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# Experiences and Perceptions of Liberian Business Leaders' Transformational Leadership Skills

Kingsley Lington Ighobor
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Dr. Eric Massey, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Peter Anthony, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Judith Blando, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2015

Abstract

Experiences and Perceptions of Liberian Business Leaders' Transformational Leadership

Skills

By

Kingsley L. Ighobor

MBA, University of Liverpool, 2009

HND, Anambra State Polytechnic, Oko, 1989

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

African business leaders may not be effective because of a lack of transformational leadership skills. Business leaders applying transformational leadership skills can strengthen relationships with followers and enhance organizational performance. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences and perspectives of Liberian business leaders regarding transformational leadership skills needed to lead profitable organizations. Building on a conceptual framework of transformational leadership theory, data were obtained from open-ended interviews of 20 Liberian business leaders operating in the capital city of Monrovia. Interviews were transcribed, coded, validated through transcript review, and analyzed to generate themes. The most prominent themes were the need for Liberian business leaders to act as role models, to attend to individual employee's needs, and to demonstrate ethical conduct. The findings indicated that Liberian business leaders may adopt transformational leadership to help a company gain a competitive advantage, make profits, and enhance employees' commitment and organizational performance. These findings may contribute to positive social change by creating awareness among Liberian business leaders about the benefits of transformational leadership to expand company operations, create employment opportunities, and contribute to poverty reduction in Liberia. Research findings may be useful information to Liberian policymakers, business leaders, and scholars seeking to understand business leadership challenges in a postconflict economy.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my late sister Omozele Eghobor who encouraged me to undertake this journey but could not be at my graduation. To my wife, Umu, children, Efe and Zogie, who sacrificed time and resources and cheered me on to the finish line. To my friends, Patrick Coker, Dr. Lans Gberie, Dr. Kenneth Kipkulei, and Urias Brooks for encouragement and support.

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My sincere thanks to my chair, Dr. Joseph Eric Massey. I am deeply grateful for his patience, guidance, and support throughout this journey. I would also like to thank my committee member, Dr. Peter Anthony, and my URR, Dr. Judith Blando, for their help ensuring that my study meets Walden University's academic standards. Finally, I would like to thank our Program Director, Dr. Freda Turner, for her continued commitment towards the student body and faculty.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Businesspersons engaging in global business need new skills to manage successfully and deal with complex issues (Lee & Liu, 2011). Complex issues in contemporary business practices include ethics, global awareness, and diversity (Melé & Sánchez-runde, 2013). An understanding of these complex issues will help business leaders formulate and implement effective strategies and practices that will assist them in formulating policies that they can apply locally and regionally (Bildstein, Gueldenberg, & Tjitra, 2013). However, some business leaders lack adequate knowledge of the dynamic nature of the contemporary business environment and rarely implement the right policies that catalyze the growth of their organizations (Lee & Liu, 2011).

In sub-Saharan Africa, which includes Liberia and 47 other nations, national economies are still developing, and many businesses are failing because business leaders lack the knowledge and skills to manage successfully (Pfeffermann & Brown, 2011). Doing business in that region and other developing economies has become challenging (Bratianu & Anagnoste, 2011). In this investigation, Liberian business leaders assessed their skills and provided their perspective on their understanding and application of transformational leadership skills.

Liberia is recovering from 14 years of civil unrest (1989-2003). Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Western Sahara, and Sudan are emerging from conflicts in Africa (United Nations [UN], 2011). This study could provide a context for understanding business leadership issues, especially in postconflict countries in Africa. Section 1 includes (a) an explanation of the background of the

problem, (b) an exploration of transformational leadership theory, and (c) a discussion of contributions of the research to social change. The purpose statement includes the objectives for the research, the research design and method, and the population and the geographic location of the study. Section 1 comprises the research questions and an examination of pertinent literature to place the research in a context of a conceptual framework. Section 1 concludes with explanations of (a) key technical terms, (b) assumptions, (c) limitations, and (d) delimitations.

**Background of the Problem**

Liberia is the oldest republic in Africa, founded in 1847 by freed American slaves (Ellis, 2006). The freed slaves named the capital city Monrovia and established an oligarchy dominated by the True Whig Party (TWP; Ellis, 2006). In 1980, a military coup toppled the TWP government of President William Tolbert, ushering in an era of political instability (Ellis, 2006). In 1989, a civil war began and continued until 2003 when peacekeepers from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a subregional body, and the UN intervened. The peacekeepers disarmed thousands of combatants and assisted in conducting democratic elections (Ellis, 2006).

Liberia is a poor country with a population of 4.3 million, a life expectancy at birth of 61 years, and a gross national income per capita of U.S. $400 (World Bank, 2015). The anticorruption organization Transparency International (2014) ranked Liberia 94 out of 174 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Of the country's 4.3 million people, 63.8% live below the poverty line on less than U.S. $1 per day (World Bank, 2015). Political stability in the country has existed since the 2005 election of the

first female president in Africa, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The World Bank (2015) reported stability in the Liberian economy because of an influx of investors, including Liberians, who used to live in the United States. However, the Liberian economy declined to 3% GDP growth in the period 2014-2015 because of the Ebola disease outbreak (World Bank, 2015). Liberian business leaders' active participation in a thriving private sector could stimulate the economy through jobs creation and mitigate prevailing poverty.

The Liberian government leaders are encouraging foreign direct investments (FDI) to create jobs. The government revitalized the National Investment Commission (NIC) in 2005 to facilitate and encourage FDI. However, Esso (2010) posited that the growth of the Liberian economy would promote FDI rather than FDI promoting the Liberian economy, stressing that such foreign investments do not necessarily lead to economic growth. Leaders of the Liberian Business Association (LIBA, 2010), which advocates on behalf of Liberian businesses, argued that the government's investment policies do not provide enough incentives for indigenes. Although Liberian business leaders advocate constantly for incentives, the leadership style that they demonstrate can play a significant role in organizational success.

Liberians have debated whether foreigners should be allowed to operate the largest businesses in the country (LIBA, 2010). Under the free market economy over which the government exercises little or no control (Kantarci & Karacan, 2013), Liberian business leaders have difficulty competing against foreigners (LIBA, 2010). LIBA leaders continue to urge the government to provide tax incentives to Liberians and to provide support for training indigenous entrepreneurs to ensure that Liberians can own

and manage big businesses. LIBA leaders also emphasize reducing the difficulties of Liberian entrepreneurs in financing their enterprises and law enforcement that supports Liberian businesses (LIBA, 2010).

The Liberia Incentive Code of 1973 restricts foreign investments to certain sectors, including (a) mining and quarrying, (b) electricity and gas, (c) agriculture, (d) forestry and fishing, and (e) the manufacture or assembly of finished and semifinished products (Liberian Government Executive Mansion, 2014). The U.S. Department of State's (2011) report on Liberia's investment climate stated that a Liberianization policy enacted in 1975 and further strengthened in 1998 prevents foreigners from operating certain businesses such as (a) travel agencies, (b) beer and soft drinks distribution, (c) poultry, (d) gas stations, (e) cinemas, (f) retail sales of rice, (g) commercial printing, and (h) importation of used cars. The goal of the Liberianization policy is to ensure that only Liberians benefit from the specified business sectors (LIBA, 2010).

LIBA considered the lack of capital as mainly responsible for failing businesses managed by Liberians. Bonaparte (1979) asserted that multinationals in Liberia often refuse to integrate their managerial values with those of the indigenes. This situation is not conducive for development, as indigenes do not have an opportunity to learn how to manage effectively from their foreign counterparts (Bonaparte, 1979). The civil war may have contributed to a shortage of human capacity in Liberia. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2012), 750,000 Liberian refugees (mostly young people) were in neighboring countries during the civil war. The UNHCR added that civil unrest caused tertiary educational institutions to shut down and thousands

of Liberians did not have access to higher education venues. Without readily available qualified personnel, Liberian business leaders may have difficulties recruiting competent staff. The lack of qualified personnel may increase the need for investment in training and development of employees.

Postconflict countries usually lack adequate human capacity (UN, 2011). To be effective leaders, indigenous business managers in developing countries need more training and better skills (Dalgleigh, 2008). Leaders of the World Bank and the European Union (EU) recognized the lack of adequate human capacity in Liberia and required the government to agree to an arrangement named the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP) in which expatriates worked alongside Liberian government officials in the management of key government departments (World Bank, 2015).

Because of the need to enhance leadership skills among Liberians, Liberian government officials are addressing business leadership training for Liberian entrepreneurs (LIBA, 2010). These efforts have been inadequate, as the government can only afford to send a limited number of people for leadership training overseas (LIBA, 2010). Liberia needs entrepreneurs to lead organizations that can be profitable, provide jobs, and undertake socially worthy causes.

**Problem Statement**

To benefit from FDI in a globalized business environment, Africans must have the necessary skills to lead organizations effectively (Owusu-Antwi, 2012). Effective transformational leadership skills will result in profitable businesses; however, a

perception exists that African business leaders are ineffective (Kiggundu, 2013). According to the Liberian government's National Investment Commission Report (2011), foreigners manage the 33 large (each investment worth more than $10 million) investments.

Many organizations in developing countries do not succeed because indigenes lack the leadership skills to manage effectively (Dalgleigh, 2008). The general business problem was that Liberian business leaders do not have sufficient transformational leadership skills. The specific business problem was the lack of transformational leadership skills resulting in the inability of Liberian business leaders to lead profitable organizations effectively.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational skills needed to lead profitable organizations. The targeted population was Liberian business leaders based in Monrovia, the capital city. I limited the population to those whose organizations are listed in the government's directory of businesses, were 18 years and over, had at least 5 years of experience as business leaders, and were members of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce. This population was appropriate for this study because individuals with the right transformational leadership skills can play a role in leading profitable organizations effectively. The population was in the same city, affording convenient access.

The study findings could contribute to the field of business by identifying skills that Liberian business leaders need to enhance abilities to lead profitable organizations effectively. The study results could contribute to social change as Liberian business leaders may identify the transformational leadership skills needed to lead profitable organizations. The study may contribute to the literature about business leadership in Liberia and assist policy makers, students of business, and development experts to understand important business leadership issues in a postconflict economy. Although Liberia was the focus of this study, the findings could apply to many developing African economies in which indigenous business leaders could contribute more to socioeconomic development.

## Nature of the Study

The primary issues in this study related to inductive discussions and interpretations, which make the qualitative, phenomenological research model suitable. Sergi and Hallin (2011) stated that researchers use the quantitative method for objective data measurement and analysis. The use of the qualitative method allows the researcher to understand individuals' lived experiences and to provide explanation for generated themes and concepts (Bansal & Corley, 2011; Schultze & Avital, 2010). Schultze and Avital added that a qualitative method enables a researcher to find the meaning and essences of events as they are happening.  With the study's intent to explore the lived experiences of Liberian business leaders by analyzing nonnumeric data, a qualitative method was the best approach. Using the qualitative approach, I explored the experiences

and perceptions of a select group of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership skills needed to lead profitable organizations.

In this study, I used a phenomenological design with open-ended, semistructured interviews. Semistructured interviews provide flexibility for a researcher to ask different questions and to focus on the subject matter (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; McGuigan, 2011). Marshall and Rossman maintained that a phenomenological design allows the exploration of perceptions and themes emerging from the research process. I preferred the phenomenological design to an ethnographic research, which focuses on the study of a cultural group over a long period (Marshall & Rossman, 2011)

## Research Questions

In this investigation, I explored the perceptions and experiences of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership skills needed to lead profitable organizations. I used a simple random sampling to select 20 Liberian business leaders from the government's directory of businesses. The 20 participants were those over 18 years, had at least 5 years of experience leading a business, and were members of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce. During the open-ended, semistructured interviews, I asked questions to allow participants to provide perceptions about leadership effectiveness and to identify skills they may need to manage businesses effectively. The interviews with executive business leaders provided answers to the research questions:

RQ1: What primary transformational leadership skills do Liberian business leaders identify as most important to lead profitable organizations effectively?

RQ2: What specific influence could the leadership skills they rate as most important have on leading profitable organizations effectively?

To answer Research Question 1, I focused on the overarching objective of the research, which is to identify the primary transformational leadership skills that Liberian business leaders may need to lead their organizations effectively. Secondary Research Question 2 involved how and what needed transformational leadership skills, if any, can influence an organization's leadership effectiveness. I conducted face-to-face interviews with 20 Liberian business leaders who provided answers to the research questions. The 10 open-ended interview questions addressed the research question of Liberian business leaders' views regarding the transformational leadership skills needed to lead effectively and improve their organizations' profits. The interview questions (see Appendix A) were

**Interview Questions**

1. What are your experiences regarding the need for leaders to provide individualized consideration, such as attending to each follower's needs?

2. What are your efforts to provide individualized consideration, such as acting as a mentor for your followers?

3. Individualized consideration also involves empathizing, motivating, and engaging your followers in a two-way communication. What influence could these transformational leadership skills have on an organization?

4. How could acting as a role model for followers enhance leadership effectiveness?

5.      What are the ways in which you have acted as a role model for your followers?

6.      What ways have you demonstrated integrity and ethical conduct before your followers?

7.      How could leaders encourage innovation and creativity in followers?

8.      How have you articulated a vision and communicated optimism for your followers?

9.      Of the primary transformational leadership skills (such as acting as a role model, acting as a mentor, attending to followers' needs, engaging your followers in a two-way communication, ethical conduct, and articulating a vision), which do you think are the most important for Liberian business leaders to lead profitable organizations?

10.     Would you like to add anything that you may not have had the opportunity to address from the other questions?

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study was the transformational leadership theory, which focuses on the relationship between leaders and followers. Under transformational leadership, followers have high trust and respect for the leader, and the leader demonstrates hard work, empowerment, and motivation (Ismail, Mohamed, Sulaiman, Mohamad, & Yusuf, 2011). The core foundation of transformational leadership is the relationship between a leader and followers. Gandolfi (2012) referred to transformational leadership as a contemporary paradigm that departs from the command-

and-control model and centers on teamwork and empowerment. Leaders who empower employees and foster team spirit enhance greater economic value for the organization than leaders who demonstrate authoritative style (Shurbagi, 2014)

The focus on transformational leadership began in the 21st century as a counter theory to transactional leadership under which employees receive individual rewards for their efforts (Basham, 2012). Burns (as cited in Bushra, Usman, & Naveed, 2011) first used the term transformational leadership to differentiate it from transactional leadership. However, whereas Burns' concept of transformational leadership centered on leaders and followers motivating each other, Bass, Avolio, Jung, and Berson (2003) categorized the theory into four dimensions: (a) idealized influence, which is the extent to which the leader acts as a role model; (b) individualized consideration, which is the extent to which the leader attends to followers' needs; (c) intellectual stimulation, which is the extent to which the leader encourages followers to be innovative; and (d) inspirational motivation, which is the extent to which the leader articulates a vision that inspires followers. Ismail et al. (2011) and Schuh, Zhang, and Tian (2013) recommended transformational leadership for business organizations and noted that although some business leaders continue to apply transactional leadership, most have adopted transformational leadership to achieve their strategic objectives. Many African business leaders demonstrate authoritarian leadership style rather than transformational leadership style, reinforcing a perception of ineffectiveness (Ebegbulem, 2012).

