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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Marvalene M. King

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Strategies to Identify and Reduce Workplace Bullying to Increase Productivity

by

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MACC, NOVA Southeastern University, 2011

MBA, NOVA Southeastern University, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2019

Abstract

Workplace bullying caused business owners to lose about 80 million employees' workdays each year. Workplace bullying can cost an organization up to \$300 billion for increased medical claims, lost productivity, and employee turnovers, and up to \$23 billion in additional expenses, such as costs for employee absenteeism and legal costs. The purpose of this single case study was to explore successful strategies to address workplace bullying used by 7 human resource (HR) managers and executives in 1, small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida. The HR managers and executives had 5 or more years of HR experience. The risk management framework and theory of planned behavior were the conceptual frameworks that guided exploration of the phenomenon. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with HR managers and executives and from company artifacts, such as HR and risk management policies. Member checking and transcript review strengthened trustworthiness of data analysis and interpretations. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Five themes emerged from the data analysis: enhanced training, encourage reporting, develop HR business partner model, implement policies and guidelines, and enforce zero-tolerance policy. The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change by building awareness of workplace bullying for employees, organizations, and society, and by providing strategies to reduce the number of bullied victims and enrich social harmony within organizations and communities.

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Dedication

I give thanks to God who makes all things possible. I dedicate this study to my darling son Charles. I thank God every day for blessing my life with you. To my grand babies Caden and Matthew who have brought more joy to my life than I could have ever imagined. To my Auntie Rose, my rock of Gibraltar, who has supported and loved me unconditionally. To my dearest friend Eurena, a genuine kindred sister in spirit.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| List of Tables | v |
| List of Figures | vi |
| Section 1: Foundation of the Study..... | 1 |
| Background of the Problem | 1 |
| Problem Statement | 2 |
| Purpose Statement..... | 2 |
| Nature of the Study | 3 |
| Research Question | 5 |
| Interview Questions | 5 |
| Conceptual Framework..... | 6 |
| Operational Definitions..... | 7 |
| Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations..... | 9 |
| Assumptions..... | 9 |
| Limitations | 9 |
| Delimitations..... | 10 |
| Significance of the Study | 11 |
| Contribution to Effective Business Practice | 11 |
| Contribution to Positive Social Change | 12 |
| A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature..... | 13 |
| Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) | 15 |
| Risk Management (RM) Framework | 22 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Combining the TPB and RM Framework..... | 28 |
| Workplace Bullying: The Phenomenon vs Incivility..... | 29 |
| Workplace Bullying: Antecedents–Organizational and Individual Culture | 30 |
| Workplace Bullying: Reduced Productivity and Stages of Disengagement..... | 32 |
| Workplace Bullying: Potential Preventive Measures and Control Systems..... | 34 |
| Workplace Bullying: Contrasting Conceptual Models | 35 |
| Supporting Literature for the TPB Conceptual Framework | 40 |
| Studies that Align with the TPB Conceptual Model..... | 44 |
| Transition | 46 |
| Section 2: The Project..... | 48 |
| Purpose Statement..... | 48 |
| Role of the Researcher | 49 |
| Participants..... | 51 |
| Research Method and Design | 54 |
| Research Method | 54 |
| Research Design..... | 56 |
| Population and Sampling | 59 |
| Ethical Research..... | 61 |
| Data Collection Instruments | 63 |
| Data Collection Technique | 66 |
| Data Organization Technique | 72 |
| Data Analysis | 73 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Reliability and Validity..... | 77 |
| Reliability..... | 77 |
| Validity | 78 |
| Transition and Summary..... | 80 |
| Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change | 81 |
| Introduction..... | 81 |
| Presentation of the Findings..... | 82 |
| Theme 1: Enhanced Training..... | 83 |
| Theme 2: Encourage Reporting | 93 |
| Theme 3: Develop a HR Business Partner Model | 101 |
| Theme 4: Implement Policies and Guidelines | 107 |
| Theme 5: Enforce Zero-Tolerance Policy..... | 113 |
| Applications to Professional Practice | 120 |
| Implications for Social Change..... | 123 |
| Recommendations for Action | 124 |
| Recommendations for Further Research..... | 126 |
| Reflections | 127 |
| Conclusion | 128 |
| References..... | 130 |
| Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Interview Questions..... | 171 |
| Appendix B: Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)..... | 174 |
| Appendix C: Proactive Risk Management – Standard Risk Model..... | 175 |

Appendix D: Workplace Bullying: Risk Management Framework176

List of Tables

| | | |
|---------|--|-----|
| Table 1 | Summary of References | 14 |
| Table 2 | Theme 1: Enhanced Training..... | 84 |
| Table 3 | Theme 2: Encourage Reporting | 94 |
| Table 4 | Theme 3: Develop HR Business Partner Model..... | 102 |
| Table 5 | Theme 4: Implement Policies and Guidelines | 107 |
| Table 6 | Theme 5: Enforce Zero-tolerance Policy..... | 114 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Figure 1.</i> The five strategies (themes) to minimize workplace bullying aligned with the TPB constructs and workplace bullying framework..... | 121 |
|--|-----|

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Workplace bullying developed as a topic in public and private organizations in the 1990s (Hollis, 2015). Since then, workplace bullying evolved into a global phenomenon that lead to serious costs and consequences for individuals, organizations, and society, such as suicide, emotional distress, and excessive use of sick days when leadership ignored the problem (Salin, 2015; Sansone & Sansone, 2015). Human resource (HR) managers need strategies to identify and minimize workplace bullying.

Background of the Problem

Bullying in the workplace is an occupational safety and health issue (Hollis, 2017). Workplace bullying affects the health of employees, financial health of organizations, and creates an unhealthy work environment (Rajalakshmi & Gomathi, 2016). Hollis (2015) referred to workplace bullying as a form of petty theft, which pilfers resources from an organization. Employees who experience bullying in the workplace may become disengaged, which can lead to lower productivity (Hollis, 2016). Carden and Boyd (2013) explored the risks employers face when bullying occurs in the workplace. The risk management (RM) approach is a useful strategy to identify bullying in the workplace, develop potential training or prevention programs, and help minimize the problem. When applied properly, the RM approach may also enable organization leaders and HR managers to provide the tools employees need to help identify bullying behavior and protect themselves from bullying in the workplace.

Problem Statement

Workplace bullying caused business owners to lose about 80 million employees' workdays each year (Hollis, 2015). Between November 2013 and January 2014, 73.8% of U.S. employees reported they were victims of bullying in their workplaces (Rouse et al., 2016). Workplace bullying can cost an organization up to \$300 billion for increased medical claims, lost productivity, and employee turnovers (Narine, 2015), and up to \$23 billion in additional expenses, such as costs for employee absenteeism and legal costs (Hassard, Teoh, Visockaite, Dewe, & Cox, 2018). The general business problem is that bullying in the workplace causes high attrition rates and reduced profitability because of lawsuits and lower productivity. The specific business problem is some HR managers lack strategies to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, single-case study was to explore successful strategies used by HR managers to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity. This study comprised one, small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida. Results from this study may contribute to social change by building people's awareness and educating people about workplace bullying. This study may also contribute to social change by reducing the number of bullied victims who need counseling for low self-esteem and reducing healthcare costs. Reduced bullying has a positive influence on social harmony at work, home, and in the community. Reduced bullying may reduce tension and stress in relationships and enhance respect and acceptance in society.

Nature of the Study

Three methods of research a researcher may choose from are (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mixed methods. Qualitative research was the best method for this study because the method involved the exploration of specific themes, in a specific context, for the business problem (Bengtsson, 2016). Exploring themes in a specific setting helped address the research question and identify strategies to reduce workplace bullying. Qualitative research was also appropriate for this study because of its flexibility. Levitt et al. (2018) posited that the method allows researchers to adjust certain aspects, such as the data collection technique or procedures, to conform to changes during the research.

Contrariwise, quantitative studies involved the use of mathematical formulas to analyze large volumes of data (Leung, 2015; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015) and comprises testing theories to support the correlation between variables (Lubbers, Verdery, & Molina, 2018). Mixed methods involved the combination of the quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect and analyze data and requires multiple steps and techniques to conduct research (Yardley & Bishop, 2015). Quantitative and mixed methods research were not the best methods for this study because neither approach was appropriate to capture the experiences of participants within their work environments using open-ended inquiry (Levitt et al., 2018).

Researchers using a qualitative method may choose from four designs to collect evidence: case study, phenomenology, ethnography, or narrative inquiry. The research design selected for this qualitative study comprised a single-case study design to explore

strategies used by HR managers to reduce workplace bullying and increase productivity.

The single-case study design was appropriate for this study because the approach comprised data collection using multiple sources of evidence to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Wamba, Akter, Edwards, Chopin, & Gnanzou, 2015). The single-case study design enables researchers to integrate a variety of evidence stemming from documentation, artifacts, interviews, archival records, direct observations, or participant-observation (Yin, 2018). Collecting data from multiple sources helped compare, validate, and support evidence (Wamba et al., 2015) of strategies used to reduce workplace bullying and develop understanding of the case.

Designs excluded from this study were phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative inquiry because the designs were not appropriate. With the phenomenology research design, researchers focus on understanding the lived experiences of participants by exploring a phenomenon (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016). Ethnography falls within the field of anthropology (Fusch, Fusch, Booker, & Fusch, 2016; Woermann, 2018) and involves the examination of beliefs or behaviors within a group of people or culture (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Narrative inquiry may involve a biography of an individual's lived experiences or descriptive stories of events and does not entail determining themes from collected data (Haydon, Browne, & van der Riet, 2018). The objective of this study was not to gather stories about the lived experiences of participants who endured workplace bullying, not to examine the beliefs or behaviors of a certain culture, and not to explore a biography of individuals' lived experiences. The objective of this study was to explore

successful strategies used to identify and minimize workplace bullying and increase productivity.

Research Question

The following research question formed the basis for this study: What strategies do HR managers use to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity?

Interview Questions

To facilitate the interviews, the open-ended interview questions included the following (see Appendix A).

1. What behaviors do employees report as *bullying*?
2. How are human resources employees instructed to respond to reports of bullying?
3. How effective is the training provided for human resources employees to respond to incidents of bullying?
4. What initiatives aid those who have experienced workplace bullying?
5. What risk management strategies have you implemented to mitigate workplace bullying?
6. What effect do your strategies for addressing bullying have on organizational productivity?
7. What other strategies might assist human resources employees to respond effectively to workplace bullying?
8. How does your organization's culture facilitate the prevention of workplace bullying?

9. What additional information can you provide to help me understand your response to workplace bullying?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this qualitative study was the combination of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and risk management (RM). Icek Ajzen first proposed the TPB in 1985 (Ajzen, 2011). In 1991, Ajzen presented a review and empirical support for the efficacy of the TPB. Since introduction, the TPB became one of the most cited and prominent frameworks used to investigate or predict peoples' behavior (Han, 2015; Steinmetz, Knappstein, Ajzen, Schmidt, & Kabst, 2016). TPB facilitated understanding how to change peoples' behavior, specifically negative behavior (Ajzen, 2011).

Smith and Merritt (2002) presented a proactive RM approach for organizations to manage risk. Carden and Boyd (2013) posited a RM framework to identify, monitor, and control workplace bullying. The proactive RM approach aligns with the risk management method recommended for organizations by the Project Management Institute (PMI), which is appropriate and adaptable for other forms of projects (PMI, 2017). The risk management method includes creating value by maintaining efficiency in four dimensions: (a) compliance, (b) prevention, (c) operating performance, and (d) the reputation of an organization (PMI, 2017). Comparatively, Squelch and Guthrie (2012) provided the Australian Comcare risk management processes that may effectively help create a positive, bully-free work environment. Like the PMI risk management method, Poplin et al. (2015) proposed a proactive RM approach for organization leaders to manage occupational safety and health in the workplace and improve management's

decision-making. The RM approach is applicable to this study because the approach comprises preventive elements, and when applied appropriately, may lead to a better understanding of risks to organizations; by maintaining efficiency in the four RM dimensions, HR managers may minimize the exposure of risk to the organization because of workplace bullying.

Operational Definitions

The operational definitions for this study facilitate the understanding of key terms, which include:

Appreciative action research. Appreciative action research involves interviewing participants, which is a form of interaction and the research process evolves through participation by the researcher and participants. Each plays a fundamental role in the sharing and collection of data (McKeown, Fortune, & Dupuis, 2016).

Beneficence. Beneficence is one of three ethical principles included in the Belmont Report to ensure protection of human subjects used in research. Beneficence is the responsibility of minimizing harm, while maximizing the benefits of the research for human subjects (Kamp, Herbell, Magginis, Berry, & Given, 2019).

Bullying behavior. Bullying behavior must be frequent, repetitive, prolonged, persistent, and hostile. Bullying behaviors may comprise belittling a person's work, threatening a person, or spreading rumors about a person (Salin, 2015).

Civility. Civility is behavior exhibited by someone, which involves treating others in a polite manner, with dignity and respect, to help maintain values and norms for reciprocal respect in the work environment (Porath, Gerbasi, & Schorch, 2015).

Cyberbullying. Repetitive mistreatment with the intent to harm a person, which can occur online or offline using information communication technology (Corcoran, Guckin, & Prentice, 2015).

Incivility. Incivility is mistreatment or rudeness exhibited by an aggressor with an unclear intent to harm the target, which violates social and workplace ethics; and the mistreatment causes distress for the target because this level of aggression signals risk for social situations, which hinders basic social intentions, such as self-control (Leiter, Peck, & Gumuchian, 2015).

Mobbing. Mobbing is joint abusive behavior exhibited by one or a group of employees who gang up on another coworker (Góralewska-Słońska, 2019). Mobbing can also be committed *downward*, when superiors cause employees physical or mental harm, and *upward*, when employees mistreat a superior (Kara, Kim, & Uysal, 2018).

Respect for persons. Respect for persons is one of three ethical principles included in the Belmont Report to ensure protection of human subjects used in research. Respect for persons involves ensuring human subjects can make decisions freely, protecting persons with limited independence (persons considered vulnerable) and obtaining informed consent from human subjects (Friesen, Kearns, Redman, & Caplan, 2017).

Target. The person being bullied (Wilson & Nagy, 2017). A group of individuals singled-out for subtle forms of mistreatment who are vulnerable parties requiring assistance and support (Zabrodska, Ellwood, Zaeemdar, & Mudrak, 2016).

Workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is a persistent pattern of negative behaviors in the workplace, over a period of time, exhibited by one or more employees, which may take the form of intimidation, humiliation, or other harmful work-related acts, against another employee (Akella, 2016; Gardner et al., 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts not confirmed but presumed to be true, which may help ensure research validity (Thomas, 2017; Wolgemuth, Hicks, & Agosto, 2017). The four assumptions for this study were: (a) participants had interest in the research study and responded honestly to interview questions; (b) participants were representative of HR managers who worked for similar small-to-medium-sized organizations in Central Florida; (c) HR managers shared perspectives, perceptions, and input based only on the time-period under exploration; and (d) it was possible to determine themes from participants' responses, which may lead to effective strategies leaders could use for identifying and minimizing workplace bullying.

Limitations

Limitations included possible restrictions or weaknesses in the research study (Holloway & Galvin, 2016). The limitations for this study were: (a) permission was attainable to interview only certain HR managers and executives, who met the criteria for participants, and gather only certain data within the organization, because some information was private; (b) this study included only HR managers and executives from one, small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida. As a result, findings could

not apply to other organizations in Central Florida, the United States, or organizations in other countries; and (c) the purposeful sample population consisted of HR personnel who met the criteria for participants and held a manager level or above position with a minimum of five years HR experience.

Delimitations

Delimitations represent the scope and boundaries of a research study (Snelson, 2016). Boundaries of this study centered on the geographic location, size of the organization, and strategies HR managers may use to reduce or prevent workplace bullying. A delimitation was the size of the organization. The Small Business Administration (SBA) defines business size standards in the United States (SBA, 2016). The SBA defines a small business as one that employs, on average, 500 to 1,500 employees (SBA, 2016). Comparatively, the U.S. Census Bureau (2016) identifies large U.S. businesses as ones that employ up to 5,000 or more employees. This study consisted of face-to-face interviews with HR managers and executives from one, small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida to collect data. This study did not include large-sized organizations.

HR managers from organizations in other regions of Florida were not participants. Findings from this study did not represent strategies used by practitioners outside of Central Florida to reduce or prevent workplace bullying because of the geographic delimitation. I selected only one, small-to-medium-sized organization for this single-case study. This study did not include HR personnel who were not in a manager level or above position and had less than five years of HR experience.

Significance of the Study

Findings may be valuable to businesses because of the potential to provide insight into HR professionals' role in identifying and preventing workplace bullying and focusing on the needs of the victim and the bully. Research showed that workplace bullying is an ongoing problem for victims and organizations (Horton, 2016). Victims may experience severe emotional, physical, and psychological effects, while long-term negative effects may erode the brand and bottom-line of an organization (Richardson, Joiner, & Hall, 2016). HR managers may tend to view and treat each case of workplace bullying as similar in nature and apply the same strategy to each one (Blackwood, Bentley, Catley, & Edwards, 2017). This is an incorrect approach for management to apply to incidents of workplace bullying because each victim, bully, and form of mistreatment will be different and require a unique approach and strategy (Blackwood et al., 2017). One challenge for management to overcome is victims may respond differently to policies and processes initiated to address incidents of workplace bullying because of victims' different experiences with mistreatment (Podsiadly & Gamian-Wilk, 2017). This study may be valuable to businesses because findings may increase leadership awareness of gaps for understanding the phenomenon and the aforementioned-challenges. This study may also provide a foundation for developing training or intervention programs to reduce workplace bullying and increase employee productivity.

Contribution to Effective Business Practice

Workplace bullying is a form of mistreatment that has long-term negative effects on employees and organizations (Freedman & Vreven, 2016). Two gaps to understanding

bullying in the workplace involved HR and a third gap involved the victim. One gap concerned HR professionals' interpretation and response to reports of workplace bullying (Harrington, Warren, & Rayner, 2015). Another gap involved understanding HR professionals' role in workplace bullying situations (Cowan & Fox, 2015). A further gap involved perspectives regarding workplace bullying, which focused on the viewpoint of the victim, *not* the bully (Samnani & Singh, 2016). This study may contribute to effective business practice (a) by filling gaps in the understanding and effective practice of business to reduce workplace bullying, (b) by providing a foundation for developing training or intervention programs within organizations to reduce workplace bullying, and (c) by providing strategies for leaders needed to reduce workplace bullying (Carden & Boyd, 2013).

Contribution to Positive Social Change

Workplace bullying can be a severe, damaging, and debilitating experience for victims (Edmonson & Zelonka, 2019; Edwards & Blackwood, 2017). The consequences of bullying may extend beyond the workplace and affect bystanders, families, and society (Hurley, Hutchinson, Bradbury, & Browne, 2016). Results of this study may contribute to positive social change by building awareness of workplace bullying for employees, organizations, and society, and providing potential solutions for preventing the harmful behavior. Results from this study may provide strategies to facilitate a better work environment for employees, reduce the number of bullied victims who need counseling for low self-esteem, reduce lawsuits and healthcare costs, and increase employee productivity.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Providing a safe, nurturing work environment may increase employee productivity and efficiency within organizations (McDonald, Brown, & Smith, 2015). Working for an organization provides employees with life aspects, such as a position, financial support, and a place in society (Verkuil, Atasayi, & Molendijk, 2015). In pursuit of these life aspects, working for an organization may lead to negative interactions in the work environment for employees, such as workplace bullying, which may cause harm to employees, society, and organizations (Verkuil et al., 2015). As a result, many academic and professional researchers show interest in understanding the nature of workplace bullying and strategies to reduce the phenomenon to increase employee productivity (Verkuil et al., 2015).

The following section includes an analysis and synthesis of (a) the scholarly literature pertaining to the conceptual frameworks, (b) the relationship of this study on workplace bullying to previous research, and (c) the peer-reviewed articles that employed a qualitative or quantitative method, or case study design. The purpose of the literature review was to provide the reader with knowledge about the topic and the gaps for understanding and reducing workplace bullying. The arrangement of the literature review consists of 10 sections relevant to workplace bullying and previous research on strategies to reduce the phenomenon.

Retrieval of scholarly, peer-reviewed literature on workplace bullying involved conducting searches in the following databases: ProQuest Central, Sage Premier, ABI/INFORM Complete, Business Source Complete, Emerald Management Journals,

Google Scholar, and library databases, such as Nexis Uni and SocINDEX from other private universities. Other references included books, Walden University dissertations, and government publications. Peer-reviewed articles represented more than 85% of references within the past five years (2015-2019) to comply with Walden University doctoral study requirements. Table 1 comprises a list of the peer-reviewed articles and percentages.

Table 1

Summary of References

| | Older | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | Total | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------------|
| Peer-reviewed articles | 14 | 62 | 58 | 36 | 47 | 14 | 231 | 90.00 |
| Dissertations | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2.00 |
| Government publications | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2.00 |
| Books | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 17 | 6.00 |
| Websites | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Total | 17 | 64 | 65 | 40 | 55 | 15 | 256 | 100.00 |

Note. Table 1 includes a summary of references used in this study. The references included peer-reviewed articles, books, Walden doctoral dissertations and government agency publications. Peer-reviewed resources represented 86% within five years of expected graduation date (2015-2019).

The objective of this qualitative, single-case study was to explore strategies used by HR managers to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity. The appropriate framework to substantiate and enhance business related research was a conceptual framework. The conceptual frameworks appropriate for this study were the TPB and risk management.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Ajzen (1985) founded the TPB to help predict and explain peoples' deliberate behavior. The TPB has been described by researchers as an ingenious and simple theory, and most widely used and tested (Leavell, 2016). A search in Google Scholar returned 1,360,000 results using the term *theory of planned behavior*, and 1,320,000 results using *theory of planned behaviour*. The TPB is an appropriate framework for this study because the theory was most often used for studies involving individuals' attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as precursors of intention (Ajzen, 2011). One objective of this study was to inform on literature and future research regarding strategies to improve individuals' negative behaviors.

The TPB abetted the understanding of how to change peoples' behavior, particularly negative behavior. The theory included the constructs of peoples' beliefs, which may be (a) behavioral, (b) normative, and (c) control (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013). Ajzen and Sheikh (2013) did not identify where these beliefs may derive from, but indicated that potential elements such as values, age, gender, education, income, the media, and other forms of information may indirectly influence a person's intentions and behavior (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 2011).

Three factors that may drive human action are (a) behavioral beliefs, beliefs concerning possible consequences of a behavior; (b) normative beliefs, beliefs concerning normative expectations of others; and (c) control beliefs, beliefs regarding the existence of aspects that could help or hinder performing the behavior (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013). A person can behave in a deliberated or planned manner (Ajzen, 1985). Ajzen

posited that behavioral beliefs created a positive or negative attitude about the behavior, normative beliefs brought about subjective norm (what the person perceived as social pressure regarding his or her behavior), and control beliefs resulted in perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985).

The attitude of a person about the behavior, perceived social pressure about the behavior, and the person's beliefs about the existence of factors that may help or hinder performing the behavior (Ajzen, 1985) form a person's behavioral intention to bully a coworker. The main construct of the TPB is intention, which determines people's behavior (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013; Boudreau & Godin, 2014). People's attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of control determine intentions; and intentions, combined with real control, determine performing a behavior (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013). The TPB diagram is in Appendix B.

The TPB is appropriate for this study because HR managers may leverage the constructs of this theory to change the behavior of a workplace bully. Using the constructs of the theory may allow HR managers to manage employees deliberate or planned behavior when they engage in bullying a coworker (Ajzen, 1985). Because the theory pertains to a person's intent to perform a negative behavior, HR managers may also use the TPB to design training or intervention programs that may help reduce workplace bullying and increase productivity.

Using the framework of the TPB, Godin, Conner, and Sheeran (2005) noted that peoples' intentions might affiliate with their moral norms. Moral norms are what a person perceives as moral and appropriate behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Godin et al., 2005). From a

study conducted in 2005 about predicting behaviors, Godin et al. (2005) theorized that aligning peoples' intentions with their moral norms is a more accurate predictor of peoples' behavior than aligning their intentions with their attitudes. Using regression analysis, Godin et al. concluded that when participants' moral norms aligned with their intentions, participants were more apt to engage in a behavior than participants whose attitude aligned with their intentions. Godin et al. found participants engaged in appropriate and healthy behaviors when intentions centered on moral norms (to engage in appropriate behaviors) rather than based on attitude about the behavior. Godin et al. posited, because of these findings, Ajzen (1991) should acknowledge in the TPB the significance that moral norms and expectations help to foster peoples' motivation to engage in certain behaviors.

Boudreau and Godin (2014) conducted a qualitative study to identify the determinants of intention and behavior for 200 participants to engage in physical activity for their health. Using regression analysis, Boudreau and Godin found a correlation existed between participants' intention and behavior, perceived behavioral control and behavior, and moral norm and behavior. Boudreau and Godin posited intention and perceived behavioral control facilitated the influence of moral norm on behavior. Participants exhibiting low physical activity, and knowing they should remain active for improved health, could add to increasing participants' belief of moral responsibility toward the behavior to form behavioral intentions (Boudreau & Godin, 2014). The constructs posed by Boudreau and Godin, and Godin et al. (2005), also apply to this study

because peoples' moral norms may drive their intent to behave in a morally correct manner and not engage in bullying behavior (their behavior-intention).

In contrast to the findings made by Boudreau and Godin (2014), Godin et al. (2005) and Ajzen (1985) theorized that the more positive a person's attitude and perceived social pressure, and the higher the perceived control, a person's intention to perform a behavior should be stronger. McEachan, Conner, Taylor, and Lawton (2011) conducted a meta-analysis study using the TPB constructs to counter this premise. The researchers found that with the passage of time, numerous events can interfere and modify a person's beliefs (behavioral, normative, and control) (McEachan et al., 2011). These events can also change a person's attitude, perceived social pressure regarding a behavior, and perceived behavioral control (McEachan et al., 2011). These modifications and changes can alter the person's intentions and decrease the validity of the person's intentions prior to the changes-modifications to behavior (McEachan et al., 2011). The construct proposed by McEachan et al. also applies to this study regarding positive events that occur, over time, and may change employees' intentions so they choose not to engage in bullying behaviors.

In 2011, Ajzen provided an editorial in which he claimed further that peoples' beliefs were indicative of the information they possessed concerning their intentional behavior (Ajzen, 2011). However, the information may be incorrect and incomplete, based on bias, or illogical principles (Ajzen, 2011). Regardless of how people attain their behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs, their attitudes, perceived social pressure about the behavior (subjective norms), and perception of behavior control, are

what help to form their behavioral intention (Ajzen, 2011). Beliefs guide a person's intent to engage in certain behaviors, and based on this viewpoint, a person's behavior is understood to be deliberate or planned (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 2011). Similarly, Ajzen and Sheikh (2013) posited the basic elements of the TPB are objects of information in the form of beliefs. Inaccurate and incomplete information may cause a person to engage in deliberate or planned behavior that is inappropriate (Ajzen, Joyce, Sheikh, & Cote, 2011). Provided with information, people can make better decisions regarding appropriate social behaviors to produce acceptable results (Ajzen et al., 2011). People may act and react effectively when provided with complete and accurate information (Ajzen et al., 2011). However, being well-informed does not guarantee people will engage in acceptable and appropriate behaviors (Ajzen et al., 2011). Knowledge is necessary for peoples' understanding, but not adequate to generate preferred and appropriate behavior (Ajzen et al., 2011).

In conjunction with possessing complete and accurate information, there is an essential need to keep people motivated to engage in the desired behavior (Ajzen et al., 2011). Using the constructs of the TPB, Ajzen proposed that only providing accurate information or increasing peoples' knowledge is not relevant for people to make decisions (Ajzen et al., 2011). Instead, Ajzen et al. (2011) posited information, which connects a desired interest to a positive or negative behavior and to expectations and controls that may constrain intentional behavior, is what determined intentions and actions (see Appendix B). This premise posed by Ajzen et al. leads to the idea of intervention strategies that may be useful to minimize inappropriate behaviors such as

workplace bullying. When leaders provide information and people gain an understanding of any behavioral issues, one expectation is that individuals will respond and exhibit appropriate and socially responsible behavior (Ajzen et al., 2011). This expectation and focus on knowledge may remain unfulfilled because people will more than likely continue to exhibit socially inappropriate and risky behavior (Ajzen et al., 2011).

Researchers posited another approach that may be more effective in altering peoples' behavior to engage in workplace bullying (Ajzen, 2011; Ajzen et al., 2011; Boudreau & Godin, 2014). Rather than focusing on ensuring that people have complete and accurate information, the focus should be on determining what information and knowledge people have and how this influences their intentions, actions, and behaviors; regardless of whether the information people know is accurate (Ajzen, 2011; Ajzen et al., 2011). The focus should be on the information, knowledge, and how these influence peoples' beliefs about behavior (Ajzen et al., 2011). Boudreau and Godin (2014) found beliefs people hold determined behavior; and to develop a positive intention to engage in a behavior, interventions should focus on developing an awareness of control over the behavior (Boudreau & Godin, 2014). Identifying peoples' behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs (Ajzen et al., 2011) is also a focal point. Then, present information to people that challenges those beliefs, which may conflict with the preferred social behavior, and information that may reinforce their current beliefs (Ajzen et al., 2011).

