies ethical principles and enforces them but promotes growth within the organization by encouraging positive outcomes from employees. For this reason, a key focus of current organizations is the identification of leadership strategies to prevent unethical employee behavior.

Problem and Purpose

The unethical behavior of employees has caused severe damage to organizations, as indicated by cases such as Barings Bank, Enron, Wells Fargo, and Volkswagen, and has led to increased academic interest in unethical employee behavior (Veetikazhi et al., 2020). Up to 75% of employees are estimated to participate in one or more types of unethical conduct within some organizations (Michel & Hargis, 2016, p. 51). The general business problem is that business leaders have not devised an effective plan to thwart the negative effects of unethical employee behavior on organizations' performance. The specific business problem is that some business leaders lack strategies to prevent unethical employee behavior in the workplace.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore leadership strategies that business leaders use to prevent unethical employee behavior in the workplace. The target population of this study included three business leaders from private sector organizations in the surrounding areas of San Antonio, Texas, who used strategies to prevent unethical behavior in the workplace. The results of this study may contribute to positive social change through the identification of strategies that promote strong leadership ethics and business practices that reduce unethical employee behavior.

These actions may improve the lives of employees and stakeholders in the community by encouraging the sustainability of organizations that provide employment and services to community members.

Nature of the Study

I used qualitative methodology in this study. Qualitative research studies focus on the phenomena itself (Kumar et al., 2017), for example studying an aspect of a particular work environment. Quantitative methodology was not appropriate for this study because quantitative studies are concerned with the examination of variables' characteristics or relationships. Mixed-methods researchers use qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain appropriate data to answer their research question. Because the focus of the study was on exploring in depth the strategies available to leaders to counter the negative effects of unethical employee behavior on organizations' performance, quantitative and mixed-methods approaches were not appropriate.

There are several types of qualitative research designs to choose from (e.g., phenomenology, ethnography, or case study). I chose a multiple-case study for this study. Yin (2018) emphasized that researchers should think of a case study as the opportunity to clarify some phenomena of interest. In this multiple-case study, I focused on the strategies, processes, and tools business leaders use to prevent and mitigate unethical behavior in the workplace. A multiple-case study was selected because it provided in-depth data through the examination of multiple cases (vs. a single-case study). Phenomenological researchers strive to understand a phenomenon as experienced by participants firsthand (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). A phenomenological design was not

appropriate for this study because the emphasis of the study was on the examination of employee workplace behavior, and not the meaning of participants' firsthand experiences with employees' unethical behaviors. *Ethnographic design* has effectively become an all-inclusive term to describe long-term qualitative research based on a triangulation of methods to focus on cultures of groups (Hammersley, 2017). Ethnography was not appropriate for this study because the focus was on the exploration of business leaders' strategies and not group cultures.

Research Question

What strategies do business leaders use to prevent unethical employee behavior in the workplace?

Interview Questions

1. What is your organization's policies and strategies for mitigating unethical behavior in the workplace?

2. What strategies worked best for you to prevent and reduce unethical behavior?

3. How do you assess the effectiveness of the strategies for preventing unethical workplace behavior?

4. How did you address the key barriers to prevent and reduce unethical behavior?

5. How did your employees respond to the different methods being used in the workplace?

6. What additional information would you like to share about your organization's strategies for preventing and mitigating unethical employee behavior in the workplace?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in this study was transformational leadership theory. James Burns (1976) shaped transforming leadership, which Bernard Bass (1985) renamed the *transformational leadership theory* (Northouse, 2019). Transformational leadership is a relational leadership style in which followers trust and convey respect for their leader to motivate them to do more than expected (Boamah et al., 2018). The leadership style includes four core components: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Bass, 1985, as cited in Ng, 2017). Leaders use these four components to create an environment where the organization's vision, goals, and shared values are embraced.

The first component of transformational leadership is idealized influence, which involves the leader fostering trustworthiness within their subordinates. The second component is inspirational motivation, which refers to the promotion of a shared vision with the team members working in a common direction. Leadership that creates an environment to support employees in developing innovation strategies and taking necessary risks comprises the third component, intellectual stimulation. The final construct, individualized consideration, relates to the leader's behavior to pay attention to the individual needs of the followers (Sahu et al., 2018).

Each of these components can be the basis for potential strategies to work within the leadership capacity. They provide the characteristics to win over employees, develop cohesion within the organization, and empower employees to make the right decisions. Kalsoom et al. (2018) stated that leaders who use a transformational leadership style make a strong connection between followers and themselves by increasing their motivation and morality. To prevent unethical workplace behavior, leaders need to understand the importance of their role in an organization and identify best practices to decrease these undesirable behaviors. Therefore, putting transformational leadership theory into practice allows business leaders to recognize and develop strategies and processes to change and transform employees' behaviors.

Operational Definitions

The following terms are pertinent to this study and reflect their use in discussions of leadership, organizational direction, and employees' behaviors in public and private organizations:

Ethical business culture: The formal and informal components of organizational business culture that nurture moral development and establish standards for ethical decision-making and practices (Sudsakorn & Rattanawiboonsoom, 2018). Key aspects include values, leadership, climate, and institutionalization.

Leadership: The art of influencing others to achieve their maximum potential to accomplish any task, objective, or project (Specchia et al., 2021).

Leadership style: A combination of distinct characteristics, traits, and behaviors that are used by leaders to interact with their subordinates (Al Khajeh, 2018).

Organizational behavior: The means by which organizational leaders manage their environment (Ristianti et al., 2020). The study of organizational behaviors encompasses the factors that influence individuals and groups in responding to organizational actions.

Organizational development: Attention given to organizational processes and the way things are done, not just what is done (Carnevale, 2019).

Transformational leader: A leader who modifies the organizational system to accommodate the company's vision, doing so by working within the boundaries of the existing system (Asbari et al., 2020).

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Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

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To understand the full scope of this research paper, the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations need to be discussed. I consider their impact on the research process and findings.

Assumptions

Researchers must establish some assumptions, or unverified beliefs, throughout the course of their research (Jerven, 2018). It is important to convey these because researchers' expectations determine how they describe and evaluate data. There were three presumptions in this research investigation. The first assumption was that organizational business leaders understand and are able to prevent unethical behaviors in the workplace. The second assumption was that the participants in this study would be straightforward, dependable, and impartial when given the interview questions and would

answer them within the best of their ability. The last assumption was that the interviewees would provide me with trustworthy materials for data analysis.

Limitations

Limitations are hindrances that are widely beyond the control of the investigators but could influence the research conclusions (Simon & Goes, 2013). There are four unique limitations that were identified within this doctoral study. The first limitation was the business leaders themselves. They might not have provided information and interview responses that related to strategies for preventing unethical behavior in the workplace. The second limitation was the potential for me the interviewer to manipulate or alter the investigation data because of my own bias. Observing and interpreting research bias is imperative for detecting the utility of research and the fundamental condition of evidence-based decision-making (Galdas, 2017). The third limitation is conducive to the data collected by the players involved and the information is accurate. I must rely on the participants to provide accurate information. The fourth limitation was that the timing and convenience of the interviews might have been restricted due to unforeseen circumstances.

Delimitations

The delimitations of an investigation are components that set limitations in the researcher's scope. (Simon & Goes, 2013). I identified three delimitations within the study. The first delimitation was that the organizational leaders from San Antonio, Texas, were the sole source of data for this study. The second delimitation was that only these organizational business leaders understand how to effectively stop employees from

unethical business practices within their specific organization. The third delimitation was that I studied only the prevention of unethical strategies in the three focal organizations.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

With unethical behavior occurring in every sector of society, ethical issues have become topics of interest in the mass media and the academic community (Gan, 2018). Corruption and unethical behaviors weaken the perceived legitimacy of the public and impair society by lowering incentives for people to value honesty and uphold the rule of law (Bashir & Hassan, 2019). Leaders cannot achieve sustainability and benefit from change unless they act ethically and adopt compatible ethical approaches themselves (Waheed et al., 2018). Incorporating transformational leadership as a foundation for encouraging and stimulating employees, enhancing their communication transference, building trust, and promoting organizational learning reduces unwarranted behavior (Para-González et al., 2018). The results of this study may provide business leaders with strategies they can use to change their employees' behavior and to develop an environment that is free of unethical behavior.

Implications for Social Change

The prevalence of unethical behaviors can adversely affect organizations and the reputation of companies and industries. Bozic (2017) emphasized that a lack of trust damages established relationships and leads to customers' rage and/or disappointment and organizations' loss of sales. The results of this study may contribute to positive social change by providing business leaders the strategies to effectively prevent unethical

employee behaviors. Moreover, leaders who create a positive environment where employees are appreciated and are willing to behave ethically may contribute to a positive public perception that can extend community outreach and influence.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

In this qualitative multiple-case study, I explored strategies business leaders can use to prevent or minimize unethical behavior in the workplace. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, I reviewed diverse sources of information and publications. In a literature review, researchers must gather a sizeable amount of information about the relevant topic, break down key elements from reputable sources, and generate a report on what is known about the research.

I analyzed and synthesized numerous studies by comparing past research findings. The review begins with a conceptualization of transformational leadership theory. In theory, the transformational leadership style will enable employees to understand their role, support organizational objectives, and build an environment where all employees contribute. The discussion also includes components that leaders can use to grow an organization and influence culture for positive outcomes. Another important topic in this study is why unethical behaviors happen. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, including poor management, greed, bribery, or pressures from upper management. The study's findings may encourage business leaders to modify their existing strategies and develop innovative approaches to prevent unethical behaviors in the workplace.

To find pertinent literature, I used keywords such as *transformational leadership*, *leadership*, *management*, *organizational culture*, *organizational behavior*, *business ethics*

AND *ethical behavior*, *unethical behaviors*, *change management*, and *team dynamics*.