Transformational leaders apply different skills to motivate followers (Searle & Hanrahan, 2011). Voegtlin, Patzer, and Scherer (2012) and Tomic and Tomic (2011)

explained that although globalization complicates the leadership phenomenon, transformational leaders could achieve strategic business goals by setting priorities, allocating resources, and motivating employees. The qualities of a transformational leader include (a) integrity, (b) intelligence, (c) self-confidence, and (d) a willingness to take responsibility (Tomic & Tomic, 2011). Unlike transactional leaders who establish themselves as the sole leader in an organization, transformational leaders demonstrate empowerment and motivation to earn employee trust and respect.

Birasnav (2014) noted that transformational leaders are charismatic and dynamic and are likely to integrate new technology into their organization's internal processes to gain a competitive advantage. Mason, Griffin, and Parker (2014) added that transformational leaders empower employees through leadership development programs. The prominent descriptors of transformational leaders in the extant literature were charisma, empathy, and trust, and leaders or aspiring leaders can adopt these attributes.

Although there is no accepted framework to understand Liberian business leaders' perceptions of effective leadership, the transformational leadership conceptual framework provided a context for this study. Liberia is emerging from 14 years of civil strife and has 74% unemployment (Liberian Government Executive Mansion, 2014). Ebegbulem (2012) characterized the leadership style of Africans as top-down, corrupt, authoritarian, and one that often resists change initiatives. A conceptual framework on transformational leadership provided a context for understanding and assessing the perceptions and experiences of Liberian business leaders' transformational leadership skills.

**Definition of Terms**

Marshall and Rossman (2011) advised researchers to explain how certain words are used in the context of the study so that readers can gain a clearer understanding. The following definitions are relevant:

*Complex adaptive system:* A model in which internal agents interact and self-organize in line with a changing environment (Hammer, Edwards, & Tapinos, 2012)

*Ethical contextualism:* A belief that ethical differences are easier to understand when considered in the right context (Shafer & Wang, 2011).

*Ethical relativism:* A belief that people of different cultures, locations, and time have different ethical values (Napal, 2014).

*Ethical universalism:* A belief that norms, habits and traditions can apply across cultures and locations (Napal, 2014).

*Knowledge-based economy:* An economy in which intellectual capabilities have more influence on productivity and growth levels than natural resources (Paton, 2013).

*Liberia Incentive Code* (also referred to as *Liberianization*): A Liberian government policy that gives Liberians exclusive rights to operate certain businesses (United States Department of State, 2011).

*Meta-ethical relativism:* A belief that no right or wrong ethical values exist (Faraci, 2012).

*Strategic intent:* A business model in which the strategy is to attain an organization's aspirations by leveraging available resources (Ryals & Davies, 2013)

*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR):* The United Nations agency that coordinates global effort to protect refugees (UNHCR, 2012).

## Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

### Assumptions

Assumptions are invalidated facts a researcher accepts as true and are included in a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Three assumptions guided this research. The first assumption was that indigenous Liberians who grew up and lived in Liberia between 1994 and 2014 have been part of and understand the country's socioeconomic patterns. The second assumption was that the 20 participants in the study were adequate. Given that I identified recurring themes at 17 interviews, and continued through 20 to achieve data saturation, 20 participants were adequate for the study purpose. The last assumption was that the interview questions covered essential topics in transformational leadership pertinent to the study. The interview participants understood the various topics in transformational leadership.

### Limitations

Limitations are anticipated weaknesses in a study capable of affecting the internal validity (Leedy & (Ormrod, 2005). The purpose of the study was to explore Liberian business leaders' perceptions regarding the leadership skills, if any, needed to lead profitable organizations. A potential weakness of the study was the possibility of biased responses from participants who may have been unwilling to accept any notion of perceived gaps in their leadership skills. I addressed this limitation by using open-ended and nonleading questions to allow participants to discuss their views frankly. I asked

follow-up questions to ensure a focus on the research purpose and clarity in the participants' responses.

**Delimitations**

Researchers apply delimitations to describe uncompleted elements of a study and the characteristics limiting the scope of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Twenty Liberian business leaders listed in the government's directory of businesses, over 18 years, had at least 5 years of experience leading a business, and were members of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce participated in this research. The research may not generalize to small business leaders often not members of the Chamber of Commerce.

The participants were in the capital city, Monrovia. The research participants' views of the effectiveness of indigenous business leaders may not reflect the views of Liberians, many of whom are in other cities and villages. Because many of the towns and villages in Liberia are not accessible by road, I interviewed 20 business leaders based in the capital city. With more participants from different regions, the results of the study could be more generalizable to a wider population.

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**Significance of the Study**

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**Reduction of Gaps**

The considerable literature in the field of business leadership includes the topics of employee motivation and job satisfaction (Springer, 2011; Yurtseven & Halici, 2012), cross-cultural leadership (Mittal, 2015), and business leadership in a technological, global economy (Gee & Gee, 2011). Limited literature exists about the leadership abilities of Liberian business leaders and what skills, if any, they may need to lead profitable

organizations more effectively. Indigenous business leaders in Liberia, foreign investors, policy makers and business schools will likely find this study useful.

Liberian businesspersons need to provide their perspectives on effective leadership and identify the transformational leadership skills they may need. Not only will doing so have the potential to aid in profitability, but also may enhance the managers' position in their organizations to compete in a globalized economy. The study results may provide useful information to government policy makers who may address the findings by changing any related policies, business leaders who may have interest in the research findings, and students of business schools in the country who may be future business leaders.

Understanding the leadership skills that will make indigenes in developing economies effective leaders is necessary (Dalgleigh, 2008). Dalgleigh (2008) found that a similar problem of ineffective leadership in the Caribbean was because of the indigenes not applying modern management techniques. Dalgleigh made recommendations regarding how foreign investors can get into mutually beneficial strategic partnerships with indigenes. African business leaders need the skill sets to lead effectively in a global economy (Owusu-Antwi, 2012). By engaging in strategic partnerships with foreign investors, Liberian business leaders may gain the knowledge and expertise necessary to lead in a globalized business environment.

In this research, Liberian business leaders identified the transformational leadership skills they needed to lead profitable organizations. Despite general knowledge about business leadership, company executives need to develop leaders who understand

leadership issues specific to each country of operations (Chang & Tsai, 2011). The results of the study provided information that may lead to a better understanding of business leadership issues among indigenous Liberians.

## Implications for Social Change

Liberian business leaders may adopt the recommendations of a qualitative, phenomenological study regarding their experiences and perceptions of transformational leadership skills needed to improve organizational performance and profits. Effective business leaders are able to give back to society (Godos-Díez, Fernández-Gago, & Martínez-Campillo, 2011). Exploring the dynamics of the contemporary business environment and identifying current leadership models may encourage Liberian business leaders to acquire new skills that will enable them to lead profitable organizations effectively. The implications for social change include the potential for Liberian business leaders to adopt the study recommendations. In doing so, Liberian business leaders could lead companies that create employment opportunities and contribute to poverty reduction in the country.

## A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This section includes an exploration of the literature on transformational leadership skills that Liberian business leaders may need to lead profitable organizations. The literature review consists of the background and definition of transformational leadership and provides a basis for understanding the effective leadership phenomenon. Included in the review is a perspective of the research problem and an explanation of the need to redress the socioeconomic imbalances in Liberia. The literature outline includes

broad themes such as (a) transformational leadership, (b) communication, (c) business strategy, (d) motivation, (e) charisma, (f) managing change, (g) integrity, and (h) ethics. These themes provide a context to understand transformational leadership skills Liberian business leaders need to lead profitable organizations effectively.

I searched the databases EBSCO, ProQuest, Questia, and Google Scholar for reference to the topics of business and leadership. Keywords and search terms included *business and leadership models, transformational leadership, businesses – Liberia, motivation, business ethics, change management, integrity, charisma,* and *communication*. The literature included 158 articles pertinent to the research study with 135 (86%) published between 2011 and 2015. The literature review includes 137 (87%) peer-reviewed articles.

**Transformational Leadership**

Generally, leadership plays a role in organizational success (Nasomboon, 2014; Nixon, Harrington, & Parker, 2012). Leadership is the ability to influence followers' behavior to perform tasks that accomplish predetermined goals (Emmanuel & Ugochukwu, 2013). Leadership involves vision, creativity, ability to effect change, and empowering employees in ways that commit them to an organization (Yukl, 2012; Sahin, Cubuk, & Uslu, 2014). However, not every leader can lead a team to success (Konorti & Eng, 2012), which is why scholars proposed that businesspersons should adopt the transformational leadership style (McKnight, 2013; Yukl, 2012).

Most leadership theories concentrate on the characteristics of a leader (Gandolfi, 2012; Landis, Hill, & Harvey, 2014.) and transformational leadership theory focuses on

the relationship between leaders and their followers (Yukl, 2012). Yukl (2012) narrowed transformational leadership to essential basic roles: (a) to formulate a clear and compelling vision and strategy and (b) to motivate employees to accomplish the vision. Yukl emphasized that the goal of transformational leadership was to enhance employee commitment. The ways by which transformational leaders can enhance employee commitment are (a) listening to them and (b) demonstrating a commitment to the organization's vision (Tomic & Tomic, 2011). Yukl (2012) expounded further on the qualities of transformational leaders stressing that they must be innovative, provide recognition to deserving employees, and envision change. Given the dynamism of global business, Liberian business leaders who adopt transformational leadership skills could be inclined to encourage employees to be innovative.

Bushra et al. (2011) stated that employees led by transformational leaders have higher levels of commitment and are more creative than those led by leaders who do not demonstrate transformational leadership skills. Shunlong and Weiming (2012) reinforced Bushra et al.'s findings. Shunlong and Weiming employed mixed methods research to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee behavior in the Pearl River Delta Region, Guangdong province, China. Using documentary research and 300 questionnaires distributed among enterprises and students, Shunlong and Weiming focused on the following constructs: (a) a leader's moral example, (b) a leader's ability to create vision to inspire, (c) a leader's individualized care, and (d) a leader's leadership charm. Shunlong and Weiming found a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership and employee behavior, including a

noticeable effect of moral practice on the rapport between leaders and employees.

Shunlong and Weiming's transformational leadership constructs align with those of Bass

et al. (2003), who encapsulated transformational leadership in four dimensions, described

as follows:

- Idealized influence or charisma. Transformational leaders act as role

    models and are highly respected and admired by their followers. These

    leaders are risk takers with high moral and ethical conduct.

- Inspirational motivation. Transformational leaders foster team spirit,

    provide a vision that inspires their followers, and encourage an

    atmosphere that enhances employee commitment to the organization.

- Intellectual stimulation. Transformational leaders act in ways that

    encourage creativity and innovation. They question assumptions and

    encourage followers to think of old situations in new ways.

- Individualized consideration. Transformational leaders pay attention to

    each follower's needs and act as mentors and coaches. They foster an

    atmosphere that encourages two-way communication.

Bass et al. (2003) four dimensions were used to determine the transformational

leadership skills that Liberian business leaders identified as key to leading their

organizations effectively. Another way to understand issues in transformational

leadership is by comparing and contrasting with transactional leadership (Basham, 2012).

Transformational leadership is relationship-oriented; however, transactional leadership,

under which employee efforts determine their rewards, is task-oriented (Basham, 2012).

Transformational leadership is the model best suited to the 21st century when employees expect to be inspired (Cheung & Wong, 2011). Groves and LaRocca (2011) added that transformational leaders develop and inspire followers to seek the interest of the group, organization, and society. Although transformational leaders focus on developing relationships with employees, the emphasis is on motivating employees to achieve set goals and to share in a company's vision, not compensation for tasks performed, which is the scope of transactional leadership.

Transformational leadership leads to higher organizational performance in every region (Koech & Namusonge, 2012). Using a descriptive survey to gain the perception of middle and senior managers, Koech and Namusonge investigated the performances of 30 state-owned corporations in Kenya, East Africa. Seventy-two managers completed questionnaires and three independent variables, represented by laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership styles, were measured against the dependent variable represented by organization's financial success in the preceding year. Koech and Namusonge used correlation analysis to determine which leadership styles had the most influence on financial success. Among the findings were that variables of transformational leadership such as motivation, creativity, and acting as a role model correlated with high organizational performance. The body of literature supports the notion that, regardless of region, business leaders can demonstrate in organizations the broad principle of transformational leadership, which is to have a good relationship with followers.

Although Koech and Namusonge (2012) used a smaller sample size than Shunlong and Weiming (2012), the former focused on managers in Kenya, which is in the same region as Liberia, and is more aligned with this study. In addition, Shunlong and Weiming's research goal was to verify the correlation between transformational leadership and organizational performance generally, whereas Koech and Namusonge focused on the connection between transformational leadership and financial performance. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership skills they may need to lead profitable organizations.  Koech, Namusonge, Shunlong, and Weiming reinforced Yukl's (2012) assertion that transformational leadership could be effective across regions and cultures.

Transformational leaders exhibit skills that enhance employee creativity and productivity (Koech & Namusonge, 2012). Theodore (2013) urged Greek managers to adopt transformational leadership skills in their companies. To ensure the creation of more medium and large businesses that could lead to an advanced industrial complex, Cheung and Wong (2011) examined the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' level of creativity in Hong Kong. Using a randomly selected sample of 182 supervisor-subordinate dyads from a restaurant, hotel, retail store, bank, and travel agent, Cheung and Wong found that followers who have strong support from, and relationships with, their leaders were highly creative and contributed positively to their organizations. Cheung and Wong studied how transformational leadership skills can enhance employee creativity, an area that researchers tend to overlook; however, the

sample size was not large enough to possess sufficient validity. By understanding the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity, Liberian business leaders can lead productive workforces.

Many scholars (Anann, 2007; Ebegbulem, 2012; Lee, 2011) described business leadership in Africa as transactional or autocratic. Transformational leadership is the antithesis of autocratic leadership (Simplicio, 2011). A lack of transformational leaders in many African businesses is negatively affecting organizational success (Ebegbulem, 2012). As postconflict countries usually face socioeconomic difficulties (UN, 2011), a perception of a lack of success of many Liberian business leaders is likely to encourage the debate on the need, if any, to adopt transformational leadership skills. Transformational leadership involves different aspects of the relationship between leaders and followers and includes motivating and empowering followers, employee participation in the process of creating a business strategy (McKnight, 2013), a leader's use of charisma to inspire employees (Searle & Hanrahan, 2011), and the relationship between integrity and motivation (Precey, 2012).

**Motivation**

Motivation is an important topic in transformational leadership literature. Scholars (Gandolfi, 2012; Nawab, Bhatti, & Shafi, 2011) asserted that transformational business leaders have a role to play in motivating their workforces. Nawab et al. (2011) described motivation as encouraging people to perform tasks more efficiently. Mohsan, Nawaz, Khan, Shaukat, and Aslam (2011) considered motivation as best expressed in the relationship between leaders and followers, adding that motivated employees are willing

to commit extra efforts to doing their jobs. According to Mohsan et al., competent and skilled employees will not necessarily assure organizational success unless they are motivated to enhance their efficiency to accomplish organizational goals. Placing emphasis on ways to motivate individual employees should be the central focus of leaders (Shafi, 2011).

Leaders should identify and motivate high performing employees (Muchiri, Cooksey, & Walumbwa, 2012). In their study of the effect of transformational leadership on organizational outcomes, Muchiri et al. (2012) surveyed employees from nine local governments in Australia. Muchiri et al. employed multiple regression analysis to test the conceptual framework. Findings included that motivating high performing employees is an aspect of transformational leadership that leads to higher performance (Muchiri et al., 2012). Given the perception that African business leaders lack effective leadership skills (Ebegbulem, 2012), the correlation between transformational leadership and organizational performance (Muchiri et al., 2012) supported the possibility of a lack of transformational leadership skills among Liberian business leaders.