Another approach is to present information that enables new beliefs to develop, which support the preferred social behavior and convince people to modify their intention

to change their behavior and choose not to engage in bullying behavior (Ajzen et al., 2011); because there is a correlation between intentions and behaviors (Boudreau & Godin, 2014). The relationship between behavior and intention is not flawless because people with the intention to exhibit a behavior in a specific way may not follow through on the intention (Keer, Conner, Van den Putte, & Neijens, 2014). Keer et al. (2014) posited a possible gap between intention and behavior based on people's affective or cognitive attitude. In a qualitative study, Keer et al. measured the strength of participants' intention-behavior relationship. The extent to which the basis of an intention is cognition and affect influences the possibility of the intention into a behavior (Keer et al., 2014). Keer et al. found the strength of the relationship between people's intention and behavior was substantial when people base intentions on affect and beliefs about the behavior. When participants base a certain behavior on affect, the motivation was to remain true to intentions and follow through with the behavior (Keer et al., 2014). Conversely, the strength of the relationship between intention and behavior was low when participants base intentions on cognition or reasonable assessments of the costs and benefits of a behavior (Keer et al., 2014). If participants anticipated short-term affective consequences for a certain behavior, the motivation was to remain true to intentions and follow through with the behavior (Keer et al., 2014).

Newton, Newton, Ewing, Burney, and Hay (2013) extended the TPB in the context there may be an overlap between peoples' moral norms and probable regret when behavior may lead to moral consequences. Researchers should be cognizant of the possibility that if people anticipate experiencing moral consequences for negative

behavior, the moral norms and probable regret may affect the intention to engage in that behavior (Newton et al., 2013). If people anticipate punishment for negative behavior or anticipate regretting the decision, intentions to exhibit negative behavior may change (Newton et al., 2013). Alok, Raveertdran, and Prasuna (2014) expanded on the TPB in the context of understanding the propensity of employees to deal with conflict in relationships by adopting an obliging or dominant personality style. Alok et al. (2014) posited that employees, who adopted an obliging style when facing conflict in the workplace, indicated they did so because that was the correct behavior to exhibit; and there would be a reward associated with behaving in an appropriate manner.

In contrast, employees who exhibited a dominant style when dealing with conflict in a relationship did so because there was a trust issue between employees and leaders in the organization (Alok et al., 2014). The expansion of the TPB by Alok et al. (2014) facilitated the understanding of why employees adopted a certain style when faced with relationship conflict. Findings by Alok et al. also facilitated anticipating employees' intentions to exhibit certain behaviors, which may allow organization leaders time to plan and develop interventions. The TPB is applicable to this study because it provides strategies that may help HR managers understand how to identify and change the behavior of people who engage in bullying behavior.

Risk Management (RM) Framework

The RM framework includes creating value for employees and the organization by maintaining efficiency in the areas of (a) maintaining compliance and preventing crises, (b) performance of operations, and (c) the reputation of an organization (Carden &

Boyd, 2013). Early research comprised Spurgeon's (2003) adoption of a RM approach to workplace bullying. Spurgeon established the principle that stakeholders are unable to eliminate risk completely from the workplace, or society for that matter, but may *control* risks to a certain degree. The goal of RM is not to remove risk but to minimize risk and any harm associated to a level that is tolerable to victims and other stakeholders (Spurgeon, 2003). The measure of prevention and control used to manage risks in the workplace comprises the final phase of the RM framework (Spurgeon, 2003).

Dumay and Marini (2012) presented a more comprehensive RM approach for workplace bullying. The researchers explained that management might initiate controls to prevent workplace bullying if they understood how the phenomenon was committed (Dumay & Marini, 2012). Dumay and Marini presented a RM approach for understanding workplace bullying, which comprised collecting data from the viewpoint of both the victim and bully. From the extensive research, Dumay and Marini found that perspectives regarding workplace bullying focused on the viewpoint of the victim, not the bully. Similar to Spurgeon (2003), Squelch and Guthrie (2012) posited a RM approach in the context of safety and health laws designed to reduce workplace bullying and ensure a safe environment for employees. Squelch and Guthrie presented the Australian Comcare risk management approach as an example a manager may use to (a) identify workplace bullying; (b) assess if workplace bullying may occur and the behaviors exhibited; (c) develop and implement controls to manage the risk of bullying; and (d) monitor, evaluate, and review reports against target indicators (to continuously improve).

Smith and Merritt (2002) also presented a proactive RM approach for organization leaders to manage risk. The proactive risk management approach involved (a) identifying risk drivers and risk events to manage the main reasons for risk, (b) distinguishing between what are risks and causes, (c) prioritizing risks, and (d) managing each risk (Smith & Merritt, 2002). The proactive RM model is in Appendix C of this study. Smith and Merritt advised the approach also involved (a) identifying tools and strategies to develop and implement a risk management approach, and (b) recognizing the importance of cultural and organizational aspects that may prevent implementing an effective RM program (see Appendix C). Poplin et al. (2015) noted that, although RM methods will vary depending on the organization, the main elements of the method, scoping, risk assessment, and the identification, and implementation of control interventions, would remain the same.

Risk management is also an appropriate framework for this study and may be useful to HR managers as a strategy to identify risks related to workplace bullying and develop training or prevention programs to reduce or prevent the phenomenon. Carden and Boyd (2013) presented a RM framework, which may also minimize workplace bullying, effectively. Like the proactive risk management approach presented by Smith and Merritt (2002), the RM framework presented by Carden and Boyd included project management aspects derived from the PMI guide on managing risk and maintaining efficiency in the prevention of risk to create value for the organization. In addition, Carden and Boyd leveraged primary steps for managing risk derived from the Australian Government Bullying Risk Management Tool (BRMT) developed in 2012, and project

management methods from the Centers for Disease Control Unified Process Practices Guide. The Carden and Boyd RM framework comprised (a) identification, (b) response planning, and (c) monitoring and controlling workplace bullying (Carden & Boyd, 2013). Carden and Boyd's platform consisted of using the RM framework to implement a program for workplace bullying and recommended prevention methods and strategies to mitigate and proactively address bullying in the workplace (see Appendix D).

Identification of risk involved identifying the type of risks related to workplace bullying and recording behaviors and actions related to those risks (Carden & Boyd, 2013). Based on this premise for the RM framework, Carden and Boyd (2013) began with identifying bullying behavior and the reasons for the behavior. Some causes of bullying included (a) treating employees in a disrespectful manner, (b) changes within the organization, (c) reduction in staff, and (d) poor leadership styles (BRMT, 2012). Researchers also noted that workplace bullying could lead to threats of an employee's continued employment (Carden & Boyd, 2013; Worth & Squelch, 2015), which may result in reduced productivity.

Response planning for risks included prevention methods and strategies to mitigate and minimize mistreatment of employees (Carden & Boyd, 2013). This represented the *employer's responsibility* in the process to prevent or reduce workplace bullying. One strategy consisted of organization leaders, HR managers, and employees creating an anti-bullying policy, which should include (a) definition of workplace bullying, (b) examples of unacceptable behaviors, (c) guidelines to protect the bullied employee from retaliation, and (d) a plan to review, revise, and sustain the anti-bullying

policies and procedures (Johnson, 2015a; Kravitz, 2014). Carden and Boyd (2013) noted anti-bullying policies should include language to hold employees accountable for inappropriate behavior and detail consequences, such as verbal or written warnings, and even termination. In a study on workplace bullying, Johnson, Boutain, Tsai, and de Castro (2015) found employees' performance appraisals included definitions and possible corrective action to address inappropriate behaviors such as bullying. Carden and Boyd also mentioned the importance of organization leaders and HR managers communicating the anti-bullying policy to current and new employees, and conducting training and prevention sessions; and the communication must be on a continuous basis to ensure that employees remain cognizant of the policy and consequences.

In addition to developing a plan, the RM framework includes *employees' participation* in the plan against workplace bullying. Francioli et al. (2018) agreed that employees should be involved in prevention programs to mitigate workplace bullying. Employers may provide employees with resources and tools to help them identify and protect themselves from mistreatment in the workplace. If employees find themselves victims of a bully, employees should document and report the mistreatment immediately (Kravitz, 2014) and employers should provide an internal or external unbiased source to take the report (Kravitz, 2014; Simpson & McPherson, 2014). Employers should also provide an anonymous hotline and complaint process for employees to report workplace bullying (Beakley, 2016; Carden & Boyd, 2013).

The final phase in the RM framework involved (a) monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and controlling the processes and procedures to ensure strategy

implementation, (b) assessing the policy and strategies frequently, (c) and modification of the policy and strategies, as needed (PMI, 2017). To facilitate this phase in the process, employers may develop a method to measure and track the progress and effective results of the anti-bullying policy (Carden & Boyd, 2013). Components of the tracking method should include the number of employees bullied over a certain time-period and answering questions such as, (a) was workplace bullying the reason why employees resigned? and (b) which health problems caused employees to call out sick? (Carden & Boyd, 2013).

Like Carden and Boyd (2013), Jenkins (2013) offered a proactive risk management approach to identify and control risk factors, which may help prevent bullying in the workplace. The two approaches are similar, but Jenkins asserted (a) step one involved management's commitment and motivation to prevent bullying, (b) step two, identify risk factors, (c) step three, implement control measures, such as training, and (d) step four, evaluate and review control measures. Notwithstanding the order of operation for each risk management approach, the researchers stipulated the importance of engaging HR in the process (Carden & Boyd, 2013; Jenkins, 2013).

Critical aspects of the RM framework include the cooperation, participation, and support of HR and senior leaders during the entire anti-bullying process (Carden & Boyd, 2013). HR and senior leaders need to ensure the successful implementation of a program to mitigate and proactively address bullying in the workplace. These individuals may provide support for the anti-bullying program by (a) providing resources needed to plan, monitor, and control the program; (b) creating procedures to investigate and resolve complaints of bullying; and (c) establishing a hotline and complaint process (BRMT,

2012). Human resource managers and senior leaders may also provide support for the anti-bullying program by (a) creating guidelines that establish what constitutes bullying behavior, (b) ensuring that the policy and procedures include actions and consequences, and (c) designing a training and prevention program for employees (BRMT, 2012).

Combining the TPB and RM Framework

The TPB and RM framework are both appropriate for this study. HR managers may leverage the constructs of the TPB to determine and manage employees' intent to perform a negative behavior (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013; Boudreau & Godin, 2014), and design a program to change the behavior of a workplace bully. The RM framework may be valuable to HR managers to identify risks pertaining to workplace bullying behaviors and actions related to those risks (Squelch & Guthrie, 2012). TPB and RM framework both lead to the idea of prevention methods and strategies that may be useful to minimize inappropriate behaviors, which includes workplace bullying. TPB and RM framework may aid in designing training or intervention programs to minimize bullying, reduce the costs of bullying, and increase employee productivity.

The following section will include an analysis and synthesis of scholarly peer-reviewed articles that employed a qualitative or quantitative method, or case study design, relevant to workplace bullying. The section will consist of seven parts and the analysis and synthesis will link to the TPB and RM conceptual frameworks. The section will also include a discussion of the relationship of this study on workplace bullying to previous research.

Workplace Bullying: The Phenomenon vs Incivility

Often, the terms workplace *incivility* and *bullying* are used interchangeably (Lim & Bernstein, 2014), but the *actions* of mistreatment in the workplace may be different. Unlike bullying between children, which may be easy to observe, bullying in the workplace can be silent and go undetected. Workplace bullying phenomenon is known as a *silent epidemic* (Bartlett, 2016) because some victims are afraid to report the abuse. Bullying in the workplace is mistreatment that goes beyond acts of incivility (Piotrowski & King, 2016; Rai & Agarwal, 2016). Workplace bullying comprises repeated *and* deliberate negative acts, over time, against another person (Hodgins, MacCurtain, & Mannix-McNamara, 2014; Rai & Agarwal, 2016). Incivility involves low-intensity actions, such as verbal or nonverbal rude behavior, comprising vague *intent* to cause harm to the victim (Hodgins et al., 2014; Schilpzand, De Pater, & Erez, 2016). One aspect of behaviors considered as acts of incivility is the potential for the mistreatments to escalate and become workplace bullying or violence (Laschinger, Wong, Cummings, & Grau, 2014).

Incivility ranks low and bullying ranks high regarding the *levels of intense mistreatment*, but bullying and incivility in the workplace both comprise negative acts of behavior. Lim and Bernstein (2014) posited use of the terms *bullying* and *incivility* is interchangeable. Hodgins et al. (2014), Piotrowski and King (2016), Rai and Agarwal (2016), and Schilpzand et al. (2016) posed a more definitive distinction between the levels of intensity victims may experience, if treated in an uncivil, rude manner, or if the victim was bullied into submission. Workplace bullying, the more intense level of

mistreatment, is the focus of this study. Bullying in the workplace may result from an organization or individual's culture. The next section depicts findings pertaining to organization and individual cultures, which may lead to workplace bullying.

Workplace Bullying: Antecedents—Organizational and Individual Culture

Various precursors in the workplace, such as culture, may contribute to occurrences of bullying. Precursors that may lead to workplace bullying are a person's or organizational culture (Freedman & Vreven, 2016). Pheko, Monteiro, and Segopolo (2017) advocated culture is a predictor of workplace bullying. Giorgi, Leon-Perez, and Arenas (2015) conducted a quantitative study about the tolerance of bullying behaviors in certain cultures and found, with workplace bullying engrained in an organizational culture, and employees experienced bullying, the mistreatment did not affect job satisfaction, and employees remained satisfied with working (Giorgi, Leon-Perez, & Arenas, 2015).

Jacobson, Hood, and Van Buren (2014) presented findings on low and high-power distance cultural dimensions. The researchers' findings were that diverse cultures embody dissimilar perceptions of bullying and behaviors, which constitute mistreatment (Jacobson et al., 2014). High power distance cultures that depict stable power and social order, for individuals with *power*, are tolerant of bullying behaviors (Devi, 2016; Jacobson et al., 2014). Cultures depicting low power distance typically consist of a large middle-class population, who view people with power as corrupt, and are less tolerant of bullying type behaviors (Jacobson et al., 2014).

In comparable research conducted exploring cross-cultural differences and similarities, targets in high power distance cultures may tolerate negative behaviors, such as workplace bullying, and accept the behaviors as normal within the work environment (D'Cruz, Paull, Omari, & Guneri-Cangarli, 2016). Berlingieri (2015) contended, organization leaders should not treat power as a separate component occurring in social dimensions, or levels of positions in the work environment. Power imbalance existed, whether occurring inside or outside the work environment, prior to acts of bullying in the workplace (Berlingieri, 2015).