Via Walden University Library, I accessed the following databases and search engines

for the research: ProQuest, Google Scholar, Emerald Management, Sage Premier, SAGE

Journals, and EBSCOhost. I also searched the Harvard Business Review website. I

reviewed and analyzed 641 sources in the literature review, including peer-reviewed and

non-peer-reviewed articles and books relating to the discussion topics. Table 1 presents

the number and percentage of articles by type. The literature review provides context on

the use of transformational leadership to prevent unethical behavior in the workplace.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources

Characteristic	No. ($N = 641$)	%
Peer reviewed	547	85
Published within the last 5 years	623	97

Transformational Leadership

The conceptual framework for this doctoral study was transformational

leadership. Transformational leadership is one of the most widely studied leadership

styles and is recognized as an effective style to address organizational tensions and aid

overall performance (Farahnak et al., 2019). Bass (1985) described transformational

leadership as creating a vision and cultivating an environment that inherently motivates

employees to surpass expectations. Transformational leaders motivate their followers to

perform beyond expectations by making followers aware how they contribute to the

greater good of the organization and by appealing to the higher order of followers

(Khattak et al., 2020). Transformational leadership is recognized as a driver of change

and creativity and is associated with goal creation, inspiration, and important levels of follower motivation (Eisenberg et al., 2019).

Transformational leadership, in principle, motivates subordinates to work better than they would otherwise; it can increase the confidence of associates, which can lead to improved performance (Lee & Hidayat, 2018). Giltinane (2013) noted that transformational leaders push employees to achieve their full potential (). Transformational leadership has several characteristic traits that embody leadership of the highest caliber. For example, transformational leaders generate trust, pride, and respect from employees and are consistently associated with positive employee attitudes and behaviors in the workplace (Yue et al., 2019). Velarde et al. (2020) expanded transformational leadership to include related factors such as modeling, elevated expectations, rewards, culture building, vision, shared goals, and individualized support as positive benefits.

What makes transformational leadership unique compared to other leadership styles is the ability of leaders to provide intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence for employees. Leaders often encounter the challenges related to the cultural socializing of team members in global organizations (Eken et al., 2014). Transformational leaders can also cultural diversity in a business environment in a way that allows them to meet desired business results. A transformational approach can lead to better performance than other leadership styles (Para-González et al., 2018). This interpretation of transformational leadership has evolved into a multifaceted concept that further defines the ideals and principles of

leadership behavior. Key facets include intellectual stimulation, individualized

consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is one of the four constructs of transformational

leadership. Intellectual stimulation is when leaders motivate employees to be creative,

challenge old assumptions, and promote learning and innovation (Yue et al., 2019). This

component of transformational leadership also involves engaging with subordinates,

allowing them to voice their concerns about business concerns in a constructive manner

for subsequent deliberation by leadership (Farahnak et al., 2019). Intellectual stimulation

allows employees to bring current ideas to the attention of leadership, allowing for

innovative solutions to the dilemmas the organization faces, and subsequently allowing

those employees to conduct the tasks with the latest knowledge at their use (Susilo,

2018).

Individualized Consideration

Another transformational construct is individualized consideration. Individualized

consideration refers to when a leader considers subordinates as people rather than a tool

for the organization, addresses employees' diverse needs, and promotes their well-being

(Choi et al., 2017). Yue et al. (2019) explained how inspirational motivation is displayed

when organizational leaders predict a future where followers perform at higher levels and

achieve common objectives through motivation and drive. As such, individualized

consideration is a leadership construct that fosters communication between individuals

and allows employees to contribute to the overall dynamics of the organization, by sharing a voice and integrating their own ideas into the organization's work environment.

Inspirational Motivation

The third construct of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation. For leaders to convey inspirational motivation, they need to provide an unobstructed vision for employees to follow, inspire confidence, and motivate employees to support their own developmental needs, ensuring they reach their full potential in the organization (Singh et al., 2020). Use of this concept helps employees promote growth within themselves and the workplace. It assists employees in gaining new knowledge, skills, and abilities while keeping them engaged in processes and solutions related to their individual assigned activities. This is a win-win for the employees and the organization.

Idealized Influence

The final construct of transformational leadership is idealized influence. Idealized influence allows leaders to be trusted and feel trusted among employees. Leaders are perceived as showing respect and caring for their followers by putting the interests of employees first. Idealized influence is common among charismatic leaders, where followers have deep confidence in their leaders, feel proud to have collaborated with those leaders, and trust leaders' capacity to overcome any problems (Herminingsih & Supardi, 2017). This influence creates a bond between leader and follower, which grows with every engagement and interaction, solidifying openness and opportunities for employees.

Idealized influence also plays a part in organizational development. Leaders who have this type of influence ensure that employees move past their standard work practices and daily routines. Their focus is on influencing the level of motivation within their team and garnering a new vision what the future may look like with everyone contributing to that core idea of success. Analyzing the four different leadership constructs of this leadership type, it is clear why employees are fond of this leadership style. The more organizational leaders engage their employees, the less likely it is that employees want to do things that jeopardize their employment and organization.

The Role of Leadership and Management in Organizations

Leadership plays a vital role in ensuring organizational success. When developing a successful strategic plan, leaders must incorporate effective team dynamics, foster ethical behaviors in the workplace, foster organizational commitment and development, formulate strategies for proper change management practices, and keep employees motivated and focused on tasks. Such considerations are essential to achieving business objectives and creating a culture where people are empowered and inspired by a common purpose (Dubois et al., 2015). Leaders have few options but to adopt specific strategies as quickly as possible as it has become a requirement to navigate uncertainty in business (Yunus et al., 2019). Harnessing such leadership abilities helps to drive today's workforce forward as business practices evolve.

Leadership styles and traits are gaining popularity among business groups; however, the concept of effective management also has a defining role. Management principles reduce organizational chaos and promote efficiency (Northouse, 2019).

Managers can ensure that organizations operate at peak performance by developing plans and organizing staff according to each employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities while fostering a dynamic of collaboration in the workplace. Management activities differ from leadership activities; managers oversee processes, and leaders influence others and create a vision for change (Northouse, 2019). When an organization needs a new direction or change, a refocusing, or new energy, an appropriate leadership style must be chosen (Hall, 2013). The leadership style can determine the level of influence and vision for change. Organizations struggle because they treat leadership change management as separate entities rather than interrelated challenges (Quinn & Quinn, 2016). Using transformational leadership as a tool can help leaders to execute integral management techniques to prevent unethical behavior in the workplace.

Organizational Culture

One of the many roles a leader or manager has is defining and shaping the organizational culture of the organization. Corporate culture can be represented by a set of shared values and norms that influence the employee behaviors in the organization (Jones, 2013). Sherafati et al. (2015) stated that organizational culture is a framework that defines corporate values, the behavior of individuals, and the specific intents of that organization. It can be inferred that the more robust an organizational culture, the greater its impact on the attitudes and behaviors exhibited by leaders and employees in the organization (Al-Ali et al., 2017). Organizational culture is further defined by upper management. Leaders then take their vision and create an environment in which the organization can move forward with a set of core values and operational guidelines.

Leaders then create control measures to ensure fairness and respect throughout the organization. Individuals and teams collaborate within their own social culture garnering their own set of rules and dynamics for the smaller subculture. The organization's overarching goal is for leaders to create, maintain, and develop a strong organizational culture, which will allow its members to achieve organizational success (Popa, 2013).

Organizational Behavior

As organizational leaders and managers set the stage for the organization and how it is defined culturally, they must also clarify accepted organizational behaviors. Kuenzi et al. (2019) stated that organization leaders must guide employees in workplace behavior. Zaal et al. (2017) supported a similar perspective and mentioned that when employees accept the institution's values and norms, they will adopt them. Thus, the importance of behaviors to develop cultural norms requires organizational leaders and managers to be deliberate.

Organizational behavior has gained the attention of business leaders because employees' well-being can significantly affect organizational performance (Anjala & Sandamali, 2019). A key to defining employee success within the organization is how internal and external constructs are characterized for the employees by their superiors. For example, leaders within the organization may identify characteristic behaviors that employees need. Civic virtue, conscience, altruism, courtesy, and fair play are constructs that characterize accepted norms (Anjala & Sandamali, 2019). At the same time, factors such as quality of services, the loyalty of customers, and customer satisfaction are necessary when addressing external considerations for public relations (Agheli et al.,

2017). Leaders can influence individual behaviors to be consistent with overarching norms that contribute to organizational performance.

Leadership's Impact on Employees' Ethical Behaviors

When organization leaders develop ethical norms, they must decide how the company will operate and how their employees will act within those confines. The organizational leaders must develop codes of conduct on how employees behave with one another and their customers. Ethical justice stresses that individuals prefer to live in an ethical organizational society (Jacobs & Keegan, 2016).

Business ethics is key to organizational success (Setiawan et al., 2020). Business ethics involves systems, techniques, and measures to safeguard an enterprise's ethics and compliance program and ensure the program is in place and running effectively throughout the organization (Ferrell & Ferrell, n.d.). Business ethics involves the leader's view of norms and principles pertaining to how every participant within the organization is treated. Company leaders want a set of core values that employees should embrace as their own. Those values may include honesty, fairness, transparency, and respect for others. Organizational leadership can facilitate a shared positive emotional reaction that elicits individuals to embrace strong ethical changes in the organization (Jacobs & Keegan, 2016). Such values may sway employees' unethical behaviors and promote favorable outcomes in ethical decisions and ethical sustainment within the company.

When organizational leaders do not recognize how employees feel about company stress, employees may begin demonstrating unethical behaviors. Klein et al. (2019) stated that workplace behaviors can trigger anxiety, burnout, loss of commitment, absenteeism,

and other individual and organizational problems. Employees who feel excluded from the company's corporate social or economic norms find it more challenging to improve their performance, achieve organizational goals, and gain more significant social and economic benefits through their actions (Wu et al., 2019). Despite the importance of business ethics, many business professionals focus on profits, wealth, and personal interests and neglect ethical business practices (Sudsakorn & Rattanawibonnsoom, 2018). Therefore, employees, including business leaders, should consider how feelings of hate, distrust, and contempt of the organization can negatively impact the company.