Scholars have discussed the many dimensions of leadership and motivation. Cheung and Wong (2011) noted that concepts such as motivation, inspiration, and influence often correlated with desired transformational leadership traits such as extra efforts, satisfaction, and effectiveness. Other scholars who highlighted motivation as key to an organization's success include Maslow (1970), who proposed that certain needs were more important than others and created a hierarchy of needs, and Herzberg, Maunser, and Snyderman (1959), whose two-factor theory elaborated that certain factors

may motivate employees, although other factors prevent dissatisfaction even if these factors do not necessarily motivate them. The various aspects of motivation indicate the difficulties business leaders face in motivating employees. Through regular communication with followers, transformational leaders can devise the best motivation techniques (Pinto, 2011).

In principle, business leaders recognize the importance of a motivated workforce but face globalization challenges as more workforces become multicultural and as people of different cultures respond differently to motivation techniques (Chang & Tsai, 2011). People can discern why they may respond to different motivation techniques differently through an understanding of Hofstede's (2001) study of five dimensions of national cultures. Hofstede's five dimensions include (a) power distance, (b) individualism versus collectivism, (c) masculinity versus femininity, (d) uncertainty avoidance, and (e) long-term versus short-term orientation. The five dimensions indicate varying degrees differences in national cultures, but the power distance dimension, which is the extent to which subordinates are afraid to disagree with a leader's style of making decisions (Hofstede, 2001), explains in particular how cultural backgrounds may influence individual motivation.

People of different cultures respond to motivation techniques differently (Pinto, 2011). Hofstede (2001) stated that high power distance cultures have centralized power structures and that employees are less likely to challenge leaders; low power distance cultures have employees who prefer equality and interdependence. In a power distance index of 50 countries and three regions, Hofstede ranked the United States low at 38, but

ranked West Africa, including Liberia, high at 10. Hofstede reinforced Annan's (2007) point that some African managers from a culture in which employees are less likely to challenge authority have difficulties working in the United States in which employees are more assertive. Understanding that employees respond differently to motivation techniques, Liberian business leaders can gain information on the best motivation techniques by engaging employees in regular two-way communication.

Based on Hofstede's (2001) study, employees in Africa (including Liberia) are less likely to challenge authority than those in the United States, which is why business leaders in Africa are more inclined to be transactional or autocratic (Annan, 2007) than their counterparts in the United States, who are more open to transformational leadership (Tomic & Tomic, 2011). To deal with leadership challenges, Chang and Tsai (2011) advised business leaders to consider the cultural backgrounds of their multicultural workforces when motivating employees. Liberia is a multicultural society (Ellis, 2006), and indigenous business leaders manage mostly local employees with different cultural backgrounds. A need exists to gain information about underlying cultural factors that may influence motivation preferences.

The differences in national cultures and their implications for business leadership accentuate the difficulties business leaders face in devising employee motivation techniques (Chang & Tsai, 2011). Pinto (2011) argued that what motivates one employee may not necessarily motivate the other and stressed that business leaders must understand employee expectations. For example, assuming that wages alone will motivate employees is erroneous, and leaders in many organizations wrongly consider extrinsic rewards as

more attractive to employees than intrinsic rewards (Pinto, 2011). Pinto underscored the point that a pay raise may not adequately motivate employees and that employees are satisfied only when pay raises surpass expectations. The advantage that transformational leaders have is their relationship-building skills (McKnight, 2013), which enable them to understand employee expectations (Pinto, 2011). Sufficient knowledge about employees helps transformational leaders devise effective motivation techniques.

**Business Strategy**

Leibbrandt and Botha (2014) described a strategy as an organization's plan to compete in an industry. Ismail et al. (2011) is clear about transformational leaders motivating employees by allowing them to contribute to business strategy. Leaders should apply transactional leadership, and an entrepreneur must take the responsibility in creating and implementing a strategy (Bingham, Eisenhardt, & Furr, 2011).

No agreement exists on who should create and implement a strategy in an organization. Ismail et al. (2011) asserted that flexible leaders with a participative approach create good strategies for an organization and will allow an organization's capacity to self-organize. Ismail et al. questioned the reasons for imposing a strategy on an organization in a dynamic external business environment and because strategic planners assume, wrongly, a certain level of predictability of external situations and rationality of the individual implementers. Davies (2012) maintained that the ideal system is one that has coherence between internal systems and adapts to changes in the environment. An organization must determine its strategic intent and leverage its strengths to achieve organizational success (Ryals & Davies, 2013).

The arguments against imposing a strategy on an organization encouraged a call for a new management paradigm, one that aligns with transformational leadership (Theodore, 2013). Transformational leaders do not impose a strategy on an organization; they encourage the participation of employees in formulating strategic plans (Birasnav, 2014). Hammer, Edwards, and Tapinos (2012) proposed the complex adaptive system that allows organizations to self-organize and warned companies against adopting formalized strategic plans. The consensus in transformational leadership literature is for leaders and followers to create and implement a strategy jointly.

Davis (2012), whose study focused on business strategy relative to franchisor and franchisee, agreed that a prescriptive strategy inhibits the creative abilities of the implementers and called for adaptive flexibilities that empower organizational actors to take responsibilities. Davis relied on firsthand experience in franchising and an extensive literature review and recommended that leaders should communicate, consult, collaborate, and coordinate with everyone in the organization while drawing up a strategy. Because of the need for transformational leaders who can build trust in business organizations, Davis' recommendations could be useful for Liberian business leaders.

African business managers understand issues in transformational leadership although they may not exhibit transformational leadership skills. Lee (2011) studied the leadership characteristics of South African managers. Two hundred and five South African managers ranked items of desired leadership characteristics. Using aggregate rank analysis, the top three ranked leadership characteristics were (a) competence, (b) honesty, and (c) inspiration (Lee, 2011). The top ranked characteristics pertain to the

need for leaders to act as mentors and role models, and are consistent with transformational leadership tenets (Bass, et al. 2003). The findings underscore the point that despite sub-Saharan African leaders' top-down approach to management, leaders should consult employees in the process of creating strategic frameworks (Annan, 2007).

Transformational leadership, which permits flexibility and a collaborative approach to management (Simplicio, 2011), is at odds with the leadership style of Africans, described as top-down and incapable of responding to the demands of the global marketplace (Ebegbulem, 2012). Japanese managers were successful with their total quality management (TQM) because they allowed systems to self-organize (Noor, Kasolang, & Hj, 2012), whereas managers in the United States have a participative style and were successful (Annan, 2007). Dalgleigh (2008) advised managers in developing countries to consider adopting a participative approach in creating and implementing a strategy, which is in line with transformational leadership. The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences and perceptions of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership skills they may need to lead profitable organizations effectively. Understanding the leadership styles of Liberian managers was necessary to determine their need for transformational skills.

**Charisma**

Effective leadership involves setting the right goals and motivating employees to commit extra efforts to achieving these goals (Fioravante, 2013). A leader has to influence followers, a task becoming more difficult because of globalization and changing technology (Snaiderbaur, 2012). The influence of globalization is set to

increase, and only charismatic individuals with skill sets that align with global competitiveness will be successful (Snaiderbaur, 2012).

Terrell and Rosenbusch (2013) described "global leaders" as those aware of the world's pressing problems and who can apply leadership skills in a manner that does not adversely affect employee sensitivity. Transformational leaders have significant influence only over employees with whom they have a good relationship (Manzoor, 2012). Charisma and motivation are connected (Bateman, 2011; Manzoor, 2012). Liberian business leaders who adopt transformational leadership could motivate their workforces with a combination of charisma, character, and competence.

Transformational leaders use charisma to influence followers (Bateman, 2011). Searle and Hanrahan (2011) conducted a qualitative study to gain the perspectives of leaders on how to inspire followers. Seven purposively selected leaders considered inspiring by others from a range of industries in Australia provided data through in-depth interviews. Two of the seven participants later participated in a focus group to validate themes emerging from the interviews. Results indicated that personal charisma is an attribute that transformational leaders use to influence employees.

Leaders demonstrate charisma in different ways (Manzoor, 2012). Searle and Hanrahan (2011) maintained that charismatic leaders are those who inspire their followers by providing opportunities and context for individuals to realize their goals and organizational goals. Searle and Hanrahan summarized the dimensions of charismatic leadership and charismatic leaders. Charismatic leaders (a) connect followers to their potentials and allow them to see for themselves, (b) connect employees to their potentials

through effective communication, (c) create a vision and communicate that vision powerfully to employees, (d) set the right context or environment to motivate followers, (e) project authenticity and act in a natural way, (f) follow up with actions to ensure tangible results, and (g) empower employees to achieve desired goals. Transformational leaders are charismatic; however, not all leaders with charisma demonstrate transformational leadership (Searle and Hanrahan, 2011). Charismatic Liberian business leaders can adopt and demonstrate transformational leadership skills

Searle and Hanrahan (2011) confirmed findings of existing research (Manzoor, 2012) that charisma, a fundamental component of transformational leadership, is an attribute a leader can use to inspire and influence followers. Searle and Hanrahan did not spell out clearly the definition of "inspire," a term that may have been interpreted differently by the participants. Searle and Hanrahan argued that the sample size was sufficient to attain data saturation, but Muyeed (2012) suggested between 18 and 30 participants for a qualitative study. In this study, I interviewed 20 Liberian business leaders.

Transformational and charismatic leaders have similar characteristics and qualities to influence employees (Berendt, Christofi, Kasibhatla, Malindretos, & Maruffi, 2012; Searle & Hanrahan, 2011). Kwak (2012) stressed that the effect of charisma on employee productivity is overrated and deserves further research. Kwak used a quantitative research method to examine the effect of charismatic leadership on followers in an electronics company in South Korea. Kwak surveyed 283 leaders and followers in a dyadic relationship using two survey sets, one for a follower and the other for the

follower's immediate leader. The leaders rated their charismatic traits using a 20-item Likert scale of charismatic characteristics and followers assessed their leaders' charismatic behavior through a 7-item scale. Leaders rated followers' empowerment by responding to a 5-item Likert scale. Thereafter, Kwak conducted means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations of the variables and followed up with a confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 17.0.

Kwak (2012) found that more empowered and knowledgeable employees are less likely to perceive a leader as charismatic. Leaders who wish to project their charisma should do so with not-so-empowered followers (Kwak, 2012). A limitation of Kwak's study was that South Korean organizations are hierarchical, and leaders have directive rather than participative style (Kwak, 2012). Kwak's study participants may not have provided genuine opinions. The success of transformational or charismatic leaders is not assured (Konorti & Eng, 2012); success is a process by which leaders learn through observations and apply their individual experiences and knowledge at the workplace. Through hard work, ethical conduct, luck, and learning from mistakes, individuals can become successful, charismatic and transformational leaders. With Liberia's not-so-empowered population because of a 63.8% poverty level and high illiteracy (World Bank, 2015), transformational business leaders have an opportunity to make a difference.

**Integrity and Ethics**

Integrity has significant implications for leadership effectiveness (Precey, 2012) and is the link between words and action (McKnight, 2013). McKnight (2013) indicated that leaders operate in a world with high demand for accountability. Precey (2012)

examined the global trend toward a centralized educational system and concluded that

leaders must show consistency in their thoughts and actions. Precey related integrity to

trust and maintained that transformational leaders are in the best position to build trust

with followers. Integrity is a recurring theme throughout the transformational leadership

literature (Salter, Green, Hodgson, & Joyner, 2013; Shunlong & Weiming, 2012). Precey

related trust to integrity and maintained that there could be no effective leadership if

followers do not believe in their leaders' words and actions. In their study of perceptions

of effective leadership, Muchiri et al. (2011) found that integrity was a primary

contributing factor to leadership effectiveness. Muchiri et al.'s findings revealed the need

for ethical and authentic leadership, attributes that correlated with the variables of

"honesty," "respectful," "trust," and "positive leadership."

Integrity involves personal sacrifice and acts of generosity (Berendt et al., 2012).

Berendt et al. examined how aspects of transformational leadership, as demonstrated by

the biblical prophet Moses, could lead to organizational success. Berendt et al. noted that

Moses' leadership projected integrity as exemplified by his forsaking a privileged life in

Egypt and declining lucrative leadership offers, and his many acts of generosity in

support of the suffering Israelites. Berendt et al. drew a contrast between Moses'

demonstration of integrity and the activities of some modern-day chief executive officers,

whom he accused of ethical lapses.

Ethics and integrity are interrelated concepts, and both are significant issues in

transformational leadership theory. Modern managers deal frequently with ethical matters

despite a lack of agreement on what constitutes ethical practices (Warren, 2011). Okpara

(2014) agreed that what is ethical in one culture may not be ethical in another culture, which makes ethics a challenge for business leaders. To understand different perceptions of ethics, Hooker (2003) questioned whether nepotism is as unethical in the United States (which is rules-based) as in China (which is relationship-based). Hooker wrote that business leaders from the West should understand that cronyism, nepotism, and bribery are not necessarily corrupt in particular cultures, and their own accepted practices may be unacceptable to other cultures.

Dela (2012) urged companies to stick with home laws even if the host countries have practices perceived to be unethical. Giving bribes, for example, to facilitate transactions may be wrong in the United States but not in some other parts of the world, in which bribery is a gesture. In relationship-based systems like in China or in Africa in which cronies are trusted more than others, more dealings with friends and family are not corruption. In rules-based systems such as in the United States, people consider as corruption dealings with friends and family (Hamilton, Knouse, & Hill, 2009). Hamilton et al. offered a solution to this dilemma, which is that business leaders must stand by their firm's core values even as they attempt to adapt to the values of the host country.

To clarify the different perceptions of ethical guidelines by people of different cultures, Peppas (2006) focused on determining if Hispanics and non-Hispanics held significantly different attitudes toward ethical business. Peppas sampled Hispanic and non-Hispanic populations in Georgia and assessed their levels of agreements or disagreements with eight business ethics value statements. An e-mail survey of 276

respondents consisted of samples from the members of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in Georgia and non-Hispanics residing in a metropolitan area (Peppas, 2006).

Peppas (2006) analyzed the demographic data for frequencies and compared the mean scores for ethics-related statements. Tested differences in responses with analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Scheffe's test indicated significant differences in attitudes toward business ethics between the two groups (Peppas, 2006). A limitation of Peppas' study was that only 26% of participants contacted responded to the e-mail survey. The findings should inform a broader understanding of ethical issues in a global economy. Bass et al. (2003) noted that high ethical conduct is a significant attribute of transformational leadership. These findings underscore the importance of assessing transformational leadership qualities of Liberian business leaders based on how they demonstrate ethical conduct.

Considerable literature exists about various concepts in the field of ethics. Hooker (2003) examined the distinctions between ethical relativism (different ethical codes for different cultures), ethical universalism (fundamental ethical codes can apply across cultures), meta-ethical relativism (no right or wrong ethics), and ethical contextualism (differences in ethical practices are better understood when considered in the proper context). These accentuate the lack of consensus on the boundaries of ethical conduct and pose further challenges for business managers operating in a postconflict country such as Liberia.

A perception of persistent corruption in Africa exists (Ebegbulem, 2012). Transparency International (2014) ranked Liberia 94 out of 174 countries in its annual

Corruption Perception Index. Chinese firms invest heavily in Africa, targeting mining, oil and gas, agriculture, and infrastructure, and increasing foreign direct investments generally (Zhang, Alon, & Chen, 2014). An agreement on how Liberian business leaders consider ethics was necessary. Perception of corruption in Liberia, as highlighted by Transparency International, may influence how foreign partners, employees, suppliers, and other stakeholders relate to Liberian businesspersons, further eroding their integrity and ability to be transformational leaders. The next theme is communication.