Most organizations operate business in a global market consisting of multiple cultures. D'Cruz et al. (2016), Giorgi et al. (2015), and Jacobson et al. (2014) agreed on the premise of engrained workplace bullying as acceptable in high power distance cultures, but if the culture dimension of an organization is low power distance, tolerance for bullying is nonexistent. Fusch et al. (2016) argued, a common and unified culture is one reason for the success of an organization, and analysis of workplace culture is important in business research. Culture is important in business because it defines human beings and their actions (Fusch, 2014), and human resource is the core of businesses (Fusch et al., 2016).

People from one culture may work within a different organizational culture, interact with coworkers from dissimilar cultures, and view workplace bullying as acceptable or unacceptable. These individuals may face challenges and conflict with the work environment and coworkers. Workplace bullying is uninvited treatment, but there are varying situations and cultures in which employees accept and tolerate the

mistreatment, regardless of prior internal or external power imbalance. For this study, participant responses to interview questions on organizational culture may provide additional insight linking bullying to culture. The following section focuses on employee disengagement and reduced productivity, both results of workplace bullying.

Workplace Bullying: Reduced Productivity and Stages of Disengagement

Various levels of employee disengagement resulting from workplace bullying may lead to lower productivity. Bullying often leads to employee disengagement in the work environment (Verkuil et al., 2015). Up to 30% of employees experienced bullying at work (Khubchandani & Price, 2015). Between 22% and 23% of targets spent 137.39 hours per week avoiding a bully (Hollis, 2015). Targets experienced frustration and demoralization from mistreatment, which led to disengagement from performing job duties or loss of productivity (Hollis, 2015). When employees experience mistreatment in the workplace, focusing on job performance or meeting productivity standards becomes difficult.

Reduced productivity is a consequence of employee mistreatment. Fisher-Blando (2008) performed a quantitative study about bullying in the workplace, which presented instances of mistreatment and effects on employee job satisfaction and productivity. The study comprised a statistical comparison of diverse employees who experienced bullying within two diverse work environments (Fisher-Blando, 2008). Findings supported the hypothesis that bullied employees become dissatisfied on the job, which leads to reduced productivity (Fisher-Blando, 2008). Additional findings were 75% of participants reported either witnessing acts of bullying or experiencing bullying as a victim (Fisher-

Blando, 2008). Literature and results from studies on the phenomenon also supported Fisher-Blando's findings (Gilani, Cavico, & Mujtaba, 2014; Hutchinson & Jackson, 2015; Le Mire & Owns, 2014). Gilani, Cavico, and Mujtaba (2014) affirmed employee mistreatment led to employee dissatisfaction and lower productivity. Similarly, Hutchinson and Jackson (2015) and Le Mire and Owns (2014) agreed workplace bullying negatively affects productivity, employee turn-over, and engagement.

Contrariwise, workplace bullying led to employee deviance resulting from emotional exhaustion (Peng, Chen, Chang, & Zhuang, 2016). Emotional exhaustion, a typical adverse reaction from targets, is a precursor to job burnout and employee deviance (Peng et al., 2016). Other researchers agreed targets exhibiting emotional exhaustion triggered employee deviance and counterproductive work behavior (Raman, Sambasivan, & Kumar, 2016). Hollis (2015) posited bullying lead to lower productivity. Conversely, Peng et al. (2016) and Raman et al. (2016) contended employees' adverse reaction to bullying is exhaustion, resulting in deviant behaviors. Regardless of the target's response to mistreatment, reduced productivity and disengagement result in breach of organizational policies and standards and compromise the well-being of employees and the business. One focus of this study comprised confirming employee disengagement resulting from mistreatment by a coworker. The following section includes analysis of HR managers' role in assessing and preventing employee conflict in the work environment.

Workplace Bullying: Potential Preventive Measures and Control Systems

Findings from a beta test study validated previous research espousing workplace bullying originated from leadership and HR rarely supporting the target, which resulted in disengagement or leaving the organization (Hollis, 2015). Leaders who appear apathetic to bullying in the workplace may minimize employee trust and lead to lower productivity (Hollis, 2015). A recurring theme found during a qualitative study was that employees thought leaders tolerated bullying and *formal* responses to complaints caused mistrust of leaders to adequately protect employees (Hurley et al., 2016). Leaders set the tone for managing and minimizing workplace bullying, and integrity is a fundamental element connecting people's values, goals, and actions (Hollis, 2015). Leadership civility may dispel employees' inclination to disengage (Hollis, 2015). Solutions derived from this study to mitigate workplace bullying comprised (a) zero tolerance for workplace bullying; (b) leadership transparency, accessibility, and visibility; (c) making employees aware leadership will intervene and address inappropriate behaviors, which may foster employee support and encourage engagement; and (d) annual 360 evaluations, with a minimum civility score, for supervisors and above (Hollis, 2015).

HR managers should understand how to minimize incidences of bullying in the workplace, and protect employee health and well-being and the organization, to help increase productivity. Johnson (2015b) found workplace bullying prevention centered on three areas: (a) prevention of workplace bullying through managerial presence, (b) normalizing behaviors, and (c) controlling behaviors. The three areas are individual levels of workplace bullying prevention (Johnson, 2015b). Research indicated that

workplace bullying is a complex issue with originations at the individual, departmental, and organizational levels (Johnson, 2015b); however, the focus of the participants in those studies was on prevention of bullying by shaping the behaviors of individuals (Johnson, 2015b). The prevention of workplace bullying may require departmental and organizational planning (Johnson, 2015b). HR managers in diverse organizations can apply results of this study to examine discussions of workplace bullying prevention and determine where change is needed (Johnson, 2015b). Findings presented by Qureshi, Rasli, and Zaman (2014) supported an organizational level of prevention that incorporated a work-life balance platform, team emphasis, and improvements to the work environment, which included structured programs and policies to mitigate occurrences of mistreatment.

Workplace Bullying: Contrasting Conceptual Models

To manage the phenomenon of bullying in the workplace effectively, HR managers need to understand how to minimize the mistreatment to protect the health and well-being of employees and the organization. Researchers asserted that the work environment is a contributing factor for workplace bullying (Hurley et al., 2016; Trépanier, Fernet, Austin, & Boudrias, 2016). Support for this assertion derived from a study conducted on the *Role of Distributive Conflict Behavior*, a framework on conflict behavior derived from Friedrich Glasl's model to enhance understanding of how conflicts may evolve into workplace bullying (Baillien et al., 2016). Researchers Baillien et al. (2016) classified Glasl's model into two forms of workplace conflict (a) task conflict – when employees disagree on how to complete tasks, and (b) relationship conflict – entails

employees' perceived stress, irritation, and animosity regarding personal dissimilarities; for example, beliefs, mindsets, choices, or a person's character. Baillien et al. contended task conflict may develop into relationship conflict, which may spark bullying behavior and affect organizations and employee productivity (Baillien et al., 2016).

The *Role of Distributive Conflict Behavior* framework involves a win-lose reaction to workplace conflict (Baillien et al., 2016). This comprises conflict management behaviors employees exhibited when faced with a conflict situation, which meant employees exhibited behaviors that minimized or escalated the encounter and outcome (Baillien et al., 2016). Francioli et al. (2016) espoused people's unique characteristics and disposition may determine how to assess mistreatment, rally resources, and cope with experiences of bullying. Similarly, Cropanzano and Dasborough (2015) argued people's responses to life events are based on their personality traits, which may predict mood patterns; and over time, the responses affected employee well-being (Cropanzano & Dasborough, 2015). In other words, employees may react in a submissive or assertive manner based on individual personality traits and desire for positive well-being.

Using the win-lose framework and Glasl's model, Baillien et al. (2016) proposed a connection between workplace conflicts and workplace bullying. Baillien et al. posited a relationship existed between acts of bullying and employee disagreements. The researchers proposed workplace conflict was a strong predictor of exposure to bullying because when employees engaged in a conflict, this may result in acts of bullying (Baillien et al., 2016); furthermore, task related conflicts may drain employees' *resources*, such as power and position, which may make employees vulnerable to

bullying (Baillien et al., 2016). The reasoning behind *resources* aligns with the *Conservation of Resources* (COR) theory presented by Chen, Westman, and Hobfoll (2015) and Rousseau, Eddleston, Patel, and Kellermanns (2014).

Conservation of Resources is a theory used to predict people's behavior and motivation (Chen et al., 2015). The framework is recognized as an approach to manage stress, mainly in work environments, and the connection between stress and health (Hagger, 2015). The premise of COR is, although stress may not ensue, people became inspired and guided from a cultural, cognitive, social, and biological standpoint to accumulate, maintain, and safeguard resource supplies (Chen et al., 2015). Resource supplies are necessities people *value* and use to protect *self*, function in cultural contexts, and maintain social relationships (Chen et al., 2015). Rousseau et al. (2014) contributed to COR theory through evidence presented on contributing factors that may aid or limit an employee's capacity to obtain, accumulate, and preserve valuable resources; and control resources and stress, particularly the perception of being subjected to workplace bullying. Similarly, Chen et al. (2015) expanded COR to include nurturing and facilitating employees to obtain resources needed to foster resilience and eliminate barriers to resources, which may help avert stress and enrich employee well-being.

Employees might experience stress if valuable resources were lost, low, or threatened (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018). Employees subjected to bullying reported experiencing depletion of resources and unable to cope with the mistreatment (Hurley et al., 2016). The foundation of COR is an abundance of resources available for employees to manage challenging situations, which may enable proactive

and resilient responses and stress prevention (Chen et al., 2015). Resilient employees may be able to navigate bullying in the workplace and emerge unscathed. Compared to Baillien et al. (2016), Rousseau et al. (2014) also identified resources employees valued, which are preservation of *self* and health and well-being. On the employer level, employees may view the organization as a source to provide resources (Rousseau et al., 2014); and one resource may be trust in management, which represents a resource to minimize employee susceptibility and perception of workplace bullying behaviors (Rousseau et al., 2014). If employees trust management, positive expectations may include trust in management to provide support, and employees can focus on work instead of worrying about possible acts of bullying (Rousseau et al., 2014). When employees do not trust management, the tendency is to operate in a *self-preservation* mode and perceive vague situations as bullying (Rousseau et al., 2014).

Researchers agreed resources are what people *value* (Chen et al., 2015; Rousseau et al., 2014). Baillien et al. (2016) reasoned resources may comprise power and position. Rousseau et al. (2014) identified resources such as self-preservation and health and well-being; whereas Chen et al. (2015) posited resources may include items (e.g. automobile or house), state of being resources (e.g. securing a job, being married), individual resources (e.g. technical skills or individual traits, such as self-confidence), and power-vitality resources (e.g. reputation, status, expertise, or wealth). Some researchers offer critical viewpoints regarding the general notion of *resources*, though COR has been popular in the field of organizational behavior (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014).

The primary strength of COR theory is the precept of individuals' motivation to conserve and acquire new *valuable* resources for health and well-being (Hobfoll et al., 2018). One aim of the COR framework is understanding and describing the process whereby individuals respond to, and manage, stress (Hagger, 2015; Holmgren, Tirone, Gerhart, & Hobfoll, 2017). An abundance of resources, such as organizational or HR support, may equip employees with tools to manage, or possibly prevent, becoming a victim of bullying. I did not choose to examine strategies HR managers need to prevent workplace bullying through the COR lens. In the long-term, employees experiencing mistreatment may not have sufficient resources and emotional strength to discourage or fend off a bully, whereas COR appears practical. A criticism of COR is the premise of *valuable resources*. Halbesleben et al. (2014) noted, *valuable* resources implied positive results for consideration as a resource, but positive outcomes are not guaranteed when using resources. A more conservative definition for valuable resources is *anything regarded by an individual to help achieve personal goals* (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Goals may vary because of each person's unique needs and wants, so a wide-ranging definition based on achieving goals may enable understanding of basic resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Sufficient tools and resources are important for employee well-being and health. However, applying COR as a preventive maintenance tool for bullying may require employees to constantly amass resources to remain one step ahead of any mistreatment. Employees' current goals for acquiring resources may conflict with the need to use resources to circumvent mistreatment and maintain health and well-being. Additionally,

applying COR to problems of mistreatment in the work environment may place sole responsibility on the victim for managing workplace conflict. This study may help HR managers explore methods for identifying unacceptable behaviors and strategies to minimize or prevent workplace mistreatment. To facilitate prevention, a behavioral approach for mistreatments, such as workplace bullying, may benefit employees and organizations in the long-term. The TPB and RM frameworks are appropriate methods to fill this gap in the literature. The following section comprises supporting literature for the TPB.

Supporting Literature for the TPB Conceptual Framework

Support for the TPB was found in literature, including peer-reviewed commentary from Icek Ajzen, the founder of the framework. Research in the field of physical activity and human behavior consists of studies to test the TPB in predicting individual's intentions and behaviors to perform a task. In a quantitative study to explain people's intention to exercise, Gomes, Gonçalves, Maddux, and Carneiro (2017) collected data from 454 participants using TPB constructs, attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and intention. The measurement tool comprised a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and included health action and subjective exercise models, with the TPB as the foundation for hypotheses. An integrated model combining the TPB with other variables is appropriate as researchers explained models of social-cognitive behavior alone are not adequate to explain the relationship between intention to perform an action-behavior and actual performance of the action-behavior (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2014).

Gomes et al. (2017) offered motivating individuals to exercise was difficult. A study represented an opportunity to understand factors that induce the initiation and continuation of exercise (Gomes et al., 2017). Predicting individual's intention to perform an action is easier than the actual behavior (Wang & Wang, 2015; Wang & Zhang, 2016). Gomes et al. (2017) agreed with the finding based on results of the behavior-intention exercise study. The researchers found the TPB model a good indicator of participant attitudes about exercising, and perceived behavior control for exercise intentions, but not the actual performance of exercise behavior (Gomes et al., 2017; Wang & Wang, 2015). Findings were consistent with results of some other studies, which advocated the TPB as a suitable model to predict exercise intentions (mainly perceived behavior control) but not as good at predicting if people will exercise (perform) the behavior (Gomes et al., 2017).

Support for the TPB as a behavior-intention framework was found in a study conducted to determine student's intentions to exhibit behaviors that lead to protecting the environment. De Leeuw, Valois, Ajzen, and Schmid (2015) revealed the TPB was a superb framework on which to base the study and integrated the model with *moral norms*, a close and accurate determining factor of intentions. Results were students' attitudes, descriptive subjective norms, and perceptions of control contributed to (a) predicting intentions to protect the environment, and (b) students' intentions, with perceived control, predicted behaviors (actions) leading to protection of the environment (De Leeuw et al., 2015).