Unethical behavior is an umbrella term that covers a wide variety of behaviors ranging from minor integrity violations, such as coming to work late and gossiping, to manifestations of criminal behavior, such as theft, corruption, and fraud (Wu et al. 2019). When employees partake in these behaviors, the organizations experience loss. They lose time, money, and resources when these behaviors become unnoticed, and leaders should consider how their behaviors and policies may contribute to unethical behaviors.

There are examples of companies across many industries where leaders' behaviors have influenced the public perception of the organization. For instance, Yang et al. (2021) explained how the hospital industry was plagued by a host of ethical issues regarding accounting and financial statements fraud. In the food and beverage industry, the court ordering a former chief operating officer and general counsel of Dole Food Company, C. Michael Carter, to pay shareholders part of $148 million for ethical misconduct (Johnson & Umphress, 2018). These are only a few of a lengthy list of unethical behaviors reported in business. Evidence suggests that employees'

characteristics play a part in unethical behaviors, but the organizational environment also plays a vital role in determining ethical or unethical behavior in the workplace (Kuenzi et al., 2019). Studies have shown that unethical behavior from employees is a result of ineffective leadership (Ohunakin et al., 2019). For organizations to prevent such unwanted behaviors in the workplace, organizational leaders should plan and build strategies to prevent such behaviors in the future. Longevity and sustainability only occur when the proper measures are in place, starting with effective leadership.

Leadership's Impact on Organizational Success

Organizations need a vigorous leader (Rizki et al., 2019), and this leader needs to have the right tools to prevent employees from engaging in deviant behaviors and to motivate them to contribute to organizational success. For instance, school leaders expect to drive their organizations towards academic achievement goals. In doing so, school leaders hope to move their organization towards achieving those set goals related to academic achievement; they must ensure that the teaching and learning environment adheres with the tenets of optimism and harmony (Velarde et al., 2020). These leaders take charge, motivate their subordinates, and build effective teams to ensure organizational success.

Organizational Culture

Leadership is central to organizations and their development (Cassar et al., 2017). Several authors, Sow et al. (2017) stated how organizational culture and administration work together to create shared beliefs, assumptions, and values that shape organizational behaviors. Upper management, along with the help of company leaders, can create,

establish, and build an environment where employees embrace the nuances of the organization by accepting the established guidelines set forth. In doing so, the core beliefs and vision of the organization may become their own and inspire a greater commitment to the overall success of the organization. These core beliefs help guide and shape employees on how to behave in the cultural environment within the organization. Instead of employees developing their personal reasons, guidelines promoted by influential organizational leaders help set the tone of the culture and give employees something to model while working to meet the company's expectations.

These actions of employees conforming to modeled behavior is known as social learning theory. If an organization is going to thrive, certain things need to be in place for longevity. As mentioned previously, leaders need to demonstrate and reinforce their talking points with actions. They can do this by studying the concepts behind social learning theory. Social learning theory examines how employees see what behaviors they called for, benefited from, and punished by studying and mimicking their leaders' behaviors. (Gan, 2018). Likewise, social learning theory proposes that people observe and adopt others' behaviors (Hanna et al., 2013). For this reason, an understanding of social learning theory may help leaders develop an ethical culture as they support ethical principles established.

To create an ethical organizational culture, business leaders need to take on transformational leadership roles. The goal is for transformational leadership to take the reins and dynamically change the organizational culture inviting the employee's contribution. Transformational leaders observe closely and pay particular attention to the

employees' desires for success by functioning as coaches/teachers to ensure they reach

their fullest potential. (Zhu et al., 2005). Additionally, in the employees' eyes,

transformational leaders perceive the culture as inviting, team-spirited, flexible in

leader/mentorship roles, and have clear guidelines on how to function within the

organization. These perceptions encourage employees to reach their goals, complete tasks

either on time or ahead of schedule and develop self-worth within accepted behavioral

guidelines.

Organizational Behavior

Organizational behavior is obtained by establishing employee criteria by

arranging opportunities for repeated results in the workplace (Singaraj & Ruba, 2020).

Simplistically, organizational behavior is about the interaction between employees and

their subculture to ensure the operations of work run smoothly. With regards to

leadership, it is up to the leaders to develop a strong company culture and institute

principles and protocols on how employees behave in this environment.

Because ethical principles of employees are different for individuals, leaders must

establish standards on how they want their employees to behave in the workplace.

Creating policies and ethical codes of conduct can help manage expectations. Kuenzi et

al. (2019) protected this notion by emphasizing that policies and regulations should

follow ethical rules that feature a code of conduct. Others, such as Kalwani and Mahesh

(2020), identified that establishing social norms through policies and regulations of

conduct can help employees identify with the organization and positively influence

employee behaviors. Thus, organizational behavior can be influenced by leaders accepted norms and company policies.

A transformational leader who brings members together by identifying and portraying proper business behaviors can offset the organization's negative aspects and generate positive outcomes (Kim, 2017). Additionally, transformational leaders influence employees by having them think about their work, their job and challenging them to the extent to which they commit to solid citizenship behavior and reduce unethical behaviors (Khalili, 2017). Thus, employees start to identify the organizational objectives and provide good faith traits which exemplify the meaning of company success for the organization (Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). Leadership in the form of transformational outcomes improves positive results and potentially reduces unethical behaviors in the workplace.

Business Ethics

Business principles, leadership, and ethical values have surfaced as significant issues over the years and are deemed necessary to business for long-term benefits (Engelbrecht et al., 2005). As unethical behavior becomes more widespread in the current business climate, organizational leaders are trying to mitigate these actions, find solutions, and build a better ethical environment within the workforce. How business leaders create applicable guidelines and policies to manage behaviors will determine how employees contribute to the business ethically.

Business leaders that establish guidelines and policies that address ethical standards can help provide a roadmap for accepted employee behaviors. Ethical leaders

model behavior, communicate ethical standards and evaluate employees based on ethical compliance (Kuenzi et al., 2019). Likewise, Bashir and Hassan (2019) argued that managers should articulate ethical standards clearly, inspire subordinates to decide ethically, and hold associates accountable for unethical conduct. Such activities may reduce unethical behaviors by demonstrating ethical behaviors that influence others to change (Waheed et al., 2018).

Transformational and honorable leaders are perceived by many as possessing only positive attributes (Jambawo, 2018). These individuals are considered role models within their organizational community. Such leaders can embed their moral composition and provide the social influence on the organization and its people by encompassing two of the four constructs of transformational leadership: idealized influence and inspirational motivation.

Idealized influence addresses the notion that these leaders are viewed as role models for the organization. To prevent or mitigate unethical behaviors in the organization, someone needs to champion ethical principles, displaying suitable characteristics and lofty standards of moral consideration. These behaviors can carry over by understanding the use of social learning theory within the workplace. The presumption in the employee's mind is that if the leader is ethical and displays him or herself ethically, they can make moral decisions to better the organization and its employees, then an employee would follow suit.

Inspirational motivation carries over by transformational leadership in a couple of ways. Transformational leaders who inspire and motivate look at diverse ways to

improve employee performance and compliance with standards. This can be as motivation gestures and praise for a job well done or recognizing a solid work performance during a quarterly review and issuing an award for outstanding performance. These identifiers convey to the employee that their deeds are noticed, and that the organizational leader sees value in their work (Lee & Hidayat, 2018).

Foundationally, transformative leadership inspires subordinates to conduct more than expected, which increases the morale of the employees and influences their overall behavior. Hauser (2014) also mentioned motivation as a tool that can be a source of positive energy affecting people's lives, whether in their workplace or private life. It is up to the transformational leader to guide their employees and create principles of high integrity and good morale within the organization by positively influencing others.

Modeling of Ethical Behaviors

Leaders and their behaviors are primary contributors to organizational behaviors. A leader's direction, influence, and demeanor can provide the context for a successful organizational output. Farahnak et al. (2019) described those attitudes toward change and transformational leadership as essential determinants of implementation success. Those leaders who resonate with transformational leadership traits can help others adapt to organizational changes. Transformational leadership is significantly tied to positive mindsets, such as work enjoyment and retention, while also reducing negative fallouts, such as turnover objectives and or absenteeism (Farahnak et al., 2019). Such influences can impact overall organizational behaviors.

Considerable research has been undertaken to examine the impact of transformational leadership behaviors on employee-level outcomes, such as task performance, citizenship behaviors, and organizational commitment (Khattak et al., 2019). Rizki et al. (2019) stated that transformational leadership is concerned with shared interests among employees by explaining the importance of its goals, putting aside their interests, and working for a common good. Ng (2019) described transformational leadership as a highly prevalent style that transforms institutions. This is enforced by the leadership traits identified within this style of leadership.

What makes transformational leadership unique is how these leaders interact with their subordinates, specifically, their overall attitude toward employees and their desire to promote a place of organizational acceptance. Para-González et al. (2018) asserted that transformational leaders are characterized by a series of features, such as ambition, motivation, honesty, integrity, business knowledge, self-confidence, cognitive abilities, and charisma influence behavior in an organization. For example, integrity can be considered an important ethical standard. Not only that, but transformational leaders who display integrity can provide their employees with their moral compass to follow. This means that transformational leaders or ethical leaders serve as role models for conduct and inspire (Zhu et al., 2019).

Motivation

Motivation is another attribute of transformational leadership. Motivation can be described as a condition or energy that moves employees to achieve the organization's goals (Andriani et al., 2018). When employees are motivated to do the right thing, and

leaders promote their positive behavior, employees feel more accepted to follow in their

leaders' footsteps and further develop an ethical organization that despises unwanted

behaviors. In one such case, workers seeking enjoyable work conditions are more likely

to assist others and create a helping work climate (Barbuto & Story, 2011), which is

precisely what the leaders of the organizations need for the long-term sustainment of

positive company culture.

Other Leadership Styles

Other leadership approaches are included in this review regarding preventing

unethical behaviors in the workplace. The identified leadership styles may share similar

characteristics. That can be from skills and expertise to integrity and ethics (Buble et al.,

2014). Leaders also have individual beliefs, values, and strong character (Eken et al.,

2014). In determining the right course of action for unwanted behaviors, leaders should

focus on what is happening and who is involved (Ward, 2019).