**Communication**

Leadership is best understood from a communication point of view (Salter et al., 2013). Birasnav, Rangnekar, and Dalpati (2011) described communication in business as the process of ensuring that information flows throughout an organization. Given the need to engage continually employees in contemporary business climate, business leaders must create communication strategies that meet this goal (Welch, 2012). Researchers in transformational leadership agree that a primary quality of transformational leaders is their willingness to encourage communication among employees to meet organizational goals (Birasnav et al., 2011; Theodore, 2013; Tomic & Tomic, 2011).

Business leaders should not rely on a single communication channel to reach followers (Theodore, 2013). In their study of the relationship between transformational leaders and followers' responsiveness, Salter et al. (2013) found that transformational leaders used different communication channels effectively to reach employees. Salter et al. found that leaders high on transformational leadership had higher ratings than those low on transformational leadership. Salter et al. added that leadership styles influence

often words that leaders use when dealing with followers. For example, leaders high on

transformational leadership used words such as "growth," "feel," and "inspire," and those

low on transformational leadership used the word "tasks" (Salter et al., 2013).

Leaders who communicate effectively with employees enhance team spirit in an

organization (Tomic & Tomic, 2011). Zeffane, Tipu, and Ryan's (2011) study about how

communication can engender trust and commitment in an organization includes the

influence of communication on an organization. Using correlation analysis, Zeffane et al.

who surveyed employees in Australia, found a strong relationship between trust and

communication and between commitment and communication. Zeffane et al. explained

their findings in three ways: (a) a close link between the variables of communication,

trust, and commitment; (b) although trust depends on many variables, communication

was the central factor in trust; and (c) a need for two-way communication between

manager and employees to enhance leaders' authenticity.

Zeffane et al.'s (2013) findings are consistent with those of Komunda and

Osarenkhoe (2012) that communication can influence loyalty. In their quantitative

research on the relationship between service delivery recovery, consumer satisfaction,

and loyalty in a commercial banking environment, Komunda and Osarenkhoe found that

communication highly correlated with service recovery. Transformational leaders

communicate effectively their vision to gain employee commitment (Muchiri, 2012);

transactional or autocratic leaders impose such a vision (Basham, 2012). Although most

African business leaders use the autocratic style (Annan, 2007; Lee, 2011), who studied

the leadership style of South African managers, found that employees always preferred to be consulted by their leaders.

A transformational leader can use communication effectively to create a positive perception of a competitive and productive leadership that cares for employees (Otara, 2011). Followers may misunderstand leaders' best intentions if leaders cannot communicate those intentions effectively (Otara, 2011). According to Linjuan and Stacks (2013), leaders should not communicate for the sake of communication alone; they should use effectively verbal, non-verbal, writing and speaking communication approaches. The two main types of communication in an organization are mass communication (such as weekly newsletters) and face-to-face communication (such as verbal interaction between employee and manager). Both face-to-face and mass communication could be effective, and transformational leaders focus more on face-to-face because it personalizes communication and enables them to have a good knowledge of employee concerns (Chaudhry, Coyle-Shapiro, & Wayne, 2011; Welch, 2012).

Drawing on findings from their research on the best communication models in use in South Africa, Tindall and Holtzhausen (2012) listed models as (a) activist, which encourages dissent and promotes new ways of thinking; (b) ubuntu, which focuses on workplace consensus; and (c) oral communication, which reflects African oral tradition. Although the activist model could be effective in South Africa because of its cultural diversity, this model is not likely to be effective in a homogeneous society (Tindall & Holtzhausen, 2012).

Tindall and Holtzhausen's findings of different communication effectiveness based on cultural factors strengthen Aldulaimi and Sailan's (2012) assertion that cultural situations define how leaders communicate with their followers. Any communication plan must align with the economic, sociocultural, political, and media environments of countries of operations. Africans do not have a single culture (Rugumamu, 2011), which means Liberian business leaders hoping to adopt transformational leadership skills may have to create communication plans in full consideration of Liberia's unique environment.

**Change Management**

An age of rapid change requires constant innovation, and business leaders must have the skills to manage change (Denning, 2011). Some of the trends that compel organizations to innovate include increasing globalization, technological advances, and the expanding knowledge-based economy (Makkonen & Johnston, 2014). Growing cultural diversity, including differences in race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, and culture (Das Neves & Melé, 2013), challenges business leaders to understand globalization in fuller context (Murmu, 2014). McKnight (2013) maintained that only transformational leaders can manage effectively change. Transformational leaders manage change and initiate a type of change likely to disrupt innovation and lead to substantial risk and uncertainties for the employees (McKnight, 2013). To mitigate these risks and uncertainties, transformational leaders can communicate effectively the need for the change and create and institutionalize a vision of the change outcome.

Business leaders who hope to effect change and transform their organizations need to have a thorough understanding of the globalization phenomenon (Thomas, Bellin, Jules, & Lynton, 2012). Thomas et al. maintained that rapid economic expansion in many emerging markets was changing the shape of the world economy. Business leaders should think global even if they operate local because the goal is for managers to innovate and to adapt to a creative global economy. Technology is a major reason for change in organizations because adoption of a new technology often involves significant changes to pre-existing practices (Hsieh-Sheng, 2011).

Change management is inextricably linked to organizational development (OD), and considerable literature on both exists (Rosenberg & Mosca, 2011). Rosenberg and Mosca reinforced that change management is central to successful organizational transformations and development. Kotter (2007), who studied why transformations fail, elaborated on how to implement change, particularly the behavior of the individual leading the change effort. Kotter stated that an effective change management leader is one who communicates effectively, is proactive during the change process, and provides pertinent information to employees. Liberian business leaders may consider Metwally's (2012) advice that leaders should take risks, be open to others' ideas, and must make efforts to minimize employee fears.

Kotter (2007) appeared to favor transformational leaders rather than managers to lead change efforts and listed eight practices to transform businesses: (a) creating a sense of urgency, (b) creating a powerful coalition, (c) possessing a clear vision, (d) communicating the vision, (e) empowering stakeholders to act on the vision, (f) creating

short-term wins, (g) consolidating improvements, and (h) institutionalizing new approaches. The degree of employee involvement in a change process depends on their relationship with a leader (Yukl, 2012). Kalyani and Sahoo (2011) advised that employee involvement must begin from the stage of conceptualization to implementation.

Kalyani and Sahoo (2011) were more direct in their recommendation that an organization's leaders should create a human resources strategy for change management. Kalyani and Sahoo insisted that during the change process, leaders must understand the behaviors of employees and train, develop, appraise and reward them because some individuals may resist change if they perceive change as undermining their competence (Mcknight, 2013). Transformational leaders can mitigate strong resistance to change by encouraging employee participation in change efforts (Mcknight, 2013). Coercive powers under which leaders enforce commands (Buck, 2012) must not be used in change management (Jacob, 2014). Constant communication between leaders and employees can minimize also resistance to change (Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2011).

Transformational leaders embrace technology and encourage employees to do the same (McKnight, 2013). Warrick (2011) maintained that many individuals have no idea on how to be transformational business leaders. Leckson-Leckey, Osei, and Harvey (2011) studied 15 banks in Ghana, West Africa, and found that leaders whose banks used information technology in operations over a 10-year period made more profits than those that did not. Some organizations are slow adopters because their leaders fear that some innovations may not lend themselves to an easy, practical application, which cause these leaders to abandon innovative approaches to business (Choudrie & Culkin, 2013).

A reason some business leaders are slow technology adopters may be more than just fear of business failure. Rogers (2003) presented a comprehensive overview of the innovation diffusion process, which explains why not all leaders adopt innovations speedily. Rogers identified five factors that can influence the diffusion of innovations: (a) the innovation's relative advantage over what already exists; (b) compatibility with the values and needs of adopters; (c) its complexity, which is whether the innovation is easy to use; (d) triability, which is whether the innovation can be experimented; and (e) observability, which is whether results are visible from its use.

Rogers' (2003) main point was that innovation diffusion is a social phenomenon that relies on factors other than just the quality of the innovation. Although in agreement with Rogers' central premise, Atsu, Andoh-Baidoo, Osatuyi, and Amaoko-Gyampah (2010), who studied factors influencing the success of ICT projects in Ghana, discovered that a lack of funds availability to promote diffusion efforts was a critical element in the diffusion process. Atsu et al. (2010) stated that business leaders in Europe and North America promoted their products easily to consumers and those in Africa had difficulties embarking on such diffusion promotions because of a lack of funds. With more than 63.8% of the Liberian population living in absolute poverty (World Bank, 2015), and many big companies managed by foreigners, the affordability factor in innovation diffusion could be affecting the speed with which Liberian business leaders adopt technology.

Slow innovation diffusion in Africa (Atsu et al., 2010; Kyem, 2012) could be affecting Liberian leaders' ability to use virtual teams to enhance business efficiency.

Virtual teams enable individuals in different parts of the globe to function as a unit, without any face-to-face meeting, by the aid of technology (Au & Marks, 2012; Kimble, 2011). Many business leaders have difficulties changing from traditional leadership style to acquiring the skills needed for virtual leadership even though virtual teams enable geographically dispersed individuals to pool efforts to accomplish goals (Kimble, 2011).

Understanding the cultures of others presents a challenge for global teams (Chang, Chuang, & Chao, 2011). Muller, Spang, and Ozcan (2009) studied the cultural differences regarding decision-making styles of virtual project teams composed of Swedish and German nationals and found that (a) Swedish teams take longer time to make decisions, (b) German teams accept readily decisions made within hierarchy, and (c) German teams are more committed to implementation. These differences explain the need for individuals with transformational leadership skills to manage virtual teams. With Hofstede's (2001) study stressing that Africans, culturally, do not like to challenge authority, Muller et al.'s (2009) findings complicate the possibility of African and Liberian business leaders discarding their top-down leadership (Annan, 2007) and adopting transformational leadership skills.

Muller et al. (2009) and Staples and Zhao (2011) focused on two different virtual teams, each with homogenous characteristics. The researchers did not fully lay out the problems associated with cultural adaptation among individuals of vastly different cultural backgrounds in virtual teams. To address this lapse, Chang et al. (2011) focused on cultural adaptation in virtual teams and stated that leaders should be aware of the cultural differences of individual team members and try to engender mutual trust.

Similarly, Staples and Zhao (2011) stressed that homogenous virtual teams were more satisfied than heterogeneous virtual teams.

Liberian business leaders, through LIBA, advocate for exclusive rights to certain sectors (LIBA, 2010) and appear to be more concerned with local issues rather than thinking global. The leadership style of African managers (including Liberians) is autocratic (Annan, 2007), which presupposes that they could face difficulties managing change. Liberian managers who lack knowledge of transformational leadership skills may be ignoring Jacob's (2014) recommendation of a more conciliatory approach to dealing with those who resist change.

## Transition and Summary

In this section, I examined the significant components of transformational leadership and the debate surrounding their applicability in contemporary African business settings. In this section, I examined the significant components of transformational leadership and the debate surrounding their applicability in contemporary African business settings. Thematic areas–motivation, leadership, communication, change management, creating business strategy, integrity and ethics–are interrelated and surround significant issues in leadership effectiveness. Hofstede (2001) presented controversial views on how cultural factors affect leadership style and motivation. McKnight (2013) and Yukl (2012) argued for businesspersons to acquire transformational leadership skills. Business leadership in Africa is autocratic or transaction (Annan, 2007) or corrupt (Ebegbulem, 2012). Dalgleigh (2008) asserted that

indigenes themselves have a duty to learn new skills. Globalization and multiculturalism present new challenges in ethics and integrity for transformational leaders (Precey, 2012).

The focus of this study was the effectiveness of the business leadership skills of indigenous Liberians. The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership skills, if any, needed to lead profitable organizations. In Section 1, I examined the literature pertinent to the study. I carried out the study using a qualitative approach. In Section 2 I explain the method for this qualitative approach.

Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership skills needed to lead profitable organizations. Two research questions guided data collection in this research:

RQ1: What primary transformational leadership skills do Liberian business leaders identify as most important to lead profitable organizations effectively?

RQ2: What specific influence could the leadership skills they rate as most important have on leading profitable organizations effectively?

This section includes the purpose statement, the criteria for selecting participants for the study, and the research methods and design. This section also includes (a) descriptions of the population, (b) methods of data collection and data analysis, and (d) the validity and reliability of the research.

**Purpose Statement**

The intent of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Liberian business leaders on the primary transformational leadership skills they may need to lead their organizations more effectively. I conducted and transcribed open-ended interviews of 20 business leaders in Monrovia. The study results may contribute to social change through recommendations on the additional or enhanced transformational leadership skills Liberian business leaders need to make them more effective. For a country with an unemployment rate estimated at 74% (Liberian Government Executive

Mansion, 2014), business leaders with the right skills can lead profitable organizations that can create more jobs and thereby enhance the Liberian economy.

## Role of the Researcher

In this study, my role was to interview 20 Liberian business leaders to explore their experience regarding the transformational leadership skills needed to lead profitable organizations. I drafted 10 interview questions (see Appendix A). During the interviews, I took notes and observed the occurrence and frequency of certain words, concepts, and themes about the study. I analyzed and validated interview data and determined how they applied to the business problem. My years of experience as a former journalist provided skills that helped me conduct successful interviews and collect, transcribe, and interpret the participants' response data. Before conducting the interviews, I undertook a pilot study with five participants who reviewed the 10 interview questions and additional three questions and determined that they met the goals of the study (see Appendix B).

Because of its interpretative nature, a researcher's involvement is intense throughout the qualitative research process (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). The researcher must develop a trustworthy relationship with an interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). I worked in Liberia for 7 years and developed extensive professional relationships with individuals who assisted me to arrange and confirm interview dates and organize venues. I did not allow my experiences to influence discussions or data interpretations.

Researchers should not allow their personal opinions or biases to influence the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I held no previous notions about the leadership skills of Liberian business leaders. To enhance privacy and minimize

disruptions, I conducted interviews at locations of the participants' choosing. After the

study, participants received by e-mail a summary sheet of the significant findings of the

research. Other stakeholders received by e-mail an executive summary of the study,

written in clear and concise language. The executive summary consisted of details of

significant findings and the social implications of the research.

## Participants

The participants for this research consisted of 20 Liberian business leaders whom

I selected by a simple random sampling from a directory of registered businesses. I used

my past professional relationship with the Liberian Chamber of Commerce to acquire

participants' contact information, including telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. For

a phenomenological study involving interviews, Muyeed (2012) suggested that a sample

of between 18 and 30 participants was adequate. Rowley (2012) and Marshall and

Rossman (2011) underscored the need for the selection of participants knowledgeable

about the research topic and likely to express such knowledge clearly. Participants were

(a) over 18 years, (b) worked for whose companies listed in the government's directory

of registered businesses, (c) had more than 5 years of experience leading a business, and

(d) were members of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce.

Two weeks in advance of the interview, I sent by e-mail interview request letters

and consent forms to the participants that stated the purpose of the research and how the

study will contribute to social change (see Appendix C). The request letters and consent

forms included contact information should participants need further information or

clarification, participants' rights, and duration of the interview. I mentioned in the

consent forms that participants' personal and organizational information were

confidential.