Results founded by Gomes et al. (2017) were opposite of De Leeuw et al. (2015), who reported the TPB predicted intentions, but not actual actions (behavior). De Leeuw et al. noted a premise of the TPB is behavioral, normative, and control beliefs, which are accessible in a person's memory, comprise prevalent contemplations that ultimately direct intentions *and actions*. The researchers advocated assessment of the influence of specific beliefs disclosed essential indications for devising effective behavior-changing interventions (De Leeuw et al., 2015). For this study, the implication of determining employees' specific beliefs that may drive intentions to bully, *and act on the intentions*, may foster designing interventions to change bullying behaviors and minimize mistreatment of coworkers. An important note is Icek Ajzen, founder of the TPB, was a contributing researcher for the study conducted by De Leeuw et al. (2015).

In a similar study about people's intentions and behaviors for protecting the environment, Greaves, Zibarras, and Stride (2013) presented a quantitative study involving 449 participants. The researchers also applied the TPB constructs, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, to test precursor beliefs and behavioral intentions and assess if employees would engage in certain pro-environment behaviors in the workplace (Greaves, Zibarras, & Stride, 2013). Comparatively, Pabian and Vandebosch (2014) presented a study to explain cyberbullying behavior-intention using an integrated model of SEM and the TPB as the framework to examine the relationship between the constructs, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. Results were that the TPB is applicable to the context of cyberbullying and attitude, followed by subjective norm, and represented the strongest predictors of

intention to engage in cyberbullying behavior (Pabian & Vandebosch, 2014). Developing successful intervention programs may mean increasing compassion and understanding for victims of cyberbullying, or alluding to expected regret to reduce cyberbullying. Similarly, results for Greaves et al. (2013) were the TPB constructs allowed for explanation of a variance between 46% and 61% of employees' intentions to engage in pro-environment behaviors (e.g. turn off PC at day's end); and results formed a foundation for developing interventions to intercede the influence of precursor beliefs on employee intentions to engage in unacceptable behaviors (Greaves et al., 2013).

Critics of the TPB admit the theory has been the leading method used to guide health and behavior-related research for many years (Rhodes, 2015; Sniehotta, Presseau, & Araújo-Soares, 2014). Supporters for the TPB commented on criticism regarding the theory's value and continued utility to determine intention and human behavior (Ajzen, 2014; Armitage, 2015). Ajzen (2014) tendered a peer-reviewed commentary, which included support for the TPB and its efficacy. The TPB is not a theory of change in behavior (Ajzen, 2014). Instead, the TPB is a sound foundation to *explain* and *predict* people's behavior and intentions, which practitioners may use as a framework to develop interventions for effective *behavior change* (Ajzen, 2014).

In the field of research for human health and behavior, a need exists to identify and devise theoretical frameworks conducive to the design of interventions for health and well-being (Schwarzer, 2015). Research presented in this study demonstrated the efficacy of the TPB to facilitate interventions and circumvent unhealthy behaviors or intentions (Greaves et al., 2013; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2014). Researchers recommended the TPB

as a benchmark by which future extended theories may derive (Armitage, 2015; Rhodes, 2015), which also demonstrates the theory's utility in driving future research and developing effective interventions to promote health. The following section includes a review of studies that aligned with the TPB.

Studies that Align with the TPB Conceptual Model

Studies published about topics of health-related behaviors indicated support for the efficacy of the TPB as an effective framework to identify behaviors and intentions and design interventions (Donahue, 2017; Holguin, 2016; Skinner, 2017; Wolfe, 2017). Donahue (2017) presented a quantitative study and tested the TBP constructs, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to ascertain individual's intention for organic food consumption. The study also included a test for individual's perceptions, known as *descriptive norms*, which denoted actions performed by most individuals (Donahue, 2017). In a study in which the focus was oral health behaviors of parents for low-income children, Wolfe (2017) used a quantitative study with the TPB constructs as the framework. Skinner (2017) presented a qualitative study to explore sleep behaviors of adults residing in rural poverty areas. The TPB and related constructs were the framework for the study. A qualitative case study by Holguin (2016) about cyberloafing in the workplace, incorporated the TPB constructs to predict individuals' behaviors and intentions to engage in cyberloafing (using company technology for personal use).

Findings from the studies by Donahue, Holguin, Skinner, and Wolfe were consistent and aligned with findings from prior literature presented in this study, which supported the utility of the TPB. Individual attitudes and descriptive norms represented

major predictors of behavior (Donahue, 2017). Participants' behavior to consume organic food was not reliant on the action of other individuals because consumption was preferential (Donahue, 2017); however, descriptive norms predicted individual intentions to consume organic food because opinion of family and friends mattered to individuals (Donahue, 2017). With oral health behaviors of adults, perceived behavior control and subjective norm were the major constructs, which predicted adult intention to engage in healthy oral hygiene behaviors (Wolfe, 2017).

Results indicated subjective norms, external influences such as family and employer, influenced participants' sleep behavior (Skinner, 2017). Findings may help with the design of intervention programs aimed at changing behavior to improve sleep (Skinner, 2017). Normative beliefs, expectations, or social norms of a group, influenced behaviors to obey company policy and avoid engaging in cyberloafing behavior (Holguin, 2016). Subjective norms (external influences like family and employer) represented the strongest influence on individual's behavior to cyberloaf because individuals cared how coworkers and leadership viewed their behavior (Holguin, 2016; Taneja, Fiore, & Fischer, 2015). Identifying the origins of cyberloafing may help with developing strategies and interventions to manage the behavior (Sheikh, Atashgah, & Adibzadegan, 2015).

The TPB represented a valid framework to help identify and predict individuals' intentions to engage in certain health-related behaviors (Taneja et al., 2015). Scholars in the field of human behavior also supported the viability of the TPB (Donahue, 2017; Holguin, 2016; Skinner, 2017; Wolfe, 2017). Findings from this study may support the

TPB framework, which relates to a person's intent to perform a negative behavior, and facilitate the design of intervention programs to reduce bullying and increase employee productivity.

Transition

Section 1 of this study comprised an overview of workplace bullying, the effect on victims, organizations, and bystanders. The review of the literature pertaining to workplace bullying revealed that the business problem may derive from an individual's or organizational culture. Several levels of employee disengagement caused by experiencing bullying at work may result in reduced productivity. Prospective preventive measures to minimize workplace bullying included developing programs and policies, creating awareness for the phenomenon, and changing (shaping) individuals' behavior so they choose not to engage in bullying behaviors. The RM framework and TPB conceptual frameworks may facilitate designing training and intervention programs to minimize workplace bullying, lower the costs incurred for bullying, and increase workers' productivity. This study may build societal awareness of workplace bullying and may provide employees with solutions to prevent acts of mistreatment. Some HR managers lack strategies to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity. This study may affect positive social change by providing a better work environment for employees and contribute to business practice by providing business strategies HR managers may use to minimize workplace bullying and increase productivity.

Section 2 of this study includes detailed information and data regarding (a) participants, (b) specific research method and design, (c) population and sampling, (d)

ethical research criteria for this study, (e) detailed data collection, techniques, and analysis, and (f) qualitative reliability and validity. Section 3 includes findings for this study. The section also includes (a) coded themes gathered from interviews, (b) implications for social change, (c) recommendations for action and further research, and (d) a concluding statement.

Section 2: The Project

The following section is an overview of the project for this study. Section 2 comprises (a) details of the researcher's role, (b) justification for the number of participants, (c) justification for the specific research method and design, (d) detailed steps taken to protect participants' rights, (e) data collection process and instruments for data collection, (f) description of data analysis, and (g) qualitative reliability and validity methods to ensure triangulation and data saturation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, single-case study was to explore successful strategies used by HR managers to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity. This study comprised one, small-to-medium-sized organization, and a population of seven HR managers and executives working in Central Florida. Workplace bullying has evolved into a global phenomenon, which results in dire consequences for individuals, organizations, and society. When employees experience bullying in the workplace, the effects go far beyond emotional stress or post-traumatic stress disorder for the employees; the problem affects families and society as well. Results from this study may contribute to social change by building people's awareness and educating people about workplace bullying. This study may also contribute to social change by reducing the number of bullied victims who need counseling for low self-esteem and by reducing healthcare costs.

Role of the Researcher

The role of a researcher consists of various tasks, such as conducting and managing the research (Ion, Stîngu, & Marin, 2018) and functioning as the main instrument (Ospina, Esteve, & Lee, 2018; Yin, 2016). Researchers are outsiders to an organization (Cui, 2015). Fusch, Fusch, and Ness (2017) explained that researchers, who are external to an organization, can ensure objective research by diminishing bias using data collection and triangulation. As the researcher, I was an outsider to the organization where data collection took place for this study. Being an outsider allowed for objective and unbiased research and analysis (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2017). An unbiased viewpoint is important when synthesizing data to enhance the credibility of the study (Finfgeld-Connett, 2018).

The collection and synthesis of data from participants involved the use of open-ended interview questions. The interaction involved with interviewing participants is a form of appreciative action research (McKeown et al., 2016). Appreciative action research involves maintaining ethics, and the process evolves through participation of the researcher and participants, who share in the collection of data (McKeown et al., 2016). Prior to conducting interviews, a researcher should provide participants with details regarding the purpose of the study, and a consent form to show participants' approval to participate (Yin, 2018). Once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) gave approval for this study, I explained the purpose of this study and provided a consent form to participants prior to conducting interviews. The study included member checking to mitigate bias, avoid the viewing of data through a personal lens, and ensure the accuracy and

trustworthiness of data and findings (Fusch et al., 2017). The study also included transcript review, which entailed providing a copy of transcripts containing paraphrased responses to participants to confirm the accuracy of data collected.

Researchers should relate to participants in a professional and respectful manner (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). Adashi, Walters, and Menikoff (2018) reported that researchers should adhere to ethical principles for treating people with respect, as mandated in the Belmont Report. I collected data in a responsible and ethical manner, treated participants in a respectful manner, kept the identity of participants and the organization secured in a locked cabinet, and ensured that I was the only person with access to word processing files and field notes for the study.

The Belmont Report comprises a group of principles, fundamental for human subjects used in research (Hallowell, 2018). The report includes three ethical principles researchers should follow (a) justice, (b) respect for persons, and (c) beneficence (Metcalf, 2016; Miracle, 2016). The purpose of the Belmont Report is to provide researchers with information to ensure the protection of classes of people considered as vulnerable, or possessing limited capacity, such as minor children, prisoners, or people with mental incapacity (McLaughlin & Alfaro-Velcamp, 2015).

The role of the researcher also involves comparing and synthesizing participant responses with prior research data and analysis. The study comprised data collected from organization documents, physical artifacts, and participants during semistructured interviews. Interviewing participants provided data and potential strategies leaders can use to minimize workplace bullying and increase productivity.

Researchers are responsible for establishing and maintaining an interview protocol before, during, and after the interview sessions (Heydon & Powell, 2018). Researchers should design an interview protocol to ensure quality results (Yeong, Ismail, Ismail, & Hamzah, 2018). The interview protocol is a document that contains steps to conduct interviews with participants in an organized manner (Yeong et al., 2018). In addition to the interview questions, the interview protocol should include (a) a draft of what researchers will say before starting the interview, (b) what to say at the end of the interview, (c) a reminder to obtain participants' informed consent, and (d) a reminder of the data to collect during the interview (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The interview protocol for this study is in Appendix A.

Participants

I spoke with organization leaders who work for small-to-medium-sized organizations, in Central Florida. While attending monthly professional meetings, such as local Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) chapter meetings, I obtained organization leaders' contact information through professional contacts and introduced myself to the organization leaders. I explained the study and inquired about obtaining verbal approval to include the organizations in the study. The leader who gave verbal approval received a letter of cooperation to sign and return. The IRB application included the letter of cooperation. Once the Walden University IRB granted approval for the study, I obtained HR managers' and executives' contact information from the organization leader. The HR managers and executives received letters of invitation by email to

participate, an informed consent form, and email notifications the interview process would occur after receipt of the consent form.

Brown and Danaher (2019) posited the importance for researchers to establish trust, rapport, and a working relationship with participants. Providing appropriate details prior to conducting interviews (Santiago-Delefosse, Gavin, Bruchez, Roux, & Stephen, 2016) may facilitate building trust. Establishing trust and a working relationship may help participants relax during the interview process and minimize anxiety to facilitate honest responses to interview questions (Yin, 2014). Prior to conducting interviews, and to establish trust and a working relationship with participants, researchers should (a) explain the purpose and scope of the study; (b) explain the research and interview questions; (c) explain the role of participants; (d) explain the researcher's role; (e) reassure participants that data collected will remain confidential; and (f) provide a consent form for participants to give approval and agreement to participate (King, Horrocks, & Brooks, 2018).

The sampling method for the study included a purposeful sampling strategy for data collection. Purposeful sampling allows for increased reliability and credibility of the sample size (Palinkas et al., 2015). Benoot, Hannes, and Bilsen (2016) posited that one benefit of purposeful sampling, although designed prior to the start of research, is that researchers may adjust the sample as the case study progresses. Purposeful sampling also allows for the selection of rich information (Palinkas et al., 2015), which may convince readers that the research is credible and may allow readers of the study to learn about effective strategies used by HR managers to reduce workplace bullying.

The sample size for the study consisted of seven participants, from one, small-to-medium-sized organization. To gather enough data needed to reach saturation once data redundancy occurred (Fusch and Ness, 2015), the sample size of seven participants was appropriate for the study. The population for the study comprised HR managers and executives from one, small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida, who shared strategies used to minimize bullying in the workplace. The criteria to participate in the study were HR personnel (a) must hold a manager-level or executive position; (b) have a minimum of five years HR experience and the authority to make decisions regarding employee well-being; (c) have prior knowledge implementing workplace bullying strategies; and (d) were available to participate in a 45-60-minute interview.

Face-to-face interviews took place on-site at the business location, during participants' free period, in a conference room to maintain privacy. To maintain ethical protection of participants, there are measures to ensure the anonymity of each participant and the organization. Grosseohme and Lipstein (2016) advised not to use participants' names and ensure participants' privacy. The study did not include HR managers' or executives' names to ensure the anonymity and privacy of each participant. Data coding consisted of generic participant names, P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P7. Transcripts containing participant responses and field notes from member checking remain secure in a locked cabinet to protect the privacy and rights of participants with planned destruction after five years using a customized, secure document shredding service. Researchers often use member checking or transcript review for studies to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of data and findings (Thomas, 2017). Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and

Walter (2016) agreed transcript review and member checking allows researchers to ensure trustworthiness and accuracy of data collected *and* to also enhance the rigor of a study.

A quality of the population selected for the study is the heterogeneous nature of the participants (HR managers and executives). The heterogeneous characteristic of the population means there may be variability among the participants (Card, 2015) selected for the study. The variability may include differences in participants' experiences and views, which I captured as part of the data collection process to enrich results.