Autocratic Leadership

As many leadership styles are coveted, autocratic leadership is one leadership

style to avoid. This leadership style is the "do as I say and not as I do" attitude. Autocratic

leaders decide independently, do not provide learning stimulation to employees, and tend

not to consult lower-level employees (Lopes, 2018). This lack of employee interaction

can make them feel distant, unwanted, and undervalued. This may result in employees

lashing out and becoming irrational, harming the company.

To prevent such unruly behavior, there needs to be a different leadership that

builds upon an initiative-taking approach that benefits the employees in the workspace

and does not hinder it. The administration's goal is to ensure all employees feel included within the work establishment, allow employees to field their grievances, and be part of a team. The employees' positive attitudes towards their job and organization motivate them to engage more within their surroundings and improve their job performance (Uddin et al., 2019) and the organization's footprint.

Several authors, for example, Farahnak et al. (2019), underscored the importance of transformational leadership as being recognized as an effective style to address organizational tensions and aid in overall performance. Kohan et al. (2018) highlighted transformational leadership as developing cohesion and organizational effectiveness within others while enhancing team performance. Last, Boamah et al. (2018) overemphasized that these types of leaders create empowering environments where employees advocate for decision-making, foster employee satisfaction within the work domain, and allow subordinates to exert themselves to reach their potential at work. With these types of leaders in an organization, upper management can feel confident that any display of unethical behavior will be erased from organizational existence.

Transactional Leadership

As organizations continue to develop and cultivate a winning strategy to beat the competition, organization leaders are at odds with the best approach organizational performance. Leaders in today's work environments have a vital role in ensuring their employees achieve their goals under the right circumstances. To do that, corporate leaders need to influence their subordinates positively. Two methods of doing that are to define themselves as transformational or transactional leaders.

Transactional leaders are researched for management style when overseeing an organization. Such leaders clarify roles and duties to the followers and tell them what they need to do to reach their objectives (Kalsoom et al., 2018). Their job is to focus on tasks and setting milestones for employees while rewarding them appropriately. More so, transactional leaders favor closed cultures, mechanistic structures, and formal systems and procedures (Baškarada et al., 2017). These types of leaders adhere to more rules and follow safety protocols to ensure compliance. If upper management verbalizes how they want things done with no flexibility, then the management teams are likely to use a transactional leadership style to complete tasks. Regardless of the industry, followers are encouraged through a system of rewards and punishments (Rizki et al., 2019). Business leaders incorporate a transactional leadership style to balance employees' needs.

Instead of being goal-orientated or task-based objectives, transformational leaders focus more on people and less on projects. Transformational leadership is the leadership style used by a manager if they want a group to expand its authority and have performance outside the status quo or achieve an entirely new set of organizational goals. The purpose of transformational leadership is to motivate and inspire others so that each person will resonate with the leader and establish a shared meaning while being challenged at the same time (McCleskey, 2014). Through transformational leadership, these leaders function as coaches or mentors and help push their employees to go beyond their potential (McCleskey, 2014). for the better part of themselves. Ultimately, create an environment where people enjoy coming to work, collaborating with their peers, and embracing their leadership's favorable climate.

Situational Leadership

The business world is always in constant change. That means organizational leaders and employees must also learn to navigate the continuous flux or stagnate with their assigned duties. For instance, healthcare companies deal with ongoing adjustments and top-tier leaders must ask subordinate leaders to implement various management control measures to counter these situations (Giltinane, 2013). The constant changing of dynamics in the workplace takes a particular leader that can navigate both people and problems. This person must be flexible and shift leadership behaviors according to situations. Walls (2019) suggested that leaders use a range of approaches and styles relevant to different situations as they occur. The description above speaks of situational leadership style.

In comparison to the transformational leader, this person focuses on the individual. Transformational leaders are more directed to employees and establishing ways to enrich their subordinates through motivation, encouragement, and compassion. Transformational leadership is a cheerleader for employees. Someone that always has their backs, mentor and guide their employees through the good and bad of workplace dynamics. This is achieved by developing employees' potential, taking an interest in their work, providing necessary support when and where it is needed, and building a strong bond between leader and member (Giltinane, 2013).

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Researchers have discovered that leadership styles are the most vital determinant of team effectiveness and organizational performance (Choi et al., 2017). With dozens of

leadership styles to choose from, there are those leadership styles that are less desirable when it comes to employee engagement, employee motivation, and organizational sustainment. Laisse faire leadership is an example of a leadership style that may adversely affect team effectiveness and performance.

Laissez-faire (i.e., liberal leadership style) implies complete involvement and freedom, hence trust in the decision-making of all employees (Roganovic & Mijalkovic, 2017). According to Eken et al. (2014), these leaders recognize subordinates but do not attempt to influence their activities. An example of a laissez-faire leader is the president of a small manufacturing firm who calls no meetings with plant supervisors, has no long-range plan for the firm, acts detached, and makes little contact with employees (Northouse, 2019). These types of leaders allow the employees to decide for themselves what direction they should take to accomplish their tasks.

Laissez faire leaders may exhibit lack of the knowledge or experience to complete tasks (Eken et al., 2014). Older employees who have been working the beat for many years might find this rewarding; any new employees that come to the organization might not be fond of this style of leadership. The overall approach to laissez-faire leadership style is directed to avoiding responsibility, very undecisive as an individual, and avoid conflict whenever or wherever feasible for the organizational leader – all of which is opposite of a transformational leader.

Rationale for a Transformational Leadership Approach

Transformational leadership is a proven leadership style that goes beyond normal leaders in an organization. These types of leaders help followers go beyond their

expectations, promote a healthy work environment within the company culture. Likewise, Choi et al. (2017) emphasized that transformational leaders' overall goal is to improve the well-being of the organization, while employees are supported to their fullest potential. Furthermore, transformational leaders seek to promote hope, optimism, and strength of their subordinates (Onyalla, 2018).

The need for transformational leadership is gaining traction in business environments. These leaders look at the integrated approach to expressing confidence and instilling honesty in the culture of the organization, following up with creativity communicating with others - the lower subordinates and higher echelons, all the while driving home the need for organizational commitment. Coupled with the positive engagement and pursuit of a common goal more than what is described in their job description (Pradhan et al., 2018).

Among scholars, leadership styles have always been an issue of concern. Furthermore, evidence suggests leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth (Rafiq Awan & Mahmood, 2010). What is more insightful is that leadership is a process of social influence through which one person can enlist the aid of others in reaching a goal (Rafiq Awan & Mahmood, 2010). However, every leadership style is impossible to employ in all situations, and a particular leadership style considers the readiness level of subordinates (Raza & Sikandar, 2018) and their willingness to follow.

Transition

In Section 1, how organizational leaders lack the knowledge to mitigate or minimize unethical business problems in the workplace was introduced. Throughout the literature review, a concise plan for balancing the proper workplace and ensuring business leaders that portray transformational leadership identifies problems within the workplace to include including negative workplace behavior from the employees is verified. Section 1 includes the problem, purpose, research question, nature of the study, conceptual framework, significance of the study, and literature review. In Section 2, the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, data collection instruments and techniques, organizational techniques, data analysis, and reliability and validity are presented. The findings of the study and recommendations are included in Section 3.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 1, I identified the business problem and the purpose of this research. I conducted this study to further understanding of leadership strategies that business leaders use to prevent unethical behavior by employees in the workplace. In Section 2, I describe my role in the research process and the research method and design I used. The techniques I used to sample and recruit participants, collect and analyze data, and ensure the reliability and validity of the study are also discussed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to prevent unethical employee behavior in the workplace. The target population of this study was three business leaders from private sector organizations in the surrounding areas of San Antonio, Texas, who had developed and implemented strategies for mitigating employees' unethical behavior in the workplace. The results of this study may contribute to social change by clarifying strong leadership ethics and solid business practices that reduce unethical employee behavior to improve the lives of employees and stakeholders in the community.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. As the primary data collection instrument, a qualitative researcher must gather data for their research with an understanding of how important data collection is for the overall success of the research. One area of focus in business research is assessing as many significant facts about a company as possible, the bulk of which pertain to the overall operations of the company.

To garner this knowledge, I primarily relied on interviews with participants. Waghmare (2021) and Anyan (2013) noted that interviewing enables participants to think and to talk about their predicaments, needs, expectations, experiences, and understandings of the study phenomenon.

Although the participants in this study were from the same geographical region as me, I will not have any existing relationships with them that would compromise the integrity of this research. To my knowledge, I did not work in the same place as any of the participants prior to this study. The driving force behind this study was to understand the elements of transformational leadership and how transformational leadership is applied to prevent unethical behaviors in the workplace. I have collaborated with several transformative leaders who went above what is needed to not only motivate their employees but ensure they are given the same opportunities as everyone else in the work environment. My role as the researcher in this study necessitated that I review existing theories and literature to gain knowledge of the study phenomenon.

I believe that the citation should be for the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) as these concepts are associated with the *Belmont Report*. I followed the *Belmont Report* guidelines to ensure that human subjects in my study were protected. Adashi et al. (2018) showcased fundamental ethical principles such as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice for research. Ferdowsian et al. (2019) identified mental capacity, moral aptitude, and other qualities that have been used historically to justify differences in the presumed moral status and treatment of humans during research.

Overall, the entire facilitation process for research must be structured and presented in a way that eases any bias during the process. One approach to mitigate bias is through triangulation of multiple sources of data (Fusch et al., 2018). To achieve triangulation, I reviewed multiple research studies to formulate interview questions; interviewed participants; and reviewed company documents, websites, and other information shared by each of the participants. However, the key to the research itself was the interaction between myself and those I interviewed. In accordance with DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), I successfully limited any ethical issues by building trust and rapport with the participants, interpreting the data while reviewing notes.