I sent another e-mail to participants who did not respond to the first e-mail within

2 business days. I contacted by telephone participants who did not reply to both e-mails. I

selected another participant to replace the two who did not wish to take part in the

research. Once participants confirmed interview dates and times, I traveled to Liberia for

3 weeks to conduct and transcribe the interviews. As required by Walden University,

participants completed and signed a consent form stating that they were participating

voluntarily in the interview (see Appendix D). I have kept the consent forms in a safe

locker. After 5 years, I will destroy the consent forms with an Aurora paper shredder.

## Research Method and Design

### Method

I used a qualitative approach for data collection in this study. A qualitative

method is the best approach when conducting a phenomenological research (Marshall &

Rossman, 2011; Yin, 2012). Moustakas (1994) wrote of the purpose of phenomenological

research as exploring people's experience of a phenomenon and discovering the essence

of such experience through their descriptions of it. The focus of this study was to explore

the perceptions of Liberian business leaders regarding primary transformational

leadership skills they need to lead their organizations more effectively.

A quantitative research method is appropriate in a research that involves

numerical data and statistical analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Because the perceptions

and experiences of Liberian business leaders' skills did not require measurement of any

quantifiable attributes, the quantitative method was unsuitable. Other qualitative methods

such as ethnography, which involves a study of a cultural group and grounded theory, in

which researchers offer a theory about a given process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011),

were not appropriate because the key issues in this investigation of perceptions and

experiences of Liberian business leaders' transformational leadership related to inductive

discussions and interpretations.

A qualitative method permits detailed explanation about the "how and why

questions of individuals' experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 142). The purpose of the

research was to gain Liberian business leaders' perceptions regarding the primary

transformational leadership skills, if any, needed to lead profitable organizations

effectively. A qualitative method is appropriate when the goal of the study is to generate

responses to open-ended questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

**Research Design**

I used a phenomenological design in this research to explore research

participants' real-life experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The investigation

began with semistructured interviews of 20 Liberian business leaders whom I selected

by a simple random sampling from a directory of businesses. Interviews are an effective

method of data collection in phenomenological research because the qualitative

researcher can explore participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Schultze & Avital,

2010).

I applied my skills as a former journalist to ensure data saturation during the

interviews of 20 business leaders. Hanson, Balmer, and Giardino (2011) noted that data

saturation occurs only after establishing that important themes and available data are sufficient for a credible analysis, and participants appear to be unable to provide any more relevant data. I identified recurring themes at 17 interviews and continued through 20 interviews to achieve data saturation. Identified themes should add valuable information to the study (Finfgeld-Connett, 2014)

Semistructured interviews provide the researcher the flexibility to, if necessary, change the direction and pace of the interview to ensure the interviewee provides the desired responses (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Applying such interview skills revealed important themes from interviews of 20 business leaders. The perspectives of the randomly selected participants reinforced the validity of research outcomes. Because of nationalism, participants might have been less inclined to be forthright on issues that affect them as Liberians, but I addressed this by explaining the purpose and benefits of the research and a guarantee of confidentiality.

## Population and Sampling

There is a lack of sufficient inquiry into the leadership skills of Liberian business leaders. As a result, the purpose of the current research was to explore the perceptions of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership skills, if any, needed to lead profitable organizations. To accomplish this goal, I reviewed the government's directory of registered businesses and used a simple random sampling to select 20 business leaders with at least 5 years of experience leading an organization and over 18 years. The selected participants were members of the Liberian

Chamber of Commerce and were based in Monrovia, Liberia's capital city. I selected

Monrovia because the largest industries are in the city.

A qualitative, phenomenological study requires between five and 25 participants

to achieve data saturation (Draper & Swift, 2010). Muyeed (2012) stressed that a

sample of between 18 and 30 can generate data saturation. For the purposes of this

study, I used a simple random sampling to select 20 participants for interview from a

population of business leaders based in Monrovia from the government's directory of

registered businesses. I selected two other participants to replace those who withdrew

from the interview. The two replacement participants led companies listed in the

directory of registered businesses, were over 18 years, were members of the Liberian

Chamber of Commerce, and had led a business for at least 5 years. I collected sufficient

data to generate recurring themes.

I asked participants to suggest a location convenient for them for the interview.

Obtaining the views of indigenous business leaders was critical to the objective of the

current research. Once the selected participants confirmed interview dates and times, I

traveled to Liberia for 3 weeks during which I conducted the interviews. With my

experience as a former journalist, I conducted and transcribed 20 interviews within 3

weeks.

## Ethical Research

Qualitative researchers can have difficulties with institutional research review

boards because of ethical violations (Ells, 2011). The Institutional Review Board (IRB)

ensures that the research does not violate the human rights of participants (Abbott &

Grady, 2011). As a result, the researcher should not violate research ethics (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). To ensure that the study met Walden University's ethical requirements, I obtained permission from Walden University IRB to collect and analyze data. My IRB approval number was 08-12-14-0166314

I sent to participants an invitation to participate in this research (see Appendix C), including a consent form (see Appendix D) detailing the goals of the research and how research outcomes will contribute to social changes in advance of the dates for interviews. Participants received advance information that there would be no incentive for participation, and I requested them to sign the form giving their consent for me to use the collected data. The consent form stated clearly that participation was voluntary and that the participants may withdraw at any time without penalty.

At the beginning of each interview, I informed participants they needed only to provide information on a voluntary basis, and any participant who wished to withdraw at any stage in the process could do so. I included in my study statistics of the number of participants who opted out of the interview. To protect confidentiality, I informed participants that I would not use names of individuals and organizations in the study. To conform to Walden's research guidelines, I have secure signed consent forms, interview transcripts, and recorded audiotapes in a locked safe to which only I have access. After 5 years, I will destroy the data with an Aurora paper shredder.

## Data Collection

I interviewed Liberian business leaders and collected data pertinent to the research questions. By conducting face-to-face interviews, I was able to ask follow-up

questions to clarify and explore important themes. I used an Olympus digital voice recorder to interview the selected business leaders. As a former journalist, I successfully used an Olympus digital voice recorder for interviews for over 5 years. I informed participants in advance of plans to tape the discussions and guarantee confidentiality. As part of the data verification process and to enhance validity, I e-mailed interview transcripts to participants to review.

**Instruments**

Data collection instruments in research include interviews, questionnaires, surveys, aptitude tests, attitude tests, leadership tests, personality tests, existing documents, and records (Pastore, Carr-Chellman, & Neal, 2011). A researcher leads data collection in a qualitative study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For this study, I prepared a set of concise interview questions for the 20 business leaders (see Appendix A). The goal was for Liberians to identify the best leadership skills, if any, needed to lead profitable organizations. I e-mailed the interview questions to the business leaders several days before the interview to allow them time to think through the questions.

I requested friends and colleagues with experience in research to review the interview questions to determine if the questions met the purpose of the study. Prior to the interview, I conducted a pilot study with five participants and determined that the questions met the purpose of the research. Before each interview, I listened to a recording of my voice to verify the audio quality of the recorder. Trochim and Donnelly (2006) maintained that a researcher must consider factors that may bring about ethical

constraints. I encouraged participants to speak about their experiences honestly. I did not attempt to influence participants' comments.

**Data Collection Technique**

Face-to-face interviews were the primary method for data collection in this research. Rakow (2011) maintained that interviews are valuable data collection techniques in qualitative research. Whereas McGuigan (2011) noted that interviews produce a large amount of data that the researcher must interpret to answer the research questions, Rowley (2012) advised researchers to design interviews appropriately and select interviewees appropriately. Further, Rowley stated that interviewers need to refocus attention quickly on a question if a participant's answer does not address an issue. The interviewer needs to listen attentively and be knowledgeable in the topic areas (Qu & Dumay, 2011). In this study, I followed Qu and Dumay's and Rowley's guidelines.

I obtained permission to begin research from the Walden University IRB. After obtaining permission, I sent an e-mail to the participants introducing the project. I followed up the e-mails with phone calls, which enabled me to build rapport with participants prior to the actual interviews. Before the interviews, I undertook a pilot study that consisted of five participants. The pilot participants reviewed the interview questions and determined they were appropriate for the needed information. For the pilot study, I used a simple random sampling to select participants who had at least 5 years of experience as business leaders and were members of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce.

The pilot participants were not part of the final study. In addition to the 10 interview questions, I requested the pilot participants to answer three additional questions. All five pilot participants indicated that the interview questions were clear, sufficient, and suitable for the study. One participant suggested that the duration of the interview was too long. Two participants said the interview duration was appropriate and would be acceptable to study participants. I did not need to make changes to the interview questions. The three additional questions for pilot participants (see Appendix B) were

1. Do you think the 10 questions I have asked will provide needed information for the purpose of the study: to explore the experiences and perceptions of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership skills needed to lead profitable organizations more effectively?

2. Do you think I should delete or add any questions to achieve the purpose of the study? If yes, kindly explain.

3. Do you clearly understand the questions and is the study purpose clear to you?

The 20 participants for the face-to-face interviews had led a business for at least 5 years and were members of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce. A simple random sampling minimizes biased results (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I worked in Liberia, and I was able to encourage participation by explaining to the participants the purpose and benefits of the research.

Face-to-face semistructured interviews of a sample of 20 business leaders consisted of open-ended questions (see Appendix A). Face-to-face semistructured

interviews allow a researcher to gain participants' experiences and views (Marshall &

Rossman, 2011). Before commencing the interviews, I informed participants of the

reasons for the consent form and encouraged them to ask questions if they needed further

clarifications. I encouraged participants to talk freely and informed them that all

information provided would be confidential and their identities would remain

anonymous.

To identify the main highlights accurately, I used a voice recorder and concurrent

notes for the interviews. A week later, to ensure that their contributions to the discussion

were accurate, I sent by e-mail transcripts to 16 participants and hand delivered

transcripts to four participants for further verification. I requested the participants to look

through the transcripts and determine if they accurately represented their views. After

receiving their views, I made the necessary changes to the transcripts.

**Data Organization Techniques**

For a phenomenological study, a sample size of between 18 and 30 participants

was sufficient (Muyeed, 2012). I chose a sample size of 20 participants for the face-to-

face interviews as an adequate representation of the total research population. I

interviewed 20 participants. Before the interviews, I requested each participant to sign a

consent form (see Appendix D), which I have kept in a locked safe only accessible to me.

After 5 years, I will destroy the consent form with an Aurora paper shredder.

To ensure proper data organization, I created a matrix (see Appendix E) to track

data from interviews. I transcribed verbatim recorded interviews. I took notes during the

interviews and highlighted significant statements in a matrix. Because of the need for

confidentiality, I coded the identities of the interview participants. The letter *P*

represented the word *participant*. I assigned codes P1 through P20 to the 20 interview

participants.

## Data Analysis Technique

I interviewed 20 of Liberia's business leaders using the following interview

questions (see Appendix A):

1. What are your experiences regarding the need for leaders to provide

   individualized consideration, such as attending to each follower's needs?

2. What are your efforts to provide individualized consideration, such as acting as a

   mentor for your followers?

3. Individualized consideration also involves empathizing, motivating, and engaging

   your followers in a two-way communication. What influence could these

   transformational leadership skills have on an organization?

4. How could acting as a role model for followers enhance leadership effectiveness?

5. What are the ways in which you have acted as a role model for your followers?

6. What ways have you demonstrated integrity and ethical conduct before your

   followers?

7. How could leaders encourage innovation and creativity in followers?

8. How have you articulated a vision and communicated optimism for your

   followers?

9. Of the primary transformational leadership skills (such as acting as a role model,

   acting as a mentor, attending to followers' needs, engaging your followers in a

two-way communication, ethical conduct, and articulating a vision), which do you think are the most important for Liberian business leaders to lead profitable organizations?

10. Would you like to add anything that you may not have had the opportunity to address from the other questions?

I used the interview questions to address the focus of the research questions, which was what Liberian business leaders considered as the transformational leadership skills needed to lead profitable organizations effectively. Rubin and Rubin (2011) noted that because interviews are conversational, a researcher and the participants could discover valuable information. As a result, questions for interview participants were open-ended to enable an expansion of their thoughts.

Data analysis in a qualitative study is an inductive process, which enables a researcher to discover concepts that relate to primary issues in research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In the data analysis, I identified and compared significant themes that emerged from the face-to-face interviews. The data analysis process consisted of several steps. The first step entailed converting into text form participants' significant statements and identifying emerging themes. During this step, I reviewed the data thoroughly and noted down in a master list important descriptive words.

In the second step, I employed a manual, two-cycle coding. The first cycle was values coding, described by Saldana (2009) as coding that reflects an individual's perspectives or worldview. During the first cycle, I coded pertinent information from business leaders' assessment of their leadership skills and the specific transformational

leadership skills they deemed essential to lead their organizations. The second cycle

dealt with data reorganization and helped identify concepts from the first cycle. In the

second cycle, I analyzed the data obtained from the interviews and coded recurrent

themes. To ensure confidentiality and to enable data tracking, I replaced the

participants' names with codes such as *P1* for the first participant and *P2* for the second

participant, and repeated the process until *P20*.

The third step consisted of loading participant's responses into NVivo 10

software program for data organizing, coding, management and analysis. The NVivo 10

software program is a useful tool to manage, organize, and report data in a concise

manner (Bergin, 2011). After identifying the themes from the interviews, the fourth step

consisted of data analysis and results interpretation. During this step, I discussed how

the findings supported or were different from materials in the literature review and the

conceptual framework. To enhance research validity, a friend with experience in

research reviewed the analysis of the data.

## Reliability and Validity

A goal of the study was to ensure the reliability and validity of the results.

Validity refers to the accuracy of findings and reliability refers to whether a researcher's

approach can be consistent across different projects (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Street

and Ward (2011) stressed that a chosen research method and design can achieve

reliability and validity with a dependable process that other researchers may replicate.

**Validity**

According to Thomas and Magilvy (2011), qualitative researchers can establish validity through (a) credibility, (b) transferability, and (c) confirmability. Jeanty and Hibel (2011) stated that a study is valid when a researcher is confident that the selected data collection methods will answer the research questions. Triangulation adds to the internal validity (creditability) of research (Wahyuni, 2012). To build a justification for the study's findings, I triangulated data from semistructured interviews of 20 Liberian business leaders.

In addition to the use of triangulation, the pilot study I conducted prior to interviews was intended to identify problems with the research questions. Pilot studies are a good strategy to strengthen dependability of a research study (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). After the interviews, to address discrepancies in interview data, I sought further investigations or clarifications from participants. My friends and colleagues with experience in research reviewed the research process at each milestone, asked questions, and verified the significant themes identified from the interviews.

Trochim and Donnelly (2006) stated that a researcher's experience of a problem often would inform the choice of topic. Researchers should mention how their worldview influenced the choice of topic and the research method (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Before embarking on research, researchers need to consider important ethical issues that may affect the research process (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). I disclosed personal biases about the study, including living in Liberia for 7 years during which time I developed professional or personal relationships with some of Liberia's business leaders.

**Reliability**

To achieve reliability, the study must be repeatable and other researchers must have access to the methods and other relevant research documents (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Wahyuni, 2012). Thomas and Magilvy (2011) described transferability as when an inquiry can be applied by other participants and to other contexts. Because of increasing interest in the growth of sub-Saharan African economy, a possibility exists that researchers may want to replicate the current study. For this study, I listed the criteria for selecting participants, including geographic location. I maintained consistency throughout the research process, including participants' interviews and data analysis, and documented the data gathering procedures.