Research Method and Design

The following section includes a description of the research method and design, and the reasons for selecting a qualitative research method and single-case study design. The section includes reasons why I did not select quantitative and mixed methods for the study. This section also included justification why the qualitative, single-case study are the appropriate method and design, which aligned with the business problem of workplace bullying.

Research Method

The method selected for this study is qualitative research. Santiago-Delefosse et al. (2016) advised to choose a research method that connects with and addresses the research question. Leer-Salvesen (2018) advocated qualitative data are good sources to address the research question. Qualitative research is more appropriate than a mixed methods or quantitative approach for this study because qualitative research is the appropriate method to enhance leaders' knowledge (Ospina et al., 2018) of workplace

bullying. Yin (2014) noted that an essential element of qualitative research, and strength, is the flexibility gained from using the method. Researchers can adapt new and developing series of open-ended questions when working with participants (Yin, 2014). In addition, qualitative research is more appropriate for this study because the method involves an *exploratory* approach. An exploratory approach includes a method of inquiry to uncover the significance and understanding of the phenomenon (Ponelis, 2015). The qualitative method allows researchers to answer questions involving what causes a phenomenon, how a phenomenon developed, and why a phenomenon exists (Ponelis, 2015). An objective of this qualitative research study is credibility, not the capability to generalize based on empirical data, which is a goal of quantitative research (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015).

Results of qualitative research may not be applicable to larger populations because researchers do not test for statistical meaning or generalizations (Rosenthal, 2016). In contrast, quantitative results may apply to larger populations based on statistical generalization (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Regardless of this limitation, the qualitative method allows researchers to explore and develop a thorough understanding of a phenomenon that may also enrich (Yin, 2014) organization leaders' knowledge of the phenomenon. In addition, qualitative research is flexible because the researcher may adjust the process for changes or challenges with participants or the context as the study progresses (Levitt et al., 2018).

I did not select quantitative research for this study because the quantitative method involved identifying relationships among variables, quantifying data, and

generalizing results (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015), which was not conducive to a qualitative research. Typically, quantitative studies include dissimilar types of participants and the researcher generalizes outside of those already contained in the study (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Using this generalization, researchers may define the goal of quantitative research as an empirical generalization to many (Antwi & Hamza, 2015), which is also not conducive to this qualitative study. Conversely, because qualitative research involves sampling to explore participants' knowledge and interpret data collected, the sample is not representative of the entire population and does not result in generalizations from study findings (Twining, Heller, Nussbaum, & Tsai, 2017).

I did not select the mixed methods approach for this study because this method consisted of several phases of analysis that involved qualitative and quantitative techniques of exploration to support research. The mixed methods approach includes analyzing data among variables to quantify observations and generalize statistical results (David, Hitchcock, Ragan, Brooks, & Starkey, 2016), which was not appropriate for the study. In addition, qualitative results may contradict quantitative results and require additional research with the mixed methods approach (David et al., 2016). The qualitative approach may lead to results to answer questions involving *what* causes bullying in the workplace to occur, which was more appropriate for the study.

Research Design

The research design selected for this study was a single-case study design. The single-case study design consisted of seven participants from one, small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida. Yin (2014) advised that the scope of a case study and

inquiry encompasses (a) design logic, (b) techniques for collecting data, (c) data analysis approaches that are specific in nature, and (d) involves an in-depth investigation of a phenomenon within a context.

The single-case study design was appropriate for this study because this design allows researchers to explore and answer how and why a phenomenon exists in a specific context (Yin, 2018). The single-case study design allows researchers to explore multiple sources to understand and explain the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). I also selected the single-case study design for this study because this approach was more appropriate for data collection using multiple sources of evidence. The case study design allows a researcher to incorporate a complete variation of evidence derived from documentation, artifacts, interviews, archival records, direct observations, and participant-observation (Yin, 2018). This collection of data using various sources may help to substantiate and strengthen evidence (Carolan, Forbat, & Smith, 2016) of strategies used to minimize workplace bullying and expand comprehension of the case.

The qualitative method includes other research designs that researchers may use to collect evidence. These designs include phenomenology ethnography, and narrative inquiry. Phenomenology ethnography, and narrative inquiry were not the designs for the study. Using phenomenology research design, researchers focus on understanding the lived experiences of participants by exploring a phenomenon (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016). Phenomenology is comparable to the design for the study to explore a phenomenon, workplace bullying, but there is a distinct difference for this study. The focus of this study was not the individual lived experiences of participants who endured

bullying in the workplace. The focus was on a single case of strategies used by leaders and HR managers to minimize workplace bullying, and the development of conclusions and findings. In addition, because the focus of phenomenology is only on capturing the lived experiences of participants, researchers are not able to use multiple sources of evidence to corroborate the case (Berglund, 2015).

Ethnography qualitative research design involves the examination of common beliefs or behaviors, among a group of people or within a culture, which involves the researcher's participation as an observer (Rashid, Caine, & Goetz, 2015). Ethnography was not an appropriate source of data collection for the study because corroboration of evidence and understanding of the case derived from the researcher interacting directly with case study participants and the culture (Woermann, 2018). I did not participate as an observer for this study. The narrative inquiry design was also not an appropriate source to gather evidence for this study because the design does not entail determining themes and may involve gathering data from biographies or stories about the lived experiences of participants (Haydon et al., 2018).

Fugard and Potts (2015) found that a participant pool of at least six is valid and sufficient to ensure data saturation. Interviewing at least six participants allows for identification of steady patterns for data collected once themes became redundant (Fugard & Potts, 2015). To ensure data saturation for the study, interviews consisted of seven participants within one, small-to-medium-sized organization.

Population and Sampling

This study included a purposeful sampling strategy for data collection. Purposeful sampling comprises planning before the research begins and potential adjustments by the researcher throughout the process (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016). A purposeful sample consists of individuals selected because they may provide rich information to answer the research question (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). To begin the purposeful sampling process, while attending monthly professional meetings, such as local SHRM chapter meetings, I obtained organization leaders' contact information through professional contacts, introduced myself to organization leaders, explained the study, criteria for participants, and obtained one leader's verbal approval to include the organization in the study. The organization leader received and signed a letter of cooperation by email. Once the IRB gave approval to conduct the study, the organization leader provided a list of nine HR managers and executives who met the specific criteria for qualified participants. To qualify, participants had to meet the following criteria (a) hold the role of a HR manager or above; (b) have a minimum of five years HR experience and have the authority to make decisions concerning employees' well-being; (c) have prior knowledge implementing workplace strategies; and (d) were available to participate in a 45-60-minute interview. HR managers and executives who met all criteria received letters of invitation by email to participate and an informed consent form.

The sample size for this qualitative, single-case study comprised interviewing seven HR managers and executives from one, small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida, who shared their success with minimizing workplace bullying. Roy,

Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, and LaRossa (2015) posited three to five cases was sufficient to reach data saturation. Purposeful sampling will allow for increased reliability of the sample size (Yin, 2014). The qualitative, single-case study involves a definitive group of participants and interview processes (Yin, 2014). A purposeful sample size selection comprised seven participants who met the specific criteria to participate in this study, with experience identifying and reducing workplace bullying.

The study comprised the use of multiple sources of evidence including interviews, review of HR documents and exploration of physical artifacts, such as procedures and policies. An organization leader granted access to review HR documents, policies and procedures, in advance, for use during interviews and data triangulation. The information obtained from the documents and artifacts enhanced the quality and consistency of data for the study (Yin, 2014). The use of multiple sources of evidence allowed for data triangulation (Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, & Gonzalez, 2018) for the study.

Accomplishing data triangulation enabled validation of the same phenomenon (Yin, 2018) of workplace bullying occurring within a small-to-medium-sized organization; and verification that more than one source of evidence supported events and facts of the case study (Yin, 2018). Triangulation increases confidence in the data and validity of data collection results (Archibald, 2015) and ensures rigor in the qualitative research (Moon, 2019). Data triangulation also ensured credibility of the data (Hussein, 2015) because multiple sources of data and evidence allowed for multiple analyses and explanations of the phenomenon occurring (Morgan, Pullon, Macdonald, McKinlay, & Gray, 2017) within the small-to-medium-sized organization.

The objective of qualitative research is to ascertain the in-depth understanding of lived experiences in a context (Yin, 2014). For this study, interviews comprised participants who met specific criteria and had considerable experience minimizing the phenomenon of workplace bullying within the organization. Participants had to meet the criteria of holding a manager level or above position, having a minimum of five years HR experience, authority to make decisions regarding employees' well-being, and availability to participate in a 45-60-minute recorded interview.

Permission from an authorized organization leader to conduct the study occurred prior to contacting participants by requesting the leader sign a letter of cooperation. The IRB application included the signed letter of cooperation. Face-to-face interviews took place on-site, during participants' free period, at the business location in a conference room to maintain privacy. Data collection occurred from the seven participants using open-ended interview questions posed during semistructured interviews. Comparison of data included synthesis of participant responses with prior research to determine results.

Ethical Research

Researchers are responsible for ensuring the protection of participants and conducting ethical research (Ludvigsson et al., 2015). The IRB ensured appropriate data collection and that participants were treated in an ethical manner (Ferreira, Buttell, & Ferreira, 2015). Before collecting data, I obtained approval from the IRB. To meet Walden and IRB ethical research guidelines, I completed the National Institute of Health training course, Protecting Human Research Participants, and received a certificate confirming completion of the course.

Prior to interviews, participants received an invitation to participate in the study and provided their informed consent (Yin, 2018). To complete the informed consent process, I (a) met with participants to initiate the process, (b) explained the study, (c) asked participants if they were willing to participate in the study, (d) emailed an invitation and informed consent form for their participation and (e) obtained signatures on the informed consent forms. Participants were free to withdraw from the study during any phase (Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, & Khodyakov, 2015). Participants could email or call me to withdraw from the study without penalty.

Competent researchers are adept at interacting with participants in a civil manner and respecting cultural differences (Arriaza, Nedjat-Haiem, Lee, & Martin, 2015). Interaction with participants is a method of appreciative action research, which involves behaving in an ethical manner and participants and researchers working together to share and collect information during interviews (James, Blomberg, Liljekvist, & Kihlgren, 2015). I treated participants in a respectful and courteous manner and ensured integrity of data collected and anonymity of participants' identities at all time. Transcripts and field notes containing interview data remain locked in a cabinet to protect the privacy and rights of the organization and participants with planned destruction after five years using a customized, secure document shredding service. Securing electronic data collected using a Livescribe smartpen included password protecting files on a computer, keeping the Livescribe smartpen stored in a locked cabinet, and planned data destruction after five years by deleting all files; including emptying the recycle bin. To ensure participants' privacy, the study did not contain names of individual participants or the organization.

Data coding consisted of generic participant identifiers, such as P1, P2, and P3. Using pseudonyms helped ensure organization and participant privacy (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016; Ludvigsson et al., 2015).

Data Collection Instruments

Clark and Vealé (2018) and Denny and Weckesser (2019) noted that researchers are the primary data collection instrument. Therefore, as the researcher for this study, I was the primary data collection instrument. The interview process is a form of appreciative action research, which involves the researcher and participants collaborating to collect data (Sharp, Dewar, Barrie, & Meyer, 2017). Data collection for this study began with conducting semistructured interviews with participants. O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozović, and Sinha (2016) advised semistructured interviews allow researchers to collect data for a qualitative study in a discreet and candid manner. Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson and Kangasniemi (2016) found that semistructured interviews allow for flexibility and versatility in collecting data, enable the mutual exchange of information between researcher and participants, and allow the researcher to devise supplemental questions depending on participant responses. Brown and Danaher (2019) argued that the level at which semistructured interviews become effective depends on the established trust and connection between participants and the researcher. Semistructured interviews, open-ended interview questions, documentation, and physical artifacts served as instruments of data collection for this study.

A strong point of case study data collection is that researchers have a chance to use multiple dissimilar sources of evidence (Yin, 2018) to address the research question.

The use of multiple sources then enables the researcher to focus on a broad range of behavioral problems (Yin, 2014). The study included multiple sources of evidence to collect data regarding strategies HR managers and executives used to reduce workplace bullying. Sources of evidence included a single-case design comprising interviews with seven participants from a small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida; and reviewing HR and risk management documents, procedures, and policies.

The information collected from documents, policies, and procedures facilitated triangulation with interview data and analysis to develop themes and thorough, credible results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Morse, 2015). Information for use in the analysis process of the study included documents detailing training protocol and policies and procedures for managing reported incidents of bullying. The use of multiple data collection sources for the study facilitated exploring strategies to prevent bullying. Once the IRB gave approval to collect data, the organization leader provided a list of nine participants who met the specific criteria for qualified HR managers and above, and approved access to HR documents, policies, and procedures.

In addition to allowing the researcher to concentrate on a broad range of behavioral problems (Yin, 2014), using multiple sources of evidence also allows the researcher to achieve data triangulation (Yin, 2018). Achieving data triangulation for the study enabled validation of the same phenomenon (Yin, 2014) of workplace bullying that occurs within a small-to-medium-sized organization; and verification that more than one source of evidence supports events and facts of the case study (Yin, 2014). Data triangulation also ensured data reliability and validity for the study because multiple

sources of data and evidence allowed for multiple analysis of the identical phenomenon occurring (Hussein, 2015) within the small-to-medium-sized organization.

Member checking used in research studies helps to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of data collection instruments and enrich research findings (Candela, 2019). Another term for member checking is member validation (Harvey, 2015). Member checking also enhances the reliability and credibility of data collection (Connelly, 2016; Petrova, Dewing, & Camilleri, 2016). To enhance the reliability and validity of data collected during interviews for this study, the process included using member checking, which involved asking participants during another conversation to confirm interpretation of the data collected and advise of any discrepancies or missing data (Harvey, 2015). To ensure the trustworthiness and accuracy of data collected, this study also included participant transcript review.

Using Livescribe dot paper and a smartpen recorder facilitated the capture of interviews and ensured accurate paraphrasing of participant responses for member checking. The Livescribe dot paper is encoded with a unique pattern of tiny microdots, which synchronized with the infrared camera in the Livescribe smartpen, allowing the capture of written words and the location of words on the paper. Controls and tags printed on Livescribe dot paper allow communication between the smartpen with the Livescribe mobile application for seamless transfer of data to a computer. I used the smartpen to take field notes on the dot paper to document participants' nonverbal responses during interviews. Field notes allow researchers to document rich descriptions of the context and encounters with participants (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018).

The interview protocol (see Appendix A) included interview questions that aligned with the research question and a framework to conduct interviews (Castillo-Montoya, 2016) for this study. The interview protocol contained a list of what the researcher should say before, during, and at the end of the interview to conduct an inquiry-driven conversation with participants (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The use of an interview protocol also serves as a guide of procedures that ensure researchers obtain information from participants to answer the research question (Yeong et al., 2018).