Participants

The participants in this study were three business leaders from private sector organizations in the surrounding areas of San Antonio, Texas. Supervisors, middle management, and upper management were eligible, depending on the size of the organization and the accessibility of the personnel. For this study, it was prudent that I address the management team for my overall assessment. These were the individuals who had either a direct report and/or other firsthand knowledge of each employee's operational movements and direction, to include observable interactions between employee and supervisor. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) had supervisory oversight of employees' assigned duties, (b) allowed for direct reporting if a situation became an issue, (c) and provided mentoring or coaching when the need arose.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The goal of a research project is to make the research more complete and to strengthen the research design (Jentoft & Olsen, 2017). In order to ensure a successful research project, the researcher needs to find the most appropriate methodology for the given doctoral research. This research necessitated an in-depth understanding of the work environment, leadership styles and behaviors, and employees' behaviors while on duty, which made qualitative methodology more suitable due to the available research designs. In comparison to qualitative research, quantitative research is focused and absolute whereas qualitative research is interpretive. The reason for the interpretive nature of quantitative research is that people are complex and may behave negatively because of their environment (Clark & Veale, 2018). The interpretive nature of qualitative research calls for a different type of objectivity in its approach (Clark & Veale, 2018). Because the focus of this study was not directed towards measuring numerical data to analyze the research problem, quantitative methodology was not used or applicable.

Research Design

The best design for this doctoral study, I concluded, was a multiple-case study one. Use of this design provides the researcher with more research material than the other styles of research. First, multiple-case studies enable comparisons that allow researchers to assess whether the findings can be replicated (Butt & Ahmad, 2020). Furthermore, multiple-case studies allow for a more convincing theory when the suggestions are more intensely grounded in several empirical evidence (Johanna Gustafsson, 2017). Multiple-

case studies increase contextual relevance, compared to single-case studies. Researchers who conduct single-case studies analyze data from one source, whereas those who conduct multiple-case studies gather and analyze multiple data sources.

The goal of the research design is to ensure the researcher applies a level of data saturation throughout the project. Since data saturation is the most employed concept for estimating sample sizes in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2020). Data saturation refers to the point in data collection when no additional issues or insights are identified, and data begin to repeat so that further data collection is redundant and sample size is reached (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

Population and Sampling

Nonprobability sampling will be used in this study. Sampling is an important tool in research when the population size is large (Bhardwaj, 2019). Nonprobability sampling can be defined as a type of method where not every selected member of the entire population size may contribute to the research study. Due to the nature of this selection proceeding, the selected protocol for this data sampling will be purposive sampling. Researchers may implicitly choose a "representative" sample to suit their needs, or specifically approach individuals with certain characteristics (Health Knowledge, 2018). I pinpointed at least several lower to mid to upper-level supervision within the three different selected small to large organizations. Again, these individuals have direct contact with their subordinates and can validate their own actions via the interview process. Additionally, and most importantly, how the interview setting can and/or will tip the scale for a favorable outcome during the information gathering process. Not only does

the information gathering play a huge part in the process but the information is only as good as the people collecting the data.

For this study, a multiple case study will be utilized because of qualitative nature of the paper. Mwita (2022) stated a methodological perspective which allows systematic collection and processing of data to come-up with different outputs such as insights, discoveries, and theories. Certain suggestive ideas that would benefit this study would be the use of proper sample size, adequate triangulation of tools used for this research, and the length of data collections. The amount of time used in collecting data from one or more of these methods has a significant effect on data saturation (Mwita, 2022). For example, during the interview process I selected open-ended semi structured interviews. This allowed for the gathering of the material and assessing the information given, in order to make a suitable recommendation for improvement within the workplace.

Ethical Research

Ethical research can be a daunting task and depending on the type of research, it could be more strenuous when keeping up with the ethical principles such as honesty, confidentiality, and protecting the human subjects during the process (Run Run Shaw Library, 2022). Due to the nature of this doctoral study (qualitative study), human subjects are the focus of this ethical research. When doing research of this caliber I need to look at two specific areas of focus. With one being the ethical principles that protect the interviewee's (Kyngas et al., 2020), while ensuring my methods and practices are held accountable within the standards of the Walden Institutional Review Board IRB Approval #03-31-23-1004487. Getting consent comprises consent given freely

(voluntary), subjects should understand what is being asked of them, and involved persons must be competent to consent (Arifin, 2018). This process must further identify how participants can withdraw from the interview process, any type of incentives for participating if awarded any, and how I will protect their anonymity for 5 years after approval of the study.

One of the first things I did is outline the requirements and direction of the study. The reason behind the study is to provide enough information to the contributors so they can make the best-informed decisions for themselves. I addressed these proceedings in such a way that it did not seem that I was proving any coercion or ill will toward the company and/or their employees. Since we are considering human behavior, the interview session should be a quiet place free from distractions or interference from others. Before starting the interview questions, I provided a way out of the interview by identifying withdrawal procedures and ensuring the members understood what is being said, ensuring the participants could withdraw verbally or in a written notification. Likewise, ease the participants by answering all questions before continuing.

As the free flow of information is going back and forth, one special consideration that must be addressed to ensure the members understand the ethical protections that will be awarded to them during the discussion process. For example, I will store the transcripts/audio files on an encrypted device for 5 years and place it in a locked box for the confidentiality of all that is questioned. Furthermore, pseudonym names will be created in the verbatim quotes to the name of the companies confidential. There are no participant incentives for this study.

Data Collection Instruments

The purpose for data collection instruments is to help researchers access the thoughts and feelings of research participants, which can enable development of an understanding of the meaning that people are ascribing to their experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015). These instruments are known as important tools within the data collection environment for research. One researcher (Adosi, 2020) wrote, deciding on the data collection instrument to use in capturing the needed data to address a research problem as a novice qualitative researcher can sometimes be challenging. However, based on a qualitative research method, some data collection instruments are useful and widely used for data collection. For example, I used an audio recording device to ensure I captured all information that is exchanged between me and my selected participants. Likewise, during the data collection phase, I will be rendering semi structured interview questions to get to the root cause of my analysis (see Appendix A). It comprised of six open-ended questions with the possibility of follow-up questions depending on the information given. The interview session will also be given in a manner to award an opportunity for the participant, a face-to-face or over the phone dialogue. An interview protocol (see Appendix B) must be given to ensure the integrity of the interview process is followed and adhered too, which also provides a way out for the interviewee during the exchange.

The best outcome and easiest to assess data during the research collection will be as semi-structured questions. Adosi (2020) stated semi-structured is the easiest data collection instrument and the questions themselves add a structure that allows participants to fully express themselves during the conversation. The interaction allows a

connection between interviewer and interviewee sharing thoughts and feelings of the subjects, identify trends that may happen in the workplace, and identify strategies to make the work environment better. The questions and answers will not tell the full story unfortunately and this may be because of human error or misunderstanding, so note taking will be the next set of tools delivered to capture items that may not be said during the discussion. Notes allow the researcher to maintain and comment upon impressions, environmental contexts, behaviors, and nonverbal cues that may not be captured through the interaction of one another (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Given the circumstances, doctoral study research must hold its weight in reliability and validity during the entire process. Walden University does a fantastic job at adding a second pair of eyes to the entire research process, validating the credibility of the work that is being captured. Several authors, Sutton, and Austin (2015) mentioned another researcher to review the same transcript and then discuss similarities and differences, which can help clarify and confirm the research findings positively.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection tools and strategies that a researcher incorporates within their study are a key aspect of qualitative research. One researcher described data collections techniques as, Billups (2019) researchers who turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos. In comparison, several other scholars reiterated, data collection techniques as a collection of information through this method allows for gathering information from multiple sources aimed at understanding the meaning of the problems through the

respondents or involved audience (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). Qualitative research can be cumbersome, but with the right tools the success rate increases with the proper tools being used.

One of the first techniques that I used for the data collection in my doctoral research is the use of semi-structured interviews, with the purpose of having it open-ended to allow for additional questions and answers during the process (see Appendix B). This type of data gathering allows me to assess each organization and try to establish what strategies business leaders used to prevent unethical employee behavior in the workplace. Having interviews, especially within the comfort of the employee's organization allows for a relaxed and conducive atmosphere, identification of respondents' body language and expressions, the accuracy of the data, researcher control over the pattern of discussion, and high response rate (Inyode & Khan, 2018), which can be a big advantage for the interviewee. The disadvantage in this same environment would be distractions from other employees interrupting the interview, or depending on the conversation, the employee could decide to cut short the interview because of personal or professional reasons.

The work environment plays another part in a data collection system. Site visits before or after the interviews could sway the direction of the data collection. Site visits are where evaluators can get "the feel" of what a program is and does, additionally, where evaluators gather and interpret data with which to make judgements about the value and effects of a program (Brad Rose Consulting, 2019). These types of techniques allow the observers to see how the interaction plays out in the work environment, the good or the

bad. Data collection is still being compiled via notes for the interview discussion process. Unobservable during this time provides positive results which are natural in the workplace. Compared to observable traits if employees were told they were being watched. Body movements and interactions would seem staged and robotic, which skews the data being collected. The flexibility of the staff also could pose both positive and negative result depending on time of day and who may be working. One author, Henschel (2018) articulated allowing flexibility and accommodating during a site visit supports an understanding and recognizing of "real world" complications. It is up the researcher to call ahead of the observation timeline to ensure all parties can take part within the research.

To ensure the integrity of the information between both interviewer and interviewee, the researcher must provide courtesy to the parties being questions making sure that both data interpretation and/or the transcript review is accurate. This is called member checking. Member checking provides a way for the researcher to ensure the accurate portrayal of participant voices by allowing participants the opportunity to confirm or deny the accuracy and interpretations of data, thus adding credibility to the qualitative study (Candela, 2019). The benefit of member checking could be related stories of workplace environment, creating themes for solutions, if enough of the interviewers provide similar content. Likewise, members checking it could also be detrimental as employees could also use the time to vent their frustration on a particular problem (Candela, 2019). In either case, it is up to the interviewer to provide the interview questions, ensure all parties understand the interview protocol, take good notes

during interview interaction, and create a positive welcome environment that is meant for engagement and success during the entire doctoral study process. Overall, I want to make sure I achieve proper triangulation by reviewing multiple research studies, interview and review of company documents, websites, or other information shared by each of the participants.