Confirmability results from credibility, transferability, and dependability of research (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). I used data triangulation, interview transcripts review, and coding to establish the study's creditability. Trochim and Donnelly (2006) advised researchers to document the techniques for ensuring data accuracy during the research process. I drew up concise interview questions to enhance the reliability of participants' responses (White & Drew, 2011). I crosscheck audiotaped interviews for accuracy of responses. I conducted a pilot study with five participants who reviewed the interview questions and determined that the questions were likely to address the purpose of the study, which was what Liberian business leaders perceive to be the transformational leadership skills they need to lead profitable organizations effectively.

**Transition and Summary**

The objective of Section 2 was to provide the elements of the research method and design. I used the qualitative method and a phenomenological design. I collected data from interviews with Liberian business leaders. The intent of Section 2 was to elaborate on why the qualitative method and design was the best choice to accomplish the research goals and processes to enhance validity and reliability. The processes included accurate transcription of interviews, assurances of confidentiality, and triangulation of data. Section 3 included a discussion of the research findings, an explanation of the application of the research outcomes to professional practice, and the implications for social change.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This section consists of an overview of the research including a review of the design and method, research questions, and purpose. Section 3 includes the presentation of findings and identification of major themes from the data analysis process. I relate the findings to the business problem, research questions, conceptual framework, and literature review. In addition, I explain the applications to professional practice and implications for social change. Section 3 includes recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, reflections, and concluding thoughts on the findings of the study.

**Overview of Study**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational skills needed to lead profitable organizations effectively. Liberian business leaders do not have sufficient transformational leadership skills to lead effectively. The population was Liberian business leaders operating in the capital city of Monrovia and are members of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce. The themes that emerged from data analysis were (a) leadership by example, (b) training and developing employees, (c) employee motivation, (d) engendering trust in followers, and (e) prioritizing followers' needs. One key finding was that Liberian business leaders were knowledgeable about transformational leadership skills, although not all Liberian business leaders demonstrated the full range of transformational leadership skills.

**Presentation of the Findings**

I used a qualitative, phenomenological design to contextualize and explore a phenomenon in a real-world business context. To address the study's purpose and research questions, I conducted face-to-face interviews with 20 participants. Liberian business leaders do not have sufficient transformational leadership skills to lead effectively. Two research questions guided data collection in this research:

RQ1: What primary transformational leadership skills do Liberian business leaders identify as most important to lead profitable organizations effectively?

RQ2: What specific influence could the leadership skills they rate as most important have on leading profitable organizations effectively?

Twenty Liberian business leaders participated in semistructured interviews. Participants for this study were Liberian business leaders who were (a) over 18 years of age, (b) members of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce, (c) had more than 5 years of experience leading a business, and (d) whose businesses were listed in the directory of registered businesses.

The interviews took place over a 15-day period in Monrovia, Liberia's capital city. Some participants preferred the interviews in their offices, and the others selected other locations, such as coffee shops, restaurants, and private residences. Two participants opted out of the interview, and I replaced them with two other business leaders who met the criteria for participation. Prior to the interviews, I conducted a pilot study of five participants who reviewed the interview questions to determine if they were appropriate for the study. The pilot study participants met the same criteria as the

interview participants. The pilot study participants were not part of the final study. According to the results of the pilot study, the interview questions were suitable for exploring the perceptions of Liberian business leaders on the transformational leadership skills needed to lead businesses effectively.

I transcribed the interview data into a Microsoft Word document and e-mailed each participant a copy of his or her responses to the interview questions. I encouraged participants to make corrections to the transcribed data if they considered that I did not state their views accurately. Three participants returned the documents with minor corrections whereas 17 participants said that they were satisfied with the transcribed data.

Prior to uploading data into NVivo 10 software for analysis, I employed manual coding to identify themes from the interviews based on participants' significant words and phrases. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes, and participants answered all 10 interview questions. If necessary, I asked follow-up questions to clarify participants' viewpoints. I used the letter P to represent the word participant and assigned codes P1 through P20 to the 20 interview participants.

**Interview Question 1**

Interview Question 1 was the following: What are your experiences regarding the need for leaders to provide individualized consideration, such as attending to each follower's needs? The aim of this question was to gain insight into how participants demonstrate a fundamental attribute of transformational leadership. Table 1 depicts the frequency and percentages of attending to followers' needs.

Table 1

*Experiences Regarding Individualized Consideration: Attending to Followers' Needs* (*N* = 20)

| Code | n | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Aware of a need for to attend to followers' needs | 20 | 100 |
| Able to demonstrate individualized consideration regularly | 12 | 60 |
| Unable to demonstrate individualized consideration regularly | 8 | 40 |

P1, P3, P8, P7, P16, and P19 stated that they discussed with followers regularly issues about their individual needs, such as training and development, medical insurance, retirement savings, and other matters such as schools for children and the best vacation destinations. P8 and P14 stated that they do the best to meet followers' needs. P11 and P18 said that followers often demanded financial support, which they could not always provide. P8 and P14 added that they could only meet a fraction of followers' needs, and as a result, they preferred not to engage in elaborate discussions with employees about their individual needs. In response to Question 1, participants indicated that not all Liberian business leaders demonstrated individualized consideration, which supported the specific business problem of a lack of sufficient transformational leadership skills resulting in the inability of some Liberian business leaders to lead organizations effectively.

**Interview Question 2**

Interview Question 2 was the following: What are your efforts to provide individualized consideration, such as acting as a mentor for your followers? The

objective of Question 2 was to elicit participants' experiences mentoring followers. As

indicated in Table 2, participants provided varying responses to Question 2.

Table 2

*Influence of Empathizing with Followers in an Organization* (*N* = 20)

| Code | *n* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Aware that empathizing enhances leadership effectiveness | 20 | 100 |
| Demonstrated some forms of empathy | 20 | 100 |

P3 and P7 maintained that mentoring was a source of motivation for followers. P6

and P15 added that mentoring was necessary for professional and personal development

and enabled followers to make the right career development and family choices. P15 said

that a performance appraisal process enabled leaders to gain information regarding

employee mentoring needs. P6 offered that mentoring provided satisfaction for the leader

and follower. However, P9 argued that a leader does not have the responsibility to mentor

followers and posited that employees need only to emulate a leader. Participants

indicated that they were aware of a need for mentoring. However, just over half of

participants were engaged actively in mentoring. In their responses, participants

supported the business problem that some Liberian business leaders did not demonstrate

sufficient transformational leadership skills.

**Interview Question 3**

Interview Question 3 was the following: Individualized consideration also

involves empathizing, motivating, and engaging your followers in a two-way

communication. What influences could these transformational leadership skills have on

an organization? Participants provided varied responses to interview Question 3, as captured in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4.

P19 said that culturally, Liberians cared for one another, and leaders who demonstrated empathy were more likely to have committed followers than those who did not. P1 stated that caring leaders developed emotional connections with followers. P14 said that leaders can encourage followers to commit extra efforts to their job through empathy. Participants indicated that they demonstrated the transformational leadership attribute of empathizing with followers.

Table 3

*Influence of Motivating Followers in an Organization* ($N = 20$)

| Code | $n$ | $\%$ |
|---|---|---|
| Considerable influence on organizational performance | 20 | 100 |
| Have a motivation policy | 14 | 70 |
| Have no motivation policy | 6 | 30 |

P3, P5, and P13 said that their companies provided financial rewards and certificates of recognition for high performing employees. P1 said that leaders could motivate followers by ensuring a conducive working environment. P1 added that provisions of air conditioning systems in offices and latest computers and software motivated employees. P17 said that leaders could motivate employees by providing transportation allowances, subsidizing medical bills, and payment of flight tickets for annual vacation. P8 offered that leaders could discover what motivates employees through regular two-way communication. P9 stated that financial incentives were the primary technique to motivate followers.

The participants indicated that they understood that employee motivation could lead to a leader's effectiveness. Participants without a motivation policy could not provide definitive information on the effect of motivation techniques on company performance. The participants provided useful insight into the study purpose, which was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership skills needed to lead effectively.

Table 4

*Influence of Leaders Engaging in a Two-way Communication with Followers* ($N = 20$)

| Code | $n$ | $\%$ |
|---|---|---|
| Considerable influence on organizational performance | 12 | 60 |
| Not necessary | 8 | 40 |

P9 stated that engaging in a two-way communication could be time-consuming. P14 stated that a gap exists in human resources in Liberia, as top managers with high expertise were dealing with junior workers with low expertise. P14 argued that engaging less educated junior employees in critical thinking could not produce desired results. P3 offered that a two-way communication with followers was necessary to deal with uncomplicated matters such as employee welfare and added that that only top managers should handle complicated issues such as setting a strategic direction for the company.

The majority of participants (60%) who said that two-way communication enhanced employee commitment and organizational performance advised leaders to listen to the ideas and concerns of junior employees. P8 mentioned that some of the best ideas that boosted company growth sometimes came from junior employees. P8 added that two-way communication reinforces employee belief in company goals. P11

encouraged managers to set policies that encourage two-way communication, adding that

leaders who do not currently practice two-way communication may have difficulties

changing existing communication policy because of a belief that junior employees may

use the opportunity to challenge their authority. Participants indicated that not all

Liberian business leaders believed that two-way communication is a necessary leadership

skill and confirmed the study problem that Liberian business leaders lack sufficient

transformational leadership skills to lead effectively.

**Interview Question 4**

Interview Question 4 was the following: How could acting as a role model for

followers enhance leadership effectiveness? Table 5 depicts that many participants have

similar and at the same time varied ideas on how acting as a role model can enhance

leadership effectiveness.

Table 5

*Acting as a Role Model and Leadership Effectiveness* ($N = 20$)

| Code | $n$ | $\%$ |
|---|---|---|
| Demonstrate good work ethic | 10 | 50 |
| Show humility | 2 | 10 |
| Be transparent | 7 | 40 |
| Avoid corrupt practices | 15 | 75 |
| Take responsibility | 12 | 60 |
| Lead in innovation | 6 | 30 |

*Note.* $n$ = the number of interview participants (out of 20 interview participants) with that particular response, % = the percentage of interview participants (out of 20 interview participants) with that particular response. Each of the 20 participants was eligible to mention one or more ways leaders can enhance effectiveness by acting as a role model.

P1, P11, and P13 mentioned demonstrating high work ethic, such as committing

to extra working hours as ways leaders can act as role models. P11 stated that followers

would be willing to commit to extra working hours if they perceive their leaders as doing

the same. P7 and P1 stated that leaders should show humility and respect for followers to

earn their trust. P4 and P11 offered that leaders need to demonstrate that they are not

corrupt. P4 added that corrupt leaders could not gain followers' respect. P6 said that

leaders should take responsibility, accepting blame when things go wrong and give credit

to deserving followers when things go right. The study participants indicated that

Liberian business leaders were aware of various ways that leaders can act as a role model

to enhance leadership effectiveness. The results aligned with the theoretical precept of

transformational leadership, including that leaders enhance their effectiveness when they

act as role models for followers (Bass et al., 2003).

**Interview Question 5**

Interview Question 5 was the following: What are the ways in which you have

acted as a role model for your followers? Responses to Question 5 showed a variance

between participants' knowledge of ways to act as a role model (Table 5) and the number

of participants acting actually as a role model in ways identified (Table 6).

Table 6

*Ways in Which Leaders Have Acted as Role Models* (*N* = 20)

| Code | *n* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Demonstrate high work ethic | 8 | 40 |
| Show humility | 2 | 10 |
| Be transparency | 7 | 40 |
| Avoid corrupt practices | 7 | 40 |
| Take responsibility | 10 | 50 |
| Lead in innovation | 4 | 20 |

*Note. n* = the number of interview participants (out of 20 interview participants) with that
particular response, % = the percentage of participants (out of 20 interview participants)

with that particular response. Each of the 20 participants was eligible to mention one or more ways they have acted as a role model.

In Table 5, 50% of participants said that demonstrating an excellent work ethic was a way to act as a role model; however, in Table 6, only 40% said they acted actually as role models by demonstrating an excellent work ethic. Also, in Table 5, 75% of participants stated that avoiding corruption was a way to act as a role model but only 40% of participants (Table 6) said that they avoided corrupt practices. Also, 30% of participants (Table 5) mentioned that leading in innovation was a way to act as a role model, whereas 20% (Table 6) agreed that they led in innovation.

P17 provided useful insight into why some leaders may not be leading in innovation. P17 stated that technologically well informed employees in junior positions, rather than top leaders with limited knowledge about technology, should lead in innovation. P20 said that every leader should endeavor to avoid corruption, even if that goal was difficult to attain because corrupt practices are a part of the Liberian business culture.

P14 explained why some leaders believe in a good work ethic although they do not demonstrate it. P14 said that a leader should motivate followers to perform tasks efficiently but that followers do not need to see how leaders perform official duties. P14 argued that leaders are involved in strategic planning, which does not require the participation of most employees. P9 added that employees should be more concerned about performing their jobs than about how or what their leaders are doing. Based on the findings, not all Liberian business leaders act as role models for followers. The study

participants supported the study problem that Liberian business leaders lack sufficient

transformational leadership skills to lead businesses effectively.

**Interview Question 6**

Interview Question 6 was the following: What ways have you demonstrated

integrity and ethical conduct? The objective of this question was to determine the specific

ways in which Liberian business leaders have demonstrated moral uprightness. Table 7

shows that participants believed that honesty and trust, fairness, and attending to

followers' needs were ways to demonstrate integrity and ethical practices.

Table 7

*Ways Leaders Act with Integrity and Within Ethics* ($N = 20$)

| Code | $n$ | $\%$ |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Demonstrate honesty and trust | 12 | 60 |
| Demonstrate transparency | 9 | 45 |
| Attending to followers' individual needs | 5 | 25 |

*Note*. $n$ = the number of interview participants (out of 20 interview participants) with that particular response, % = the percentage of interview participants (out of 20 participants) with that particular response. Each of the 20 participants was eligible to mention one or more ways leaders demonstrate integrity and ethical conduct.

P2 remarked that employees were informed regularly and transparently of

company activities, including when facing challenges such as during the Ebola virus

outbreak. P12 said that leaders have a moral obligation to support sick employees. P9

argued that corruption should be considered within prevailing Liberian culture, adding

that offering tips to an official to gain a favor was not a corrupt practice. P9 suggested

that Liberians and people in the Western world perceive corruption differently. P15

opined that the same rules must apply to every employee, irrespective of status within a

company.

In relation to the business problem, findings from question 6 show that 100% of participants considered that demonstrating integrity and ethical conduct made leaders more effective. However, some participants stated that individuals of different cultures should interpret ethics and integrity in ways applicable to local context. The findings from this question showed that most participants agreed that leaders need to demonstrate integrity and ethical conduct to be effective. Some participants defended practices such as giving bribes to obtain a favor. Participants indicated that not all Liberian business leaders demonstrated integrity and ethical conduct, which supported the general business problem of Liberian business leaders not demonstrating sufficient transformational leadership skills to lead more effectively.

**Interview Question 7**

Interview Question 7 was the following: How could leaders encourage innovation and creativity in followers? The results showed that 14 participants (70%) believed that leaders should encourage innovation in followers, and six (30%) said leaders do not need to encourage followers to be innovative. Participants who did not believe in encouraging innovation explained that leaders should not interfere with followers' creative development. P9 said that leaders who compel followers to be innovative could disrupt employee creative development. P11 advised that followers adopt slowly an innovation that has been tried and found to be good by other companies. P4 said that companies hardly regain money or time lost in the process of innovation adoption.

Participants who supported encouraging followers' innovative practices opined that companies benefit in the long term when employees know they can try new things.