Data Collection Technique

Participants for this study comprised seven HR managers and executives who worked for a small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida. I attended monthly professional meetings, such as local SHRM chapter meetings, obtained organization leaders' contact information through professional contacts, introduced myself to organization leaders, explained the study, and obtained verbal approval from one leader to interview HR managers and above. Twenty-four hours after the meeting, the organization leader who gave approval received an email containing a letter of cooperation to sign and return by email. The IRB application included the letter of cooperation. After the Walden University IRB granted approval for the study, the organization leader received a second email requesting the names and contact information for at least six HR managers and above who met the requirements to participate in the study. The email included a request for access to copies of training material, policies, and procedures for managing bullying, and to reserve a private room on the premises of the business to hold interviews. The organization leader provided a list

comprising nine HR managers and executives for participation in this study. After receipt of participant information, each HR manager and executive received an email containing a letter of invitation to participate in the study. The letter of invitation included the criteria for HR managers and above to determine if they qualified to participate. To participate in the study, HR personnel had to (a) hold a manager-level or above position; (b) have a minimum of five years HR experience and authority to make decisions regarding employees' well-being; (c) have prior knowledge implementing workplace strategies; and (d) availability to participate in a 45-60-minute interview. The email invitation included directions to complete and return an attached consent form and information advising scheduled interviews would commence after receipt of the consent form. After receiving signed consent forms and prior to interviews, I contacted participants to confirm each one met all requirements to participate.

Participant availability determined the scheduling of interviews. Interviews occurred onsite at the organization location, during participants' free period, in a private room. I employed strategies to ensure participants felt comfortable during the interviews. Conducting interviews on the premises of the organization created a sense of familiarity for the surroundings and allowed each participant to feel comfortable and safe. If meeting on the premises of the organization was not appropriate, or a participant was not comfortable meeting on the premises, I made alternative arrangements to conduct the interview, in private, at another location. Prior to starting the interviews, I advised participants that if they became uncomfortable with a question, they could ask to exclude the question. Participants were also free to stop the interview process at any time,

including during the member checking and transcript review phases. Exhibiting a calm demeanor and engaging in a professional and transparent manner are also strategies I employed to facilitate participants' comfort level. These strategies also helped achieve and maintain participants' trust during and after the interviews. Incentives were not part of this study and HR managers and executives did not receive incentives for volunteering to participate in the interviews.

Collection of data from participants consisted of using nine open-ended interview questions posed during face-to-face interviews to answer the research question: What strategies do HR managers use to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity? Face-to-face interviews with participants occurred in a private room located on the premises of the organization and captured using Livescribe Dot Paper and a Livescribe Smartpen recording device. The backup recording device was a Sony IC Recorder.

Precise capture of data is fundamental for research studies. Faulds et al. (2016) advised research studies should consist of efficient, vigorous methods to ensure precise data collection, management, and analysis. The Livescribe Smartpen and dot paper was the recording system selected because of the technological advantages. An individual can record conversations on the Livescribe Smartpen, or use the smartpen to take notes on the dot paper and automatically record conversations. Written words synchronize automatically with spoken words as the user captures conversations on the dot paper; and users can automatically replay audio recorded on the pen by tapping anywhere on the dot

paper. I documented participants' nonverbal responses and took field notes during interviews using the smartpen and dot paper.

I accomplished transfer and organization of notes and audio recordings by downloading to a computer using the Livescribe Echo desktop software. Every word was captured, digitally, using the Livescribe Smartpen and dot paper. Harari et al. (2016) advocated using smartphones as the method for accurate data collection and storage. Zacharia, Lazaridou, and Avraamidou (2016) agreed the use of mobile devices in research allowed for instant data collection, audio, and video recording. Harari et al. cautioned data security was important for collecting, storing, and sharing data using smartphone devices. The use of smartphone devices requires researchers to ensure data uploads through a secure server when connected to WiFi to transfer data using encryption (Harari et al., 2016). A smartphone device was not selected for this study to collect data because transfer of data on the device would occur using an external service provider's server, while connected to WiFi. The service provider's server is protected using secure-sockets layer encryption, but the system is not within my control and potentially vulnerable to attack by unauthorized individuals.

The backup Sony recorder does not include the capability to capture every word electronically in writing during the interview, or download and transfer audio to a computer for easy access and organizing. Transcribing recorded conversations from the Sony recorder comprised replaying recorded audio and manually typing the content into a word processing application. Missed words required using the rewind and fast-forward function on the recorder to review audio and ensure the capture of all data. The expected

total interview time for the study was approximately 10 hours. The Livescribe Smartpen contained 2GB of storage, which equaled approximately 200 hours of recording time. The maximum high-quality recording time for the Sony recorder was approximately 30 hours. Regardless of the limitations, the Sony recorder was an acceptable backup recording device for purposes of collecting data during face-to-face interviews.

A qualitative strategy of data collection incorporates characteristics that are relevant to the research question (Yin, 2014). The interview questions provided support for successful results to reduce workplace bullying. The organization leader who approved conducting interviews on the premises provided contact information for nine HR managers and executives to participate in this study. Final participants consisted of seven HR managers and executives who shared their success with minimizing bullying in the workplace. Results of the interviews included support for the need to resolve the specific business problem within organizations. Data collection also comprised exploring organization risk management and HR documents, training protocols, policies, and procedures.

There are advantages and disadvantages of using the interview process for data collection. One advantage of face-to-face interviews is researchers can observe nonverbal communications from interviewees (Heath, Williamson, Williams, and Harcourt, 2018) such as facial expressions and body language. Nonverbal reactions may indicate participants' comfort or discomfort during interviews and capturing their reactions on Livescribe dot paper for field notes can enriched findings. Heath et al. (2018) posited another advantage of face-to-face interviews was researchers can gauge changes in the

atmosphere during the interview to make immediate adjustments to the interview structure. Face-to-face interviews can also facilitate the prevention of misunderstandings between participants and the researcher (Hilgert, Kroh, & Richter, 2016). One disadvantage of interviews is researchers may influence participant responses (Oates, 2015; West & Blom, 2017), which may invalidate data and results. Face-to-face interviews also require participant and researcher use of personal time and incurring transcription and travel costs (Hogan, Romaniuk, & Faulkner, 2016).

Member checking involves asking participants to confirm the accuracy of their paraphrased responses (Harvey, 2015). Transcript review entails re-engaging with participants through their review of interview transcripts (Thomas, 2017). These two paradigms of data validation include confirming, modifying, and verifying data collected to help ensure the credibility of study results (Birt et al., 2016). For this study, some participants were unable to meet for a member checking follow-up interview due to scheduling conflicts. Therefore, this study included member checking of the data interpretation during follow up interviews *and* a few participants' review of transcripts to validate their responses and help ensure dependability and credibility for this qualitative study.

Member checking interviews involved a follow up meeting with some participants to confirm interpretation of the data collected (Thomas, 2017). Transcript review involved providing a printed copy of a synthesis of the data collected to other participants for them to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations (Thomas, 2017). Transcript review can aid in reassuring participants that they had some level of control over the data

collected (Lancaster, 2017; Petrova et al., 2016). Allowing transcript review and initiating member checking interviews can help maintain trust between the researcher and participants because these contributors to data collection will have reassurance that recorded and published data had their prior approval (Birt et al., 2016). Scheduling of member checking follow-up interviews, and some participants' receipt of transcripts by email for review, occurred within seven days of interviews. The email included a request for participants to verify the accuracy of data collected. After publication of the study, participants will receive a summary of the results to show appreciation for their participation. This study did not include a pilot study after IRB approval because of the flexibility of the qualitative research method and case study interview technique (Kim, Sefcik, & Bradway, 2017; Yin, 2014), which permitted adaptation of new and developing open-ended questions and clarification of participant responses as the interviews progressed (Sengel, 2016; Yin, 2014).

Data Organization Technique

Data coding comprised the use of generic names, such as P1, P2, and P3, and so forth. This technique helped ensure proper organization of data and participant privacy (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016; Ludvigsson et al., 2015). Documentation and organization of collected data occurred using a secure case study database. The use of a case study database increases data reliability (Yin, 2014). Setup of the case study database comprised creating electronic research folders for the organization and subfolders for each participant on a computer Microsoft Windows C: drive. Data organization also consisted of secured folders and files using a password to protect the

data and ensure data reliability. After collecting data from participants using a smartpen recording device, I downloaded field notes and audio recordings to a computer Windows C: drive using the Livescribe mobile application to organize participants' responses in secure folders on the computer C: drive. The Microsoft Windows C: drive facilitated creating a case study database within a file explorer, consisting of password protected folders. The C: drive is accessible and easy to use on a computer and I incurred no costs to use the Microsoft Windows file explorer.

Researchers may use a paper journal to record additional thoughts, participants' experiences, or decisions reached during an interview to enrich transparency of data collected (Berger, 2015; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). To complement data collection during interviews, I used Livescribe dot paper to document notes about participants' comments, additional thoughts about the interviews, and participants' demeanor during the interviews. I organized copies of the training protocol, policies, procedures, interview transcripts, and case study notes, and locked the documents in a cabinet; which will remain secured for 5 years. The smartpen and computer also remain secure in the locked cabinet, with planned shredding and disposal of all printed data in 5 years using a customized, secure document shredding service; including deletion of all files from the smartpen and Windows C: drive, and emptying the recycle bin on the C: drive to ensure removal of all data.

Data Analysis

The study comprised the use of multiple sources of evidence to accomplish data triangulation (Carolan et al., 2016), which included interviews and exploration of HR and

risk management documents and physical artifacts, such as policies and procedures. Fusch, Fusch, and Ness (2018) mentioned four types of triangulation compatible for case study design (a) method triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) data source triangulation. The appropriate triangulation for this study was method triangulation (also called within-method triangulation) because the technique involved collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources (Fusch et al., 2018). Joslin and Müller (2016) posited researchers used a minimum of two data collection techniques to guarantee within-method triangulation. For this study, data collection originated from interviews and exploring HR and risk management documents, policies, procedures, and training protocol. After IRB approval, the organization leader granted access to training protocol, policies, and procedures for managing bullying. Lee, Hoti, Hughes, and Emmerton (2017) explained that within-method triangulation is a useful technique to facilitate a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. Farquhar and Michels (2016) emphasized that within-method triangulation ensured the credibility of data collected. The information collected from interviews, training protocol, policies, and procedures aided in answering the research question, developing themes, and conducting data analysis for exhaustive, reliable results of strategies used to minimize bullying in the workplace.

Data analysis was consistent with the interview questions to ascertain strategies used by HR managers and executives to minimize workplace bullying. Case study participants responded to interview questions relevant to how they identified deliberate or planned behavior. Based on the behavior, HR managers may be able to understand how

to change the behavior of a workplace bully and devise appropriate strategies to alter the conduct. Merriam and Grenier (2019) advised researchers use the research question, literature review, sample selection, and data collection to conduct data analysis. For this study, data analysis consisted of a logical and sequential assessment of each interview question and data collection results. Face-to-face interviews, with seven HR managers and executives, comprised using a Livescribe recording device to capture data. Member checking and participant transcript review helped confirm the paraphrasing of data collected (Lancaster, 2017).

The next step in the process involved coding the data and narrative derived from the interviews. Codes tell the story of the interviews and after establishing a structured code, themes were determined. I transcribed interviews and developed codes based on repeated instances of responses. This method of data transcription helped identify codes precisely for the wide range of circumstances and participant responses (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019). Codes consisted of synonyms identified based on patterns found in participants' statements from their responses and using the codes to determine themes for those responses (Rosenthal, 2016; Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). NVivo is data analysis software used to organize and analyze qualitative data (Rosenthal, 2016), determine codes and themes, and reduce researcher bias (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019). This study included the use of *NVivo 11 for Windows* query tool to identify themes and consistent patterns in participant responses.

Qualitative evidence synthesis (QES) involves integrating multiple sources of evidence to increase confidence in findings and present findings in a robust manner. The

QES process is used to reinterpret findings from the original work of researchers (Hannes, Petry, & Heyvaert, 2017) through the review and integration of findings into an informative report (Houghton et al., 2017). The use of NVivo helped achieve QES for this study because of the software versatility and functionality, such as the compatibility with multiple research designs and methods, and capability to collect and import text, images, audio, and video recordings (Zamawe, 2015). Alternative software to accomplish QES are available, such as ATLAS.ti, but NVivo allows users to perform functions like maintaining an accurate record of choices made, color code data, and the option to use a query function to search findings in a robust manner (Houghton et al., 2017). The capability to query findings in a rigorous and structured manner using NVivo enhanced the reliability of the data review (Houghton et al., 2017).

NVivo and ATLAS.ti both result in the display of data-code relationships. However, ATLAS.ti displays relationships as *network views*. The preference was for NVivo *comparison table* display of data-code relationships. Paulus, Woods, Atkins, and Macklin (2017) noted NVivo and ATLAS.ti capability for program output. The researchers confirmed NVivo software calculated case management output codes for comparison at a faster rate than ATLAS.ti (Paulus, Woods, Atkins, & Macklin, 2017). NVivo also included the capability to perform data extraction for easy importing and coding (Paulus et al., 2017). Lensges, Hollensbe, and Masterson (2016) maintained data analysis and write-up of findings are crucial steps for completing a study. I synthesized data derived from interviews, HR and risk management documents, policies and procedures to identify themes using NVivo. The final step involved correlating the

themes with the literature, TPB and RM conceptual frameworks, and recent studies to verify findings.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

The use of a chain of evidence maintains reliability of data and narratives (Yin, 2014). This chain of evidence for case study research consists of (a) case study questions, (b) case study protocol to link interview questions to the business problem, (c) using citations to support sources of evidence stored in the case study database, (d) using a case study database, and (e) composing the case study findings and report (Yin, 2014). I selected the case study design for this study because the approach was more appropriate for data collection using multiple sources of evidence.

The case study design allows a researcher to incorporate a complete variation of evidence derived from documentation, artifacts, interviews, and archival records (Yin, 2018). The collection of data using multiple sources helped substantiate and strengthen evidence and results from data that was dependable and trustworthy (Yin, 2014) for the study. This study included member checking and participant transcript review after interviews to help confirm accurate data collection (Lancaster, 2017). I maintained and strengthened validity for the study using pattern matching logic. Using a single-case design allowed for the comparison of experiential and expected patterns from interview questions (Yin, 2014). When the two patterns overlapped, the result was a stronger dependability for the case study (Yin, 2014).

Validity

To maintain qualitative research validity, literal replication of a study is critical (Yin, 2014). The single-case design for this study comprised one case depicting transparency in transferability to qualify for literal replications in a different context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Triangulation of multiple sources is a strategy to test data validity (Hussein, 2015). After collecting and analyzing data, I composed a case report to indicate the degree of the case replication and explained why the case had certain predicted or contrasting results.