Data Organization Technique

Qualitative research is employed to support a researcher in generating a deep and nuanced understanding of a phenomenon (Lester et al., 2020). Because of the study, researchers need to compile data in such a way that it allows for uncomplicated tractability of data going to and from the hands of the researcher to the document for prosperity. For example, a researcher could use research logs or cataloging/labeling system for accountability. Another form of data organization can be in using reflective journals. Several authors addressed reflective journals as, Hojeij et al., (2021) form of learning logs, diaries, descriptive personal narratives, or dialogue journals which promote self-assessment and analytical perspectives into methods and actions for critical inspection and correction. Researchers use these various methods to go back to when a question arises or to draw conclusions for readability or correctness during a particular discussion point. To ensure I capture everything that is needed for my discussions with the interviewer, I am using similar methods to record and track my data. Once collected I need to store the information securely for 5 years, and after that I can destroy the data permanently as instructed by Walden University.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is one of the most powerful stages of the qualitative research process, likewise; during this phase, extensive fieldwork and illustrative data are transformed into substantive and actionable conclusions (Raskind et al., 2018). Diving deeper into data analysis, qualitative researchers must balance the data in a way that encompasses all information in manageable parts for assessment and understanding. To capture this very thing, data triangulation should be considered in qualitative research. Several authors, Noble and Heale (2019) identified triangulation as a method used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings. The same authors also stated triangulation is also an effort to help explore and explain complex human behavior using a variety of methods to offer a more balanced explanation to readers (Noble & Heale, 2019). In comparison, triangulation techniques aim to search, identify, select, evaluate, and summarize data from scientific articles by pre-defined criteria and emergent categories (Celestino & Bucher-Maluschke, 2018).

For my doctoral study, methodological triangulation (data triangulation) was best for the needs of the study. Methodological triangulation involves using over one kind of method to study a phenomenon (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). This type of method provides the researcher with the best of both worlds in data research and application. The more data a researcher must extract from, the easier it is to draw conclusions for problem resolution. For instance, understanding leadership behaviors; the articulation between interview and observation can be found in leadership studies, in which the efficiency of a

leader can be studied with both interviews with leaders and, concomitantly, the study of their behavior (Abdalla et al., 2018).

Since the focus of my studies involves exploring leadership strategies preventing unethical employee behaviors, this style of data triangulation fits appropriately. Case in point, I first want to review all the case studies that involve different and effective leadership behaviors that circle around topics such as organizational leadership, organizational culture, organizational behavior and how the different leadership styles play a part in every facet of organizational development. Likewise, I then search for how certain leadership styles affects employee's behavior and ways leadership can steer employees toward an ethical paradigm for the betterment of an organization. After the case study review, I then develop semi constructed interview questions that get to the heart of the problem. Upon completion of the interview, I will study the interview transcripts and notes that were taken during the interview and interpret and analyze the data. Equally, I will observe the working environment and draw inferences as to the leader/employee relationship. Taking all the information in I will compile the data from various sources, collapse the data into understandable groups or categories, realign the information to where it makes sense to the reader or other researchers, analyze the documents, and provide concluding evidence for positive results.

The process which I am using to assess my work is known as thematic data analysis. The basic function of the thematic data analysis approach is to organize and simplify the complexity of the data into meaningful and manageable codes, categories, and themes (Peel, 2020). Ensuring the integrity of my work, I must incorporate software

applications to validate my findings and see if my approach to thematic data analysis is correct or not. The best application for thematic data analysis comes from today's research software such as ATLAS.ti or other notable applications. The application of ATLAS.ti will help break down specific keywords and/or allow the system to identify groupings/themes in observable parts. It will be up to me to correlate the key themes with case studies, areas of interest I may have found during the observation phases of the research, coupled with interview questions and answers to determine the best overall approach to an impactful resolution.

Reliability and Validity

Both reliability and validity are essential for measuring an instrument (Hancock et al., 2018), since reliability is concerned about consistency and dependability of information, as validity addresses things like credibility, confirmability, and the ability to relate in one's research. The goal of qualitative studies is to provide a methodological strategy that ensures transparency, as well as credibility and reliability during the planning and implementation of investigative research (Santos et al., 2020). Furthermore, reliability refers to the reproducibility of the study results, should the same measurement instruments be applied in different situations, while validity evaluates the interpretation of the studied instruments to ensure they support the evidence and the area of investigation (Chetwynd, 2022). For my doctoral study, I must ensure both reliability and validity are captured not only correctly, but confirm, the overall trustworthiness of the research through credibility, transferability, and confirmability through the entire project (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Reliability

Reliability is an important aspect of any research documentation. Reliability speaks on the overall performance and quality of that research. Reliability also refers to the appropriate methods chosen, and the ways in which those methods were applied and implemented in a qualitative study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Likewise, other researchers, Deggs and Hernandez (2018) proclaimed that "the researcher's creativity, sensitivity, flexibility, and skill in using the verification strategies determine the reliability of the study.

Dependability

Researchers not only need to establish reliability in their work, but they must also focus on dependability of the material. A natural definition of dependability results from adopting a conditional probability framework (Heddaya & Helai, 1996). The research that is provided, can other researchers adopt the same theories or concepts and utilize similar data with other tools/processes, such as having interviewee's check the transcripts to ensure the information is true and correct or have a second pair of eyes reviewing the interview questions for proper validation. Overall, if other researchers can infer the same results - that is dependability. For the part of the process in doctoral research, I will ensure both reliability and dependability by having each interviewer research the transcriptions in the form of member checking to validate its correctness.

Validity

Validity in research is a process to obtain scientific consistency, such as a strongly formulated research question, a well described theory, a research design that potentiates

the scientific aspects of the study, and a well-described process of collecting and analyzing data (Hayashi et al., 2019). Moreover, validity can further be described "the degree to which the tool actually measures what it claims to measure" (O'Brian & Orn, 2018). For example, is the piece of evidence credible and/or truthful in the investigation? Capturing the entire scope of the validity, I must ensure that during the research I build credibility, transferability, and confirmability throughout my entire doctoral study.

Credibility

As important as reliability, dependability, and validity is in research; credibility is also a main derivative of the entire qualitive research platform. Build credibility also means the researcher must also build confirmability, as well as transferability in an individual's research. Beginning with credibility, several authors wrote Establishing a reader's confidence in the findings requires the author to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the research process; its credibility or "truth value" (Wood et al., 2020). Other researchers back up these claims by stating that credibility in research data if found plentiful, allows others to judge whether the researchers conducted the right predictive analyses or not (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019).

Building credibility in research means that the researcher themselves must produce areas of consideration in the research. For example, triangulation of data is utilized to ensure proper saturation was composed. Triangulation, by combining theories, methods, or observers in a research study, can help ensure that fundamental biases arising from the use of a single method, or a single observer are overcome (Noble & Heale, 2019). Triangulation speaks on connecting data points together to determine what is

observed from data sources and establish a connection or theme with the entire project. Additionally, generated feedback form interviews with member checking will validate the collected data for accuracy and completeness. Member checks are process of continuous, informal testing by solidifying reactions of respondents to what he or she has been told or otherwise found out during the final care report of the research (Candela, 2019). Upon reviewing the transcribed data, the information will be presented to the interviewee for completeness, ensuring data is accurate and viable for final research obligations.

Confirmability

In terms of confirmability, you want to prove that your qualitative research is neutral and not influenced by the assumptions or biases of the researchers (The Farnsworth Group, 2021). Confirmability can also be described as the findings in research are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations, and perspectives (McGinley et al., 2020). To prove confirmability is using audit trails in research. Subsequently, details each step of data analysis and shows that your findings are not colored by conscious or unconscious bias but accurately portray the participants' responses (The Farnsworth Group, 2021). To tackle confirmability, I will pull from various sources such as websites, peer-reviewed articles, business journals that was directed to organizational leadership, development, and employee behaviors to eliminate bias of any kind during the research.

Transferability

As the name implies, transferability measures whether, or to what extent, the study's results are applicable within other contexts, circumstances, and settings (Ferrando et al., 2019). Transferability is established by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations (Complete Dissertation, n.d.). To demonstrate transferability in qualitative research, you can utilize thick description, which involves providing adequate details on the site, participants and methods or procedures used to collect data during your study (The Farnsworth Group, 2021). I will achieve transferability by incorporating the interview and the information gathered to build a case that help bolster other researchers in their own studies of the same topic.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, in of my doctoral study, I provided a summary of purpose statement, then identified my role as the researcher, and explained how I will select the study participants for the interview process. Moreover, I talked about my selection of population, its data saturation and sampling, while discussing ethical research as a form of reliability and validity. Next, I gathered data collection instruments, identified data collection techniques and how I was going to organize and provide data analysis to the evidence collected. I further defined information on reliability, validity, while highlighting research credibility, confirmability, and transferability of the doctoral research. In Section 3, I provided the (a) presentation of findings, (b) application to professional practice, (c) implications for social change, (d) recommendations for action,

(e) recommendations for further research, (f) summarization of my experience during the

DBA process, and (g) conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

In this qualitative multiple-case study, I explored leadership strategies to prevent unethical employee behavior. The participants of this study consisted of three business managers within the San Antonio area of Texas who effectively used leadership strategies to mitigate/prevent unethical employee behavior within their organizations. The data collected consisted of recorded, semi structured interviews via the Zoom platform and reviews of corporate public websites. Member checking was used to confirm the accuracy of data. The study findings revealed that participating business managers' leadership strategies were congruent with transformational leadership and a desire to prevent unethical behaviors in the organization's workplace. To maintain the confidentiality of the business owners in the study, I refer to them as Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 3. During the analysis phase of the data coding, I identified three themes using the ATLAS.ti application: (a) communication, (b) respect, and (c) organizational culture. I begin this section by presenting the study findings. I then consider the study's applications to professional practice and implications for positive social change. The section also includes recommendations for action and further research, my reflections on the research, and a conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of this doctoral study was to explore the strategies business leaders use to prevent unethical employee behavior in the workplace. The multiple-case study involved local business owners within the San Antonio area of Texas. All three

participants were in agreement that transformational leadership theory provides positive results in preventing or mitigating unethical business practices within the workplace. Due to participating' business owners' schedules, I conducted their semi structured interview via the Zoom web-based videoconferencing application. A total of six open-ended questions were posed to the participants. I also reviewed the participants' company websites. The data analysis yielded four themes: intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation.