P1 said that screening videos of how Americans or Europeans were applying new technology to enhance organizational efficiency helped motivate company employees into adopting the same technology. P7 said that the company rewarded followers who demonstrated creativity. In their responses to Question 7, participants supported the study problem that some Liberian business leaders lack sufficient transformational leadership skills to lead effectively.

**Interview Question 8**

Interview Question 8 was the following: How have you articulated a vision and communicated optimism for your followers? All 20 participants considered articulating a vision and communicating optimism to followers as influential factors in effective leadership. P1 said that because Liberia was experiencing a bad economic situation, Liberian business leaders must communicate optimism to followers. P6 offered that a well-articulated vision could enhance employee commitment to the organization.

Regarding ways to communicate vision and optimism, P11 listed face-to-face meetings with individual employees, regular staff meetings, and bulletin notices. P13 said that communication was most effective by e-mail. P10 added that sending regular mobile phone text messages help leaders develop relationships with individual employees. However, P9 offered that leaders operating in difficult financial situations have difficulties communicating optimism. In their responses to Question 8, participants indicated that Liberian business leaders were aware of and demonstrated the transformational leadership skill of communicating a vision and optimism.

**Interview Question 9**

Interview Question 9 was the following: Of the primary transformational leadership skills (such as acting as a role model, acting as a mentor, attending to followers' needs, engaging your followers in a two-way communication, ethical conduct, and articulating a vision), which do you think are the most important for Liberian business leaders to lead profitable organizations? The objective of this question was to elicit responses to address the research question 1, which was What primary transformational leadership skills do Liberian business leaders identify as most important to lead profitable organizations effectively? Participants identified the most important transformational leadership skills needed to lead effectively. The results show that 19 (95%) of participants believe that attending to followers' need was the most important skill to acquire, 18 (90%) mentioned acting as a mentor, 18 (90%) stated engaging in a two-way communication, 15 (75%) stated ethical conduct, 11 (55%) said acting as a role model, and 11 (55%) mentioned articulating a vision.

Participants' responses to question 9 indicated that they understood the range of transformational leadership skills and could identify skills that were most important for Liberian business leaders to lead effectively. P11 stated that followers feel a sense of belonging whenever leaders attend to their needs. P18 said that followers want to be proud of their leaders. P18 mentioned that a leader's ethical conduct fostered followers' commitments. The general business problem was that Liberian business leaders do not have sufficient transformational leadership skills. The study participants addressed Research Question 1, which was the following: What primary transformational leadership

skills do Liberian business leaders identify as most important to lead profitable organizations effectively?

**Interview Question 10**

Interview Question 10 was the following: Would you like to add anything that you may not have had the opportunity to address from the other questions? Twelve participants said they did not need to add any more information to the interview but 8 participants provided varied answers to this question. P6 said that the effectiveness of Liberian business leaders was best understood in the context of prevailing socioeconomic factors, such as the poor state of the economy, the country's level of development, and the characteristics of the workforce. P6 said that some leaders spend years training and developing followers who move on to more established foreign-owned business organizations. P9 said that no evidence exists that links transformational leadership to organizational success in Liberia. P9 added that the main problem for Liberian business leaders was a lack of investment capital.

P15 disputed a perception of corruption of African business leaders. P15 maintained that Chinese business leaders perceived also as corrupt are leading some of the world's largest business organizations. P15 advised African business leaders to ignore perception of corruption. P9 argued that transformational leadership skills could not apply effectively in a country in which some workers do not have a good work ethic and stressed that under a poor work ethic culture, leaders could demonstrate autocratic traits. Participants indicated that not all participants agreed on the need for transformational

leadership and supported the business problem that Liberian business leaders lack

sufficient transformational leadership skills.

**Identified Themes**

The themes identified from analysis of interview data were leadership by

example, training and development, motivation, trust, and prioritizing followers' needs.

These themes were supported by significant statements from interview participants.

Listed in Table 8 are examples of participants' significant statements supporting

identified themes. The themes are consistent with findings from my literature review on

transformational leadership.

Table 8

*Themes Supported by Significant Statements from Interview Participants*

| Themes | Participants' significant statements |
| --- | --- |
| Leadership by example | P3: Leading by example is a first step in gaining followers' confidence and respect.<br>P11: Employees learn by the practical examples demonstrated by their leaders. I cannot come to the office daily at 12 noon but tell my employees to be at their desks at 9 am. |
| Training and development | P20: Our company organizes regular training for employees to ensure that they are up to date with new ways of doing things.<br>P5: The business world is changing so fast that leaders must design methods to enhance training and development of employees. |
| Motivation | P16: My experience teaches me that implementing a motivation scheme makes one an effective leader.<br>P15: We double the monthly pay of our "employee of the month" and award a certificate to appreciate the hard work. We realize that after proving those kinds of incentives, employees redouble efforts and other employees strive to be recognized. |
| Trust | P6: I behave in a way that my followers can trust me. My staff know that I have zero tolerance for corrupt practices. They trust that when I say something I mean it. |

P18: Followers trust morally upright leaders. Just look at how people follow their church pastors in this country because they consider pastors morally upright. The same happens in companies for leaders who demonstrate moral uprightness.

Prioritize followers' needs

P19: Through regular interactions with individual workers, especially in informal settings, a leader can know how a worker feels. I get the best out of my workers when I pay attention to their concerns.
P3: You may be surprised that the best ideas do not come from people at the top. When a leader shows empathy to workers and makes them believe they are the company's most valuable assets, the company will grow and make profits.

**Theme 1: Leadership by example.** Participants said leaders should be role models for followers and listed ways to lead by example, including (a) demonstrating a good work ethic, (b) being transparent, (c) taking responsibility, (d) avoiding corrupt practices, and (e) leading in innovation. P3 offered that a leader's first task in gaining employee respect was to lead by example. P3 commented that possessing a good work ethic, including going and leaving office at the appropriate times, would be emulated easily by the employees.

Leadership by example is consistent with transformational leadership practices identified in the literature review. Bass et al. (2003) considered idealized influence or leading by example a fundamental attribute in transformational leadership, and added that leaders demonstrate idealized influence by acting as role models, taking risks and demonstrating high moral and ethical conduct. Leadership by example plays a vital role in 21st century organizational success (Lin & Hsiao, 2014). Attending to individual employee needs improves job satisfaction (Shurbagi, 2014). Lin and Hsiao (2014) added that employees have high levels of commitment to an organization if led by managers

who demonstrate moral example. Employees admire and emulate leaders who act as change agents (Quintana & Cabrera, 2015).

In the literature, Lee's (2011) study of South African managers' leadership traits identified top-ranked attributes of effective leaders as (a) competence, (b) honesty, and (c) inspiration. The research findings aligned with Lee's top-ranked leadership attributes and are consistent with Bass et al.'s (2003) conceptualization under the dimension of idealized influence or charisma. P3's statement that leaders acting as role models gain the confidence and respect of employees concurred with Bass et al. (2003). The findings correlate to the conceptual framework of transformational leadership theory as the results indicated acting as role models was a leadership practice that enhanced a leader's effectiveness. Based on the findings, leadership by example may be a skill that Liberian business leaders can use to enhance their effectiveness.

**Theme 2: Training and development.** Participants said that training and development of employees could make Liberian business leaders effective. P5's comment that a changing world requires leaders to design and update training and development schemes regularly supported Yaghoubi et al.'s (2014) assertion that leaders can enhance their effectiveness by empowering employees through knowledge management programs. In an increasingly competitive and dynamic business environment, companies with training and development programs derive benefits in the long-term (Kalyani & Sahoo, 2011). Kalyani and Sahoo advised companies to adopt a human resources strategy that focuses on appraising, training, and developing employees.

Leaders empower employees through training and development opportunities (Ismail et al., 2011). Through an employee knowledge acquisition program, leaders can identify other leaders within a company who understand issues specific to a company's operations (Yaghoubi et al., 2014). The participants reinforced Kalyani and Sahoo's (2012) assertion that leaders who implement training and development programs have an innovative and creative workforce. P20's statement that training and development programs ensured that employees adopt new ways of doing things and led to a company's success aligned with Yaghoubi et al.'s (2014) assertion.

Participants' concern about a lack of adequate training and development opportunities for Liberians further explains the advocacy by the Liberian Business Association for training opportunities for Liberians (LIBA, 2010). The participants highlighted the need for training and developing employees as a means to gain a competitive advantage, improve leadership effectiveness, and profits. P5 said that sending staff overseas for regular training helped companies gain a competitive edge, reinforcing Kalyani and Sahoo's (2011) assertion that companies with employee training and development programs maintained an edge over rivals. The results of this study indicated that Liberian business leaders could improve their effectiveness if they devise training and development schemes.

**Theme 3: Motivation.** Participants agreed that effective leaders motivated employees. Motivated employees commit extra efforts to work and competent and skilled employees need to be motivated (Nawab et al., 2011). P11 offered that an unmotivated workforce impedes a company's growth. P15 stated that the extent to which employees

are motivated is a reflection of a leader's effectiveness. P15 advised leaders to implement an incentive package that provides intrinsic motivation such as recognition and extrinsic package such as cash rewards.

The study findings indicated that leaders can demonstrate motivation along the lines of Bass et al.'s (2003) four dimensions of transformational leadership, which are when a leader (a) acts as a role model, (b) attends to followers' needs, (c) encourages innovation, and (d) inspires followers through vision creation. Motivation is a means to foster team spirit (Bass et al., 2003) and a means to enhance employee efficiency (Mohsan et al., 2011). P16 agreed that leaders can motivate employees by paying attention to individual needs of employees. P15 stated that leaders can motivate employees by acting as a mentor and by encouraging innovation. P17 stated that communicating optimism was a good motivational technique.

Transformational leaders differentiate themselves from transactional leaders by devising schemes to motivate employees (Shurbagi, 2014). When compared to the body of literature, the research findings supported Bass et al.'s (2003) views that leaders who demonstrate inspirational motivation foster team spirit and enhance employee commitment. P15's statement that awarding a certificate of recognition and cash to a high-performing employee motivated the employee to commit extra efforts to work supported Bass et al.'s assertion.

The findings from the study indicated that Liberian business leaders viewed motivation as a means to enhance organizational performance. All participants asserted that leaders who motivate followers are effective. However, only 14 participants

implemented a motivation policy. Based on the results of this study, knowledge about

motivation techniques may not be sufficient for Liberian business leaders to be effective.

The findings indicated a need for Liberian business leaders to formulate and implement

motivation policies for their companies. In relation to this study's conceptual framework,

the findings align with the transformational leadership principle that employee motivation

is a significant attribute of effective leadership (Mohsan et al., 2003).

**Theme 4: Trust.** Participants considered engendering trust in followers as an

important practice of effective leaders, which concurred with the larger body of literature.

Trust relates to integrity (Precey, 2012) and integrity is when leaders display consistently

strong moral and ethical principles (von Eschenbach, 2013). There could be no effective

leadership if followers do not trust their leaders (Precey, 2012). P6 listed behaviors that

engender followers' trust, including (a) avoiding corrupt practices, (b) leaders meaning

what they say, (c) empathizing with followers, (d) leaders' good work ethic, and (e)

engaging in a two-way communication. P6 and P18 noted that leaders who avoid corrupt

practices engender trust in followers.

Acting in ways that engender trust is a sign of leadership effectiveness (Lin &

Hsiao, 2014). Ismail et al. (2011) referred to trust as the foundation of transformational

leadership, adding that followers trust and respect leaders who demonstrate hard work,

empowerment, and motivation. P18's statement that followers trust morally upright

leaders varied slightly from Zeffane et al.'s assertion that two-way communication was

the primary means leaders use to engender trust. Participants considered trust as the result

of various transformational leadership practices rather than the result of internal communication within an organization.

P12 offered that Western scholars' definition of corruption was misleading. P15 supported that Liberians should devise ethical codes that suit the local context. Conceptually, transformational leadership depends on trust between leaders and followers (Lin & Hsiao, 2014). Compared to the study's conceptual framework, participants disagreed on ways to engender trust in followers. For example, in principle, participants agreed that leaders should avoid corrupt practices. However, participants disagreed on what constitutes corrupt practices. Some participants suggested that corruption should be considered in consideration of local socioeconomic and cultural realities.

**Theme 5: Prioritizing followers' needs.** All participants indicated that prioritizing followers' needs was important for effective leadership. This theme was consistent with Bass et al.'s (2003) assertion that individualized consideration—when leaders attend to the individual needs of followers—is a significant transformational leadership practice. Transformational leaders gain information on individual followers' needs through two-way communication (Bass et al., 2003), strengthen relationships with followers by acting as agents of change (Quintana & Cabrera, 2015) and by connecting individual followers to their potentials (Searle & Hanrahan, 2011).

P18 and P20 observed that through regular interactions with individual employees, leaders get the best output. P3 reinforced that showing empathy and demonstrating that employees are a company's most valuable asset will improve a company's growth and profits. P20 maintained that in a fast-changing business world,

employees were a company's most valuable assets. P3 added that leaders who attended to the individual needs of employees have a committed workforce. P19 stated that through regular interactions with individual employees, leaders enhanced employee performance.

Most participants stated that they were able to discuss with followers issues about their individual needs but were unable to meet such needs regularly. P9 offered a contrary opinion and said that a leader has no obligation to discuss with follower their individual needs because followers receive salaries. Most participants' responses concurred with the extant literature on transformational literature and underscored the need for transformational leaders in African businesses (Ebegbulem, 2012).

In the literature, Bass et al. (2003) conceptualized transformational leadership in "four "I"s, which are (a) idealized influence, which is when a leader acts as a role model; (b) individualized consideration, which is when a leader attends to followers' needs; (c) intellectual stimulation, which is when a leader encourages innovation among followers; and (d) inspirational motivation, which a leader inspires followers through vision creation. Snaiderbaur (2012) maintained that globalization's influence would increase in the coming years and that only transformational leaders were equipped with skill sets to be successful. Leaders motivate followers by prioritizing their needs (Mittal, 2015) and through face-to-face interaction to gain knowledge of individual employee needs (Welch, 2012). The study findings supported Bass et al.'s conceptualization that individualized consideration or attending to followers' individual needs is a primary factor in effective leadership.

**Application to Professional Practice**

Business leaders may find the findings of this study valuable because effective leadership is critical to a company's success. Liberian business leaders may use the study findings to (a) improve employee commitment and productivity, (b) improve profits, and (c) enhance a perception of their leadership effectiveness. Leaders with good working relationships with employees increase employee commitment to an organization and enhance their productivity (Nusair, Ababneh, & Bae, 2012).

Business leaders, employees, students and other business stakeholders may consider the findings of this study as affecting positively effective business practice by enriching existing knowledge and practice on transformational leadership. Shared perspectives on transformational leadership practice in Liberia may benefit business leaders regarding leadership effectiveness. To realize the twin purposes of short-term profits and long-term growth, Liberian business leaders could integrate training and development programs into organizational strategies. Leckson-Leckey et al. (2011) found that banks in Ghana, West Africa, whose employees were trained in information technology made more profits than banks whose employees did not receive such training. Liberian business leaders could enhance employees' effectiveness and long-term commitment to their companies if they design and implement employee training and development programs.

As an improved business practice, Liberian business leaders could design and implement employee motivation schemes. Business leaders can motivate employees by affording opportunities to discuss training and development needs. Trained employees

can ensure that a company remains competitive, becomes efficient, and saves cost by

adopting new ways of doing things (Birasnav, 2014). Through an effective two-way

communication with employees, Liberian business leaders may gain information on

motivation techniques that suit individual employees.