Results of the interviews for the study provided support for the need to resolve the specific problem of bullying within organizations. Member checking and transcript review used in research studies help enhance accuracy, credibility, trustworthiness of data collection, and enrich research findings (Birt et al., 2016; Lancaster, 2017). Therefore, this study included member checking and transcript review. After publication of the study, distribution of a summary of the results will go to participants to show appreciation for their participation.

The study comprised the use of multiple sources of evidence for data credibility. Using multiple sources of evidence for a study achieves data triangulation (Abdalla et al., 2018). Accomplishing data triangulation for the study allowed validation of the same phenomenon of workplace bullying that occurred within the small-to-medium-sized organization, and verification that more than one source of evidence supported events and facts of the case study (Yin, 2014). Triangulation increases confidence in the data and validity of data collection results (Archibald, 2015). Data triangulation also ensured

credibility of the data because multiple sources of data and evidence allowed for multiple analysis of the identical phenomenon occurring (Hussein, 2015) within the small-to-medium-sized organization.

Transferability occurs when findings from a research study are transferrable or replicable for a future study (Connelly, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). One limitation was that the study only consisted of HR managers and executives from one, small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida. As a result, findings did not apply to other organizations in Central Florida, the United States, or organizations in other countries. Additionally, findings did not transfer or replicate for future studies or a different context, nor preserved themes from the original study (Smith, 2018), because of this limitation.

Researchers of qualitative studies may use a detailed audit trail to confirm the accuracy of data collected (Hadi & José Closs, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To confirm research findings were the result of the interviews and data collected, and that no bias existed, I conducted auditable procedures during the study to ensure findings reflected participant's responses and did not reflect my perspectives. The audit procedures involved taking field notes to document follow up questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) and utilizing transcript review and member checking for participants to approve narratives collected during each interview. NVivo is a data management software used to assist researchers in analyzing large amounts of data and reduce researcher bias (Rosenthal, 2016). This study included use of the NVivo analysis tool to determine themes and consistent patterns in participant responses and minimize researcher bias.

To achieve data saturation, the sample size for this case study consisted of seven participants from one organization. The study comprised interviewing seven HR managers and executives, from a small-to-medium-sized organization in Central Florida, who shared their success with minimizing workplace bullying. The sample size was appropriate for the study to gather enough data needed to reach saturation once data redundancy occurred (Rosenthal, 2016). The sample size of seven participants was valid and appropriate to ensure saturation of themes and allowed for identification of consistent patterns within the data collection once themes or concepts became redundant (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Rosenthal, 2016). For this study, data collection comprised a single case involving one, small-to-medium-sized organization. Seven HR managers and executives participated during interviews and data collection continued until saturation and no additional themes and information developed.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included details regarding the project quality indicators for this study. Details, description, and justification was provided for the (a) number of study participants; (b) research method and design; (c) ethical research and process; (d) data collection instrument, technique, and organization; (e) data analysis; and (f) reliability and validity criteria that ensure dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Section 3 will include findings gathered from data collected during interviews. The section will also cover (a) application of findings to business practice, (b) implications for social change, (c) recommendations for action, (d) recommendations for further research, (e) reflections, (f) conclusion, and (g) appendices.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, single-case study was to explore successful strategies used by HR managers to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity. The reason for conducting a case study was the uniqueness and importance of this study, as it pertains to social change, and the findings are not general to all contexts, business industries, or populations. I asked nine interview questions to gather data needed to answer the research question. The data derived from interviews with HR managers and executives, organization training protocol, and HR and risk management policies and procedures for managing reported incidents of mistreatment. The HR managers and executives represented the appropriate individuals to provide rich information to answer the research question. Five themes evolved from interviews with seven HR managers and executives and a review of HR policies and risk management documents: (a) enhanced training, (b) encourage reporting, (c) develop HR business partner model, (d) implement policies and guidelines, and (e) enforce zero-tolerance policy. The findings showed approaches HR managers and executives used to minimize bullying in the workplace to increase productivity.

The significance of the business problem was HR managers' efforts to minimize employee mistreatment and ensure a safe, nurturing work environment. Centered on the conceptual frameworks of this study, I found that enhanced training, reporting, policies and guidelines, and a strong HR business partner model comprised risk management methods to mitigate workplace bullying, as theorized by Carden and Boyd (2013). In

addition, enforcing a zero-tolerance policy required employees to *change behavior* that was unacceptable based on Ajzen's (1985) TPB.

One outlier that resulted from member checking, which pertained to unacceptable behavior and the need for enhanced training, comprised implicit bias, also referred to as unconscious bias. Implicit bias leads to making unintentional, unplanned judgements and stereotypes against individuals, or a group of individuals (Bellack, 2015). The behavior subsists within individuals and affects behavior toward other individuals or groups (Frieze, Marculescu, Quesenberry, Katilius, & Reynolds, 2018). Unconscious bias may lead employees to exhibit biased behavior and consequently, result in barriers to civility, people engagement, and inclusion (Lattal, 2016).

I sought data that supported or refuted the findings in the literature and ensured the findings linked to the conceptual frameworks. In the sections below, I present my findings. The sections also contain information relevant to the conceptual frameworks, application to professional practice, and implications for social change. Section 3 will close with my recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and a conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was as follows: What strategies do HR managers use to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity? Triangulation of participant responses captured during interviews, review of risk management policies, HR policies, code of ethics and professional conduct, and training procedures emphasized five themes, which answered the research question. I determined

the relevance of the themes and related each theme to Carden and Boyd's (2013) RM framework, Ajzen's (1985) TPB, and HR managers' need for strategies to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity. In the following sections, I present the five themes: (a) enhanced training, (b) encourage reporting, (c) develop an HR business partner model, (d) implement policies and guidelines, and (e) enforce zero-tolerance policy, through analysis of the findings that support the themes, and discuss the way findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge through comparison and alignment with the conceptual frameworks and recent literature.

Theme 1: Enhanced Training

The enhanced training theme comprised HR managers' primary intervention to educate and make employees aware of bullying. Salin et al. (2018) considered training a primary intervention and concurred the method can build leadership and employee awareness of bullying. Nielsen and Einarsen (2018) advised the purpose of primary interventions, such as training, is prevention of bullying in the workplace *before* the mistreatment occurs. To accomplish this purpose involved stopping situations, which triggered bullying behaviors; adjusting the culture within the organization; immediately ceasing behaviors perceived as bullying; and before bullying occurred, enhancing available resources to prepare employees to manage mistreatment (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Brunetto, Xerri, Shacklock, Farr-Wharton, and Farr-Wharton (2017) noted, individual motivation to reserve valuable resources derived from basic needs to maintain health and well-being.

Tricco et al. (2018) conducted a review of 23 peer-reviewed studies and identified interventions to prevent and manage unprofessional behaviors, such as workplace bullying. Results of the review were that awareness/education (91.30% of studies) and training (52.17% of studies) comprised the main themes and intervention methods; where totals exceeded 100% because each study could fit in more than one category (Tricco et al., 2018). In a global study involving 14 countries on prevention methods to combat workplace bullying, Salin et al. (2018) also found training was one of two preferred strategies to prevent bullying; the second being policies. Rockett, Fan, Dwyer, and Foy (2017) categorized training as a support tool and agreed victims, perpetrators, managers, and teams should receive training before and after a bullying conflict occurred. Ritzman (2016) noted the importance of training was to set boundaries on behavior and focus on maintaining professional associations in the workplace. Results of this study confirmed the need for enhanced training as depicted in participants' responses in Table 2.

Table 2

Theme 1: Enhanced Training

| Participant | Comment |
|-------------|--|
| P1 | I would say we do not have a specific anti-bullying training for human resources employees. It's part of leadership training, because it really depends on how you want to handle the situation. HR has led the effort on that with support, and we have trained everyone from the CEO to the last team member, with a video guided sexual harassment training, and then manager training. They might get anger management sometimes through the organization. |
| P2 | All new employees go through new hire orientation, and one of the |

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Theme 1: Enhanced Training

| Participant | Comment |
|-------------|--|
| P2 | <p>components of new hire orientation is a diversity module. We educate employees about that component of our culture at new hire orientation. It doesn't really say bullying, but it does give some examples of 'this kind of behavior would be inappropriate;' and then every year we have annual mandatory training, where employees are asked to do a refresher and take a test to make sure that they still are caught up on that material. So, it's both – they do it at hire and then again, every year; then there's a special module that all managers and directors are required to take that is about diversity, but it talks a lot about sexual harassment, harassment, 'bullying' type of behaviors, how to recognize that, how to address it.</p> |
| P3 | <p>We conduct trainings so employees will know what their rights are in the workplace. Employees also need to know the conduct policies and guidelines that exist. Leadership also needs to be sensitive to the situation and know the guidelines.</p> |
| P4 | <p>We have listed what conduct is acceptable and what conduct is not acceptable in one place. So, each of those have the definitions. We have been trained on that, which means that when we bring HR folks on board, we take them through an onboarding process, they are asked to review those policies and they are trained on that. That is one level of training and our information sharing. The second piece of information sharing that we do is we collaborate with Organizational Development. We have a number of sessions that are dedicated for us related to hostile work environment – HR is part of that training. All of HR does go through orientation, onboarding, and special training --and also the team members and the managers go through the training as well. As part of the disciplinary process, we do want them to attend anger management, or relationship, interpersonal relationship training. Some risk management things that we have done to mitigate is training the whole entire staff, including managers. Last year, all of our management staff and team members went through a 45-minute, sexual harassment training in the workplace, which included bullying, how to recognize bullying, what to do when somebody is bullied, what steps you can follow -- that has been outlined and educated. Last year was a welcomed initiative for a lot of them because people don't know whatever they say is, or can amount to, bullying. So, we saw a high heightened awareness as well as the number of reporting go up because of the training.</p> |

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Theme 1: Enhanced Training

| Participant | Comment |
|-------------|--|
| P6 | I really think that some training -- I don't even know that internal trainings will be the best-- I think external training would really be the most helpful for our HR team, and I think what resonates best with the group is training from a law firm – from an attorney that comes in and talks about case studies and talks about ‘here’s what the law says, but here are some examples of recent cases,’ -and then give some best practices. |
| P7 | There is an educator that rolls out programs to help us deal with respect. So, one of their focus last year was on implicit bias and training leaders and individuals on what is implicit bias, the fact that all of us have implicit biases, that it's just ingrained, whether it's through media or learned behavior, or through school, or parents. But what is implicit bias? How can we identify the biases that we have, and how can we make sure that they are not impacting the way that we interact with other individuals here at our organization? So that's why when I talk about prevention and the culture, I feel like that is a huge part of our organization and the work that we do. |

Enhanced training aligned with the prevention method necessary to mitigate workplace bullying as indicated in Carden and Boyd’s (2013) RM framework on employers’ responsibility to conduct training and prevention sessions. Employees who experienced bullying became distracted and unable to perform job duties, which resulted in reduced productivity (Cowan, 2018). Data collected from the organization risk management harassment policy confirmed *behavior, which unreasonably interfered with employees’ performance and decreased productivity, or the time available to complete work, as unacceptable and a violation of the policy*. Fisher-Blando (2008) hypothesized bullied employees became displeased on the job, which led to reduced productivity. Gilani et al. (2014) asserted mistreated employees led to dissatisfaction and lower

productivity. Comparably, Hutchinson and Jackson (2015) and Le Mire and Owns (2014) affirmed workplace bullying adversely affected employee engagement and productivity. P2, P3, and P4 agreed workplace bullying caused employee productivity to decline. P2 stated, “bullying definitely negatively impacts productivity. If not properly addressed, it can affect the morale of an entire department.” P3 affirmed, “We expect that anytime an employee is mistreated...to see work productivity go down. A disengaged employee equaled absenteeism and looking for another job.” Belak (2018) determined training and education of all employees is important to eradicate, or significantly minimize bullying in the workplace.

Training should incorporate raising employee awareness about bullying, the code of conduct, acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and strategies to manage incidents of bullying (Belak, 2018). For example, P4 advised one goal of training is to ensure the victim began to feel comfortable in the work environment, which lead to increased productivity. P4 explained:

One of the things that we do from a learning and development standpoint is we really try to foster solving issues on the lowest level possible versus letting them escalate. So, for example, we adopted some practices from *Crucial Conversations* [emphasis added] and created a course on *leading authentic dialogue* [emphasis added]. The idea is to teach leaders and team members that when it comes to employee relationships, you can either have conflict situations, or you can move it into coexistence, cooperation, or collaboration; with collaboration being the goal. But if ever there is *chaos* [emphasis added], and it places tension on the team, and

issues that are going to impact productivity, how can you have a conversation to move passed that? So, we teach them the skill set to move passed that. So, that's one thing that we do, proactively, in order to protect productivity on teams; and again, it's really more on communication techniques. But I think that's the start of a lot of bullying anyway. It's lack of respect and poor communication.

When an employee's productivity diminished due to workplace bullying, the situation escalated exponentially when the mistreatment impacted the productivity of other employees. Oftentimes, employees must complete assignments of absent coworkers who missed worked due to bullying, or if the daily productivity of the coworker diminished because the employee became disengaged. P4 explained a relevant situation as follows:

We had a department of 18 people, there was an understanding that the manager was very strict, did not care what the employees were thinking, and wanted to change and implement things that employees really did not appreciate. As a result of that, we had six people leave the department. So, there was a high turnover, and as a result of the high turnover, people who were currently working have [*sic*] to take on more and more, the morale was down and they are [*sic*] asked to do more with less, so morale and productivity was impacted.

Kolb and Ricke (2018) affirmed employees absent from work to seek treatment for, or avoid workplace bullying, are no longer productive, and coworkers left behind take on additional work for absent victims. Lassiter, Bostain, and Lentz (2018) determined prompt and sufficient training on methods to intercede bullying from occurring in the workplace may help minimize the mistreatment.

Salin et al. (2018) concluded training modules on workplace bullying can serve a specific purpose to (a) educate employees to understand what qualifies as bullying behavior, (b) create awareness of targets' rights, (c) warn perpetrators of sanctions for unacceptable behavior, and (d) facilitate managers to prepare for potential employee conflicts. It is important to note that some strategies may overlap (Salin et al., 2018). For example, training on workplace bullying can serve as a method to communicate policies on acceptable and unacceptable behavior in the workplace and how employees may report incidents of bullying. The BRMT (2012) incorporated designing a training and prevention bullying program for employees and ensuring the incorporated policy and procedures included actions and consequences. Lassiter et al. (2018) agreed workplace bullying interventions should include training, which included a policy, definition of bullying behavior, and a process to report employee mistreatment.

Similar to