Each of the three business owners explicitly stated that they had prevented or mitigated unethical business practices within the workplace via their leadership styles in operating their unique organizations. I selected the participants based on customer satisfaction and the size and scope of the organizations. I steered away from big corporations that provided a bigger platform and presence within the local community. Furthermore, each business leader was specific in how they portrayed themselves in their position. The values of each business owner supported transformational leadership theory as described in the research literature.

Theme 1: Inspirational Motivation

Each of the three business leaders encompassed inspirational motivation. An aspect of inspiration motivation is leaders' provision of a clear vision and commitment to ensuring that the team works towards common goals (Yue et al., 2019). Understanding the impact of inspirational motivational, transformational leaders can inspire and motivate employees by praising desired workplace performance and recognizing team members' value to the organization.

Participant 1stated ""we do things with our employees…weekend getaways…pay for their trip and stay," whereas Participant 2 emphasized motivation through emotional connection and communicating company's vision. Participant 2 stated that he "keeps the pulse of the organization" through daily meetings and understands the pay gap with competitors, so he provides higher compensation, which lessons turnover. He stated that "increasing compensations enhances crew mentality" and "employees showing up every day…even in the wintertime." He stated that he empathized with coworkers regarding family dynamics. The reported actions of Participant 2 promote understanding and the follower feeling valued and appreciated. As evidence of this, Participant 2 noted that one worker had been in their employ for 10 years.

Last, Participant 3 reported expressing motivation through representation and demonstrations. For example, Participant 3 explained, I am always educating if I see anything going awry, if I see something on the internet, where there is an unethical business practice taking place, we'll send the link out to the team and say, hey, beware of these kinds of things. Do not get involved in anything like this.

This action constantly enforces solid business practices and the company's visions toward the future. Cohrs et al. (2019) emphasized that leaders must communicate an inspiring vision. In each case, the participants had a clear vision that emphasized desired standards with ongoing attention to communicating with their teams. Additionally, the participants' efforts to recognize and encourage desired behaviors and performance in the workplace appeared to mitigate unethical business practices.

In understanding the importance of unethical behavior in the workplace, transformational leaders need to be upfront about their vision for the organization. They must apply appropriate tools to ensure that all subordinates abide by the rules and follow them. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their employees to act accordingly and highlight examples with their verbal skills. In one study, leaders assessed as transformational were more effective communicators in three areas: careful listening, openness, and careful transmission of messages (Brandt & Laiho, 2022). These attributes allow the participating business owners, as transformational leaders, to foster organizational success through direct communication of organizational needs, expectations, and ethical boundaries in the workplace.

Theme 2: Idealized Influence

In making organizational changes, employees look to their leaders for guidance and reciprocation of interaction to understand the nature of the organization and the expectations within their day-to-day operations. Leaders drive the company forward and set the organization's pace by asking for commitment, ensuring that employees abide by the company rules and regulations, and treating everyone respectfully. To foster the outcomes that leaders want, they must treat all employees with respect and dignity as human beings. Fundamentally, they must have a "walk the walk, talk the talk" mentality.

Each of the three participants supported Theme 2: Idealized Influence. When leaders embrace idealized influence, they convey a higher level of leadership qualities, such as being a strong role model or someone who does what they say and says what they mean. Poturak et al. (2020) noted that idealized influence encompasses a leader's

emotional connection with subordinates and that leaders attract others through their visionary and ethical behaviors. Essentially, a leader who conveys idealized influence is one whom employees can look up to.

Participant 2 mentioned that when an incident occurred, he took the time to speak with his subordinate and provide counsel on the situation: "If we have some sort of issues, I usually give a verbal warning to the crew." He let employees know that certain behaviors would not be tolerated, though in a way that was respectful but firm. When an employee's behavior goes too far, Participant 2 stated that he must terminate the employee, which garners respect from other employees. "The rest of the crew respected me for the decision," he said. Oreg and Berson (2019) articulated that leaders need to communicate organizational conditions and specific leader roles in influencing the change and its outcomes.

Participant 1 stated, "Employees would not say to hey boss." Participant 1 reported keeping meetings very informal and approaching group sessions in different ways. Furthermore, Participant 1 stated that they "treat everyone like a family member"; this highlights the treatment of employees as equals versus their treatment in a hierarchical type of environment. Clarke (2011) suggested that respect is seen as a distinct attribute associated with the leader in that they can command or are deserving of respect due to the leadership characteristics they possess. This is the case for Participant 3. He stated that he creates respect by asking members for straight feedback and instills a sense of solid bonding by being willing to listen to constructive criticism from

employees. Furthermore, he said, "I give employees value," a behavior that earns respect on both sides of the organization from a leader/member exchange standpoint.

Leaders must take charge of destructive behaviors and oversee the negative outliers with finesse. When unethical behaviors happen, leaders and other members of the organization need to understand that the leader will act in a manner that is positive, supportive, and appropriate to the situation's dynamic. This stance corresponds most closely with how respect is treated within traits, behavioral, and leader–member exchange leadership perspectives (Clarke, 2011). In contrast, leaders must find ways to engage followers to commit their efforts and abilities to contribute to the organization (Book et al., 2019). Moreover, some authors have found that employee loyalty significantly affects customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and service quality (Book et al., 2019). The three companies in the study demonstrate respect through loyalty to their leader and the organization. All company leaders' actions reflect transformational leaders' actions.

The transformational leadership model provides a moral compass to steer an organization in the right direction, guided by ethical choice and responsibility. This is not just change but a genuine shift towards human leadership, where trust and respect permeate the organization (Asbari, 2020). Moreover, leaders mostly perform this work to create trust between their team members and a climate where everyone respects one another, which is consistent with idealized influence (Hassan et al., 2019).

For leaders to garner respect throughout the organization, they need to perform congruent with the values they want from their employees. To prevent unethical behavior

in the workplace, organizational leaders must create a positive environment that promotes solid organizational citizenship behaviors, trust, and respect while empowering employees to do the right thing. If leaders want to create a world of organizational success, they must be the role model their employees can emulate. They need to provide a demeanor that is ethical and welcomed by all, through transformational leadership.

Theme 3: Individualized Consideration

Leaders should operate and maintain their organization throughout a subsection of transformational leadership – individualized consideration. Individualized consideration focuses on efforts by the employee themselves, through actions like being a good mentor, showing empathy toward employees, supporting subordinates' strengths and skill sets, while driving purpose for everyone in the organization. Bakker et al. (in press) conceptualized when leaders are idealized, show individual consideration, and/or are motivating and intellectually stimulating, they inspire their followers to use their strengths and take personal initiative.

Participant 3 stated "by mentoring employees and requesting feedback, he is able to gauge their satisfaction". Participant 2 mentions "Through communication, open dialogue between me and the crew, I counsel when necessary" in the form of mentorship. Participant 2 further stated, "that was a big step for the rest of the crew that kind of open their eyes" And produced positive results because of it. Participant 1 identified "We don't we don't want employees to feel like they're being segregated during group discussions" through empathy and mentorship, Participant 1 displays strong transformational leadership qualities as he takes cares of employees needs first, before his own. Leaders

are to ensure company success by enriching their employees and cultivating a workplace environment that is warm, welcoming, and ethically sound for everyone.

Regarding transformational leadership and each company leader identified one to two or all four components of the transformational leadership style. As far as transformational leadership is concerned, Bass (1985) has suggested that transformational qualities lead to performance beyond expectations in organizational settings (Xenikou & Simosi, 2006). Furthermore, transformational leaders demonstrated that efficient and innovative organizations have group norms that promote achievement, self-actualization, participation in decision-making, cooperation, social support, and constructive interpersonal relations (Xenikou & Simosi, 2006).

Theme 4: Intellectual Stimulation

Transformational leaders provide intellectual stimulation within the workplace. Being a leader requires a commitment to learning and accepting unexpected challenges as opportunities for development, through goal setting and building creativity in the workplace. Remember transformational leadership is about increasing transformational behavior and employee commitment and performance (Asbari, 2020). This explanation also relates to the expectations of the leaders when transforming the vision and attracting employees to immediately contribute to the achievement of the organization so that employees are committed to conducting the tasks that have been mandated (Cahyono et al., 2020). Within the scope of ethical boundaries, transformational leaders ensure they challenge the employee's own assumptions and beliefs and encourage a way to navigate controversial issues for the betterment of the organization and its culture.

Each participant touched on theme 4 - intellectual stimulation. Participant 3 expressed this notion by articulating "Hey, are you all in? Are you ready to go to the next level?" By saying that, Participant 3 verbized the need to push employees to company goals and aspirations. Participant 2 communicated "I can kind of keep my finger on the pulse on a day-to-day basis". Ensuring employees are being challenged toward company policies and professional growth, as further stipulated "I think that's done really well, for kind of crew mentality, and, and them showing up every day pursuing company's vision". Participant 1mentions goals and challenges by "Well, we just made sure that each employee is clear about the goals and expectations, and everything is well written and documented; additionally, we have meetings about various topics, including ethical behaviors in the workplace".

Transformational leader supports initiatives within their leadership styles, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. O'Reilly and Chatman (2020) portray leaders who motivate followers not by the social exchange and mutual benefits that transactional leaders provide but by raising the consciousness of their followers and inspiring them to pursue an energizing and unifying higher cause.

The key is for leaders to ensure they not only provide clear guidance to employees but also go beyond themselves and seek a higher purpose with work and personal life, elevating ethical principles and organizational commitment toward a solid organizational dynamic. Leaders that convince their employees that following and abiding by organizational goals and visions will also benefit collectively within each employee as

intrinsic value to their own goals and motivations. Organizations only last as strong as their leaders. It is up to leadership to drive the change they want through sharing common values, goals, commitment, and above all ethical reproach.