Liberian business leaders may engender employee trust by engaging them

regularly in a two-way communication and demonstrate integrity by acting consistently

in strong moral and ethical manner. Business leaders who embrace practices such as

regular face-to-face and town hall meetings between leaders and employees, avoiding

corrupt practices, and fulfilling promises will engender trust in followers (Lin & Hsiao,

2014; McKnight, 2013; Zeffane et al., 2011).

To gain a competitive advantage, Liberian business leaders may need to prioritize

employee needs. The essence of transformational leadership is for employees to develop

(Mittal, 2015). Leaders who use good business practices such as seeking employee

opinions on company policies, attending to their training and development needs, and

appealing to their ideals and emotions will enhance a commitment to an organization

(Mittal, 2015).

## Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential to improve

awareness among Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership

skills needed to lead effectively. By demonstrating transformational leadership skills,

Liberian business leaders may (a) continually train and develop their workforces, (b)

demonstrate ethical conduct and integrity, and (c) lead profitable companies. The

potential exists for a change of perception of leadership in Africa from autocratic and top-down style (Ebegbulem, 2012) to transformational leadership in which they gain employee trust and commitment through motivation, inspiration, and vision creation (Yukl, 2012).

By applying transformational leadership skills, Liberian business leaders may have opportunities to (a) expand company operations, (b) hire new employees, and (c) give back to society. With Liberia's poverty level estimated at 63.8% (World Bank, 2015), Liberian business leaders could lead organizations that contribute to poverty reduction. Business leaders may foster their companies' relationship with the society through social responsibility initiatives (Groves & LaRocca, 2011).

Scholars, policymakers, business leaders, and students of business could use the study results to understand challenges of business leadership in postconflict economies. Participants in the study who said that they demonstrated transformational leadership such as idealized influence and inspirational motivation reported a positive followers' perception of their effectiveness. From the literature review and the study findings, I determined that Liberian business leaders could use transformational leadership skills to effect positive social change.

## Recommendations for Action

Participants in this study indicated an understanding of transformational leadership practices and identified (a) leadership by example, (b) training and development, (c) employee motivation, (d) trust, and (e) prioritizing followers' needs as practices that could enhance leadership effectiveness. Therefore, I recommend that

Liberian business leaders assess their transformational leadership skills by interviewing or distributing Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires to employees. After completing an assessment, I recommend that Liberian business leaders take actions to adopt needed transformational leadership skills.

The results of the study demonstrated that participants understood transformational leadership. Many participants said that social and economic factors, such as a high poverty rate, may inhibit transformational leadership practices in Liberia. Some participants stressed that a consideration of ethical practices must depend on Liberia's unique situation. Given these extenuating circumstances, leaders could consult with followers to identify a list of unethical practices and develop a code of ethics. Leaders and employees may find reasons to refer to an ethics document while carrying out their daily activities.

Business leaders must recognize the need to focus on employee welfare, motivation, and commitment. The study participants identified key transformational leadership attributes for leadership effectiveness during interviews. Liberian business leaders could benefit from seminars at which leadership experts explain further the breath and application of the identified transformational skills. Participants indicated they understood the need for transformational leadership, which suggests that Liberian business leaders may be receptive to training programs to enhance their knowledge and practice of transformational leadership.

My objective is to make the findings accessible to business leaders, students, and other stakeholders. I will encourage each of the 20 participants, who will receive an

electronic copy of the study, to distribute the study within their individual organizations. I may disseminate the study findings to Liberian business leaders through LIBA. I may volunteer to present the findings at a future LIBA seminars or workshops. I will disseminate the study findings through various publications and professional journals accessible to researchers, including ProQuest/UMI dissertation database and Walden University's International Journal of Applied Management and Technology.

## Recommendations for Further Study

The goal of this study was to identify transformational leadership skills that Liberian business leaders consider they need to lead effectively profitable organizations. To improve business practice, I recommend further research in three areas. The first recommendation is an assessment of Liberians' transformational leadership skills from the point of view of stakeholders, including employees, suppliers, customers, and shareholders. Transformational leadership focuses on mutual relationships between leaders and followers (Nusair et al., 2012). Therefore, employee perception of a leader's effectiveness could provide further insight into gaps in skills.

The second recommendation is an investigation into the possible influence that prevailing socioeconomic and cultural factors may have on the effectiveness of Liberian business leaders. Transformational leadership traits such as engendering trust, motivation, training and development, creating a vision, and inspiring employees can lead to leadership effectiveness (Yukl, 2012). Some participants stated that factors unique to the country, including high poverty level, unethical business practices, a lack of adequate skilled workforce, and a lack of capital prevented business leaders from practicing the

full range of transformational leadership skills. In the present study, I focused more on the leadership skills of Liberians and less on Liberia's prevailing socioeconomic and cultural situations. Given that several participants mentioned that, for example, leaders of companies in rich nations may find it easier to demonstrate transformational leadership skills than their counterparts in poor nations, an investigation into socioeconomic and cultural influences on leadership effectiveness becomes necessary.

The third recommendation is to explore the possibility that foreign business leaders in Liberia who demonstrate transformational leadership practices are more successful than their Liberian counterparts. The aim of this recommendation is to determine if factors other than a lack of transformational leadership skills affect Liberians' leadership effectiveness.

## Reflections

As the primary researcher for this study, I enjoyed the excitement, education, and information received throughout the research process. I had a preconceived bias toward the idea that Liberians could adopt a new set of skills to lead effectively profitable companies. I made efforts to temper my personal bias. I visited Liberia to collect data a few days after the World Health Organization declared the country Ebola free. I sensed that participants and political authorities were eager for economic growth, which was downgraded from 6.8% before the Ebola outbreak to 3% following the outbreak (World Bank, 2015). The Liberian business leaders I interviewed were hopeful for the country's socioeconomic situation. I considered that Liberia could face new challenges in the

future, which meant that business leaders with the right skills could be in a position to withstand such challenges.

Participants responded to interview questions happily and recognized that leadership effectiveness in the private sector could foster economic development. Participants were accessible and did not demand any favors. Conducting this doctoral study afforded me the opportunity to gain new information from the literature and data collected. After completing the study, I gained indepth knowledge about Liberians' leadership characteristics, including the difficulties they face leading business in an economically challenging environment. Finally, I consider my doctoral study a first step in efforts to contribute to social change. My challenge is to go further by communicating findings to Liberian business leaders in ways that will encourage them to adopt recommendations in the study.

### Summary and Study Conclusions

Transformational leadership is the primary tool to enhance leadership effectiveness and leaders who have adopted transformational leadership have been more effective than those who have not adopted transformational leadership (Konorti & Eng, 2012). Business leaders have to deal with contemporary issues, including ethics, technology, competition, and diversity. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Liberian business leaders on the primary transformational leadership skills they need to lead their organizations effectively. The research questions that drove this study were (a) What primary transformational leadership skills do Liberian business leaders identify as most important to lead profitable

organizations effectively? (b) What specific influence could the leadership skills they rate as most important have on leading profitable organizations effectively?

The participants in this study were Liberian business leaders who had at least 5 years of experience leading a business and were members of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce. A review of literature included scholarly and peer-reviewed articles on transformational leadership. Participants responded to 10 open-ended interview questions regarding their experiences with transformational leadership skills. The open-ended questions afforded me the opportunity to ask follow-up questions to clarify certain statements that participants made.

I coded manually information gathered during the interview process. I uploaded the information into NVivo 10 software program for further qualitative data analysis. From this process, I identified and organized emerging themes. The themes were (a) leadership by example, (b) training and development, (c) motivation, (d) trust, and (e) prioritizing followers' needs. Through these themes, participants provided an insight into the primary transformational leadership skills Liberian business leaders identified were necessary to lead effectively. Most participants in this study agreed that these themes covered practices that can enhance leadership effectiveness. However, some added that Liberian business leaders should practice transformational leadership in consideration of local socioeconomic and cultural realities.

Participants addressed the identified specific problem, which was that a lack of sufficient transformational leadership skills may be affecting the ability of Liberian business leaders to lead profitable organizations effectively. Liberian business leaders

could benefit from a further assessment of their transformational leadership skills. The

transformational leadership skills identified by participants to lead effectively could

enhance effective business practice and contribute to social change.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

The interview questions address the research questions of views regarding the leadership skills of Liberian business leaders and what transformational skills the Liberian business leaders need to improve their organizations' profits. Responses to the questions will be analyzed in the Results section.

**Questions**

1. What are your experiences regarding the need for leaders to provide individualized consideration, such as attending to each follower's needs?

2. What are your efforts to provide individualized consideration, such as acting as a mentor for your followers?

3. Individualized consideration also involves empathizing, motivating, and engaging your followers in a two-way communication. What influence could these transformational leadership skills have on an organization?

4. How could acting as a role model for followers enhance leadership effectiveness?

5. What are the ways in which you have acted as a role model for your followers?

6. What ways have you demonstrated integrity and ethical conduct before your followers?

7. How could leaders encourage innovation and creativity in followers?

8. How have you articulated a vision and communicated optimism for your followers?

9. Of the primary transformational leadership skills (such as acting as a role model, acting as a mentor, attending to followers' needs, engaging your followers in a

two-way communication, ethical conduct, and articulating a vision), which do you

think are the most important for Liberian business leaders to lead profitable

organizations?

10. Would you like to add anything that you may not have had the opportunity to

address from the other questions?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Pilot Study

**Questions**

1. What are your experiences regarding the need for leaders to provide individualized consideration, such as attending to each follower's needs?

2. What are your efforts to provide individualized consideration, such as acting as a mentor for your followers?

3. Individualized consideration also involves empathizing, motivating, and engaging your followers in a two-way communication. What influence could these transformational leadership skills have on an organization?

4. How could acting as a role model for followers enhance leadership effectiveness?

5. What are the ways in which you have acted as a role model for your followers?

6. What ways have you demonstrated integrity and ethical conduct before your followers?

7. How could leaders encourage innovation and creativity in followers?

8. How have you articulated a vision and communicated optimism for your followers?

9. Of the primary transformational leadership skills (such as acting as a role model, acting as a mentor, attending to followers' needs, engaging your followers in a two-way communication, ethical conduct, and articulating a vision), which do you think are the most important for Liberian business leaders to lead profitable organizations?

10. Would like to add anything that you may not have had the opportunity to address from the other questions?

**Three pilot study questions:**

1.  Do you think the 10 questions I have asked will provide needed information for the purpose of the study: to explore the perceptions of Liberian business leaders regarding the transformational leadership skills needed to lead profitable organizations more effectively?

2. Do you think I should delete or add any questions to achieve the purpose of the study? If yes, kindly explain.

3. Do you clearly understand the questions and is the study purpose clear to you?

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in Research

Date

Address Block

Dear (name of selected participant)

As a part of my doctoral dissertation research at Walden University, I am requesting you to participate in an interview to explore the transformational leadership skills of Liberian business leaders. I selected you from the directory of registered businesses in Liberia. In this research, I am interviewing only business leaders over 18 years, are members of the Liberian Chamber of Commerce and have led a business for at least five years. Kindly note that participation is voluntary, and information provided in the course of the interview will be confidential. No one else will be informed of your decision to participate or not participate in the interview. If you would like to participate in this research study, please contact me via the contact information listed below.

I anticipate that the total time involvement to complete the interviews to last no more than 45 minutes. The interview will be recorded and, if you agree to participate, you will have the opportunity to review a transcribed interview prior to inclusion in the study. The attached consent form, which you will kindly sign, provides further details about the research and interview process.

I appreciate how valuable your time is, so I thank you in advance for your help. It is my hope that my study will benefit Liberian business leaders.

Sincerely,

Kingsley Ighobor

New York, USA

█████████

███████████

Appendix D: Consent Form for Participants

This section contains Consent Form that will be required for each participant to review and sign before the in-depth interviews.

**CONSENT FORM**

You are invited to take part in a research study at your office or any other location convenient for you to gain your perspective regarding the transformational leadership skills of Liberian business leaders. You were chosen for the study because you are a Liberian who manages a business in the country. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to participate. This study is conducted by a researcher named Kingsley Ighobor, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. Research gathered in this study will be used to understand effective leadership in business in Liberia.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of Liberian business leaders regarding transformational leadership skills needed to help lead organizations more effectively.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an individual interview to assess the leadership effectiveness of Liberians.

- The interview will be taped with a voice recorder.

- The interview will last approximately 45 minutes

Here are some sample questions:

1. What are your experiences regarding the need for leaders to provide individualized consideration, such as attending to each follower's needs?

2. What are your efforts to provide individualized consideration, such as acting as a mentor for your followers?

3. Individualized consideration also involves empathizing, motivating, and engaging your followers in a two-way communication. What influence could these transformational leadership skills have on an organization?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline this interview and your decision will be respected. There will be no retribution if you decide not to be in the study. Even if you decide to join the study now, you have the option to terminate your participation later. In the course of the interview, you may skip any questions that you think are too personal.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Apart from minor discomforts of taking part of your time on the day of the interview, there are no risks involved in your participation. The interview will involve a detailed discussion of the leadership skills of Liberian business leaders and suggestions about what new transformational leadership skills are likely to make leaders more effective. The study results may encourage Liberians to consider acquiring the necessary skills to lead profitable organizations effectively, and to contribute in other ways to society.

**Payment**

There will be no payment but your participation will be appreciated.

**Privacy**

Any information you provide will be confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or any other information that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure in a locked safe and destroyed after 5 years.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via telephone ████████████ or e-mail (kingsley.ighobor@waldenu.edu). If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott, the Walden University representative who can discuss the matter with you. Her phone number is +1-612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 08-12-14-0166314 and it expires on August 11, 2015.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I agree to the terms described above.

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Appendix E: Interview Themes Matrix

| Emerging Themes | Participants' significant statements |
|---|---|
| Leadership by example | P3: Leading by example is a first step in gaining followers' confidence and respect.<br>P11: Employees learn by the practical examples demonstrated by their leaders. I cannot come to the office daily at 12 noon but tell my employees to be at their desks at 9 am. |
| Training and development | P20: Our company organizes regular training for employees to ensure that they are up to date with new ways of doing things.<br>P5: The business world is changing so fast that leaders must design methods to enhance training and development of employees. |
| Continuous innovation | P1: An effective leader must be innovative and encourage employees to be innovative. Companies should go for the latest technology.<br>P12: People consider us leaders in our business because we invest heavily in technology. We have sent some staff to the United States just to learn about new technology. |
| Motivation | P16: My experience teaches me that implementing a motivation scheme makes one an effective leader.<br>P15: We double the monthly pay of our "employee of the month" and awards him or her a certificate to appreciate the hard work. We realize that after proving those kinds of incentives, employees redouble efforts and other employees strive to be recognized. |
| Trust in followers | P6: I behave in a way that my followers can trust me. My staff know that I have zero tolerance for corrupt practices. They trust that when I say something I mean it.<br>P18: Morally upright leaders are trusted by their followers. Just look at how people follow their church pastors in this country because the pastors are seen as morally upright. The same happens in companies for leaders who demonstrate moral uprightness. |
| Prioritize followers' needs | P19: Through regular interactions with individual workers, especially in informal settings, a leader can |

know how a worker feels. I get the best out of my workers when I pay attention to their concerns.

P3: You may be surprised that the best ideas do not come from people at the top. When a leader shows empathy to workers, and makes them believe they are the company's most important assets, the company will grow and make profits.