Applications to Professional Practice

Transformational leadership theory is a way of life for many business owners. The dimensions themselves provide a guide on how to commit to the business functionally and operationally, and through these leadership traits, it gives business owners a better understanding of how to enact proper business demeanor and gives employees things to strive for within the scope of their responsibilities. Organizational success is a two-part process a strong leadership presence and the support of the employees. The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore leadership strategies that business leaders use to prevent unethical employee behavior in the workplace, with the focus on using transformational leadership theory as a catalyst to support.

The findings of this study help navigate the muddy waters of organizational obligations and drive success through strong leadership values, ethical principles, and unwavering commitment from employees. Therefore, efforts of a leader to change unethical behaviors in the workplace will lead the organization to success in the way of organizational stewardship by changing the behaviors of employees; organizations must have a solid leader who can deal with change effectively due to the constant significant changes in the current environment (Usman, 2020). Likewise, the role of authentic transformational leadership style suggests that this form of leadership style is more

appropriate in today's highly competitive and dynamic business environment to create managerial excellence (Mauari & Mukherjee, 2021). Therefore, future transformational leaders need to adopt each dimension within their unique leadership presence to drive the change needed in the workplace.

Transformational leadership can transmit organizational values to followers and transform followers' self-worth to meet companies' values (Huang et al., 2021). Likewise, when employees' self-worth is consistent with the companies' values, they will perceive superior levels of meaningfulness, influencing them to show higher levels of employee engagement (Huang et al., 2021). Transformational leadership can be viewed from two perspectives: vision and action-vision are associated with creating images of future goals, while the action is about performing immediate behavior (Nuel et al., 2021). These visions/actions allow business leaders to create the world they want and motivate and encourage employees to do what they need for overall organizational success.

Implications for Social Change

This study aims to operationalize positive social change within a business organization. The information in this literature gives business owners an understanding of a suggested avenue for thwarting unethical business practices within the work setting. The implications recommended can provide leaders a way forward to not only change the mindset of employees but ensure they stay the course of strong ethical principles and values that make each organization unique in their industry. When business leaders go that extra mile for their employees, employees return that same dedication to customers, building a bond between the organization and the community.

A strong presence in the community awards commitment and stewardship from locals, in return enhancing community togetherness. The goal is to incorporate a transformational leadership style into every organizational facet. The organization flourishes when transformational leaders build, guide, mentor, and collaborate on an opportunistic approach to business and team dynamics. Social change starts when the leaders in the business world start to become receptive to their social responsibilities toward their communities. They also become collaborative with their processes and ensure they share the same values as those within the surrounding areas while continuing to involve themselves as a powerful driver of social responsibility and community togetherness. When a business grows, so does the community.

Recommendations for Action

The scope of this study was to understand what leadership strategies us to prevent unethical business practices within the workplace. The results concluded that the transformational leadership style could be the beacon of hope for business leaders. Furthermore, understanding transformational leadership and how to guide unwanted behaviors from employees can give business owners the relief they need in their chaotic work environments.

The first recommendation is capturing the essence of individualized consideration within the workplace. If employees are struggling or not meeting company deadlines, the business leader needs to address all concerns that the employee might have. This shows compassion and empathy, allowing the employee to open about their individualistic needs and wants from the organization and their leadership team. Although, the leader needs to

understand that this is not one time fits all model. What works for one employee does not mean it will work for another. In current literature, leaders need to be aware of their workplace surroundings.

Business owners engage with their employees daily to understand the dynamics they may be facing. Fully immersing oneself in a leadership role generates positive results. The workplace starts to unravel when leaders become less engaged and step back from their duties. Corporate leaders that engage in selective blindness by denying knowledge of their subordinates' egregious conduct encourage other employees to do the same thing (Westerhaus-Renfrow, 2018).

The second recommendation is to continue to motivate the employees to do the right thing. All business organizations ought to take the crucial step of motivating the workforce of the organization because motivation is the factor that inspires the organization's workforce to perform better and remain more productive (Rahaman et al., 2020). Motivation from the business leaders in the form of "cheerleading" creates a dynamic where employees can gain a sense of worth in their work, will work harder on individual or team tasks, and increases work productivity with efficiency.

The third recommendation is to continue to show ethical prowess with everyone you do as a leader. Leaders are always being watched in the workplace. Leaders need to portray themselves in a way they want their subordinates to idolize. When the leader does this, it helps foster an environment of trust and admiration toward the leader, which follows up with helping leaders make better decisions that drive action in the workplace. For instance, a female leader could be used as a role model. The leader can show women

how to behave in challenging situations—speak, stand, or move (Latu et al., 2018). These model behaviors are suitable for the employees and good for the work environment. When leaders hold themselves to a higher standard, including having a solid ethical presence, it is said that employees will mimic the leader's behaviors, perpetuating a more vital workforce.

Recommendations for Further Research

Since the study focused on leadership strategies that prevent unethical behaviors, the core topic of the study was for leaders to use the transformational leadership theory as a guide to prevent unwanted behaviors. Further research could include other leadership styles/strategies that favor the same results. Likewise, the area of investigation should also be taken into consideration. Instead of keeping things local within the surrounding areas, the researcher could expand the scope by extending the nature of the study to other states or neighboring districts outside the perimeter of the study itself. The research could use a different method of study. Instead of executing a qualitative multiple case study, the researcher could expand on the research model to see if one can create the same results with a viable mixed-method approach to the overall completion of the study.

Reflections

The road for this doctoral study has been treacherous. The long hours of research, many nights staying up late re-writing paragraphs to completion, and loss of sleep along the way have been a worthwhile endeavor. I caught the educational bug well before I retired from military service. Then when I finally retired, I still felt incomplete. So, I pushed further and further because of a passion, which in turn created a dream to get a

doctorate focusing on organizational leadership and understanding team dynamics. I achieved just that. The amount of knowledge and hours of reading peer-reviewed articles changed my life forever. I not only have a new understanding of what being a leader is all about, but I also now want to ensure the world follows suit.

What was apparent was the biases I held from being a military leader and now a leader in my own right with people I work with and for. The guiding light of military leaders taught me to have strong core values and an unwavering ethical presence in and out of the workplace. Moreover, as I still walk the path, I must remember that some biases are unconscious and need not project onto others who have not led such a double life as many of us have in the military.

Understanding these elements within myself, I made sure when creating the research questions and recognizing problem statements I did not affect any outcome with the created data. As well as, during the interview process, no biases were depicted during the entire ordeal. Taking everything in and with the research that I found, I will continue to find better ways to prevent unethical business practices and ensure that future leaders are well equipped to oversee such responsibility. This will be done with the same level of patience and dedication that I did during the research and beyond.

Conclusion

In this multiple case study I aimed to understand leadership strategies that prevent unethical business practices in the workplace. The focal point of the study was incorporating the use of transformational leadership style as the backdrop for current and future leaders to model after. Data were collected within and around the San Antonio area

to understand this notion, where three local business owners volunteered to participate in the doctoral study. The study's findings showed significant consideration for business leaders to pursue as a future construct in their personal development.

In today's business climate, there are opposing factors that change the dynamic of operations, with the competitive advantage being one; employees are now more stressed, underpaid, micromanaged, undervalued, and absent from the workplace more today than at any other time in history and most employees are quitting or being fired for bad conduct. According to the 2016 CEO Success Study, dismissals for ethical lapses globally have increased by 36% over the past 5 years, to 5.3% in 2012–2016 from 3.9% in 2007–2011 (Teachout, 2017). To prevent despicable acts from furthering, this study proposes using transformational leadership as a solid suit to stop such atrocities within the workplace. When leaders understand their roles as corporate technicians in charge and are equipped with the knowledge and technical expertise to maximize workplace performance and efficiency, unwanted behaviors from employees will diminish. The unwanted behaviors will be replaced with devotion, commitment, and successful organizational output.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is your organization's policies and strategies for mitigating unethical behavior in the workplace?

2. What strategies worked best for you to prevent and reduce unethical behavior?

3. How do you assess the effectiveness of the strategies for preventing unethical workplace behavior?

4. How did you address the key barriers to prevent and reduce unethical behavior?

5. How did your employees respond to the different methods being used in the workplace?

6. What additional information would you like to share about your organization's strategies for preventing and mitigating unethical employee behavior in the workplace?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Script (What you will say)	Actions (What you will do)
Hello, my name is Greg O'Donnell. I appreciate you taking the time to participate in this interview and my doctoral study. In this study, I am exploring what strategies do business leaders use to prevent unethical employee behaviors in the workplace? I am a current student at Walden University. Before we are being the interview process, I must provide you a consent form for participation of the study. Do you have any questions regarding the informed consent?	• Set the tone and atmosphere for a cozy interview. Also introduce me (providing a comfortable tone, eye contact, and a welcoming handshake).

Do you have any additional questions or concerns about what is about to happen? Or about your confidentiality or safety during this process? As a quick reminder I will be recording the entire interview to capture all information for clarity and prosperity for further analysis. Once completed, I will provide you a copy of your answers for a form of record. Do you have any questions before we begin? _____ • Ask interview questions • Insert probing questions to follow up as needed	1. What is your organization's policies and strategies for mitigating unethical behavior in the workplace? 2. What strategies worked best for you to prevent and reduce unethical behavior? 3. How do you assess the effectiveness of the strategies for preventing unethical workplace behavior? 4. How did you address the key barriers to prevent and reduce unethical behavior?

	5. How did your employees respond to the different methods being used in the workplace?
	6. What additional information would you like to share about your organization's strategies for preventing and mitigating unethical employee behavior in the workplace?
• Conclude the interview • Remind the participate of the possible follow-up interview	I will transcribe this interview and provided you with a hard copy of your answers. Please check over your responses and check for any errors. If there are any inaccuracies, I will schedule a follow-up interviews. Thank you for your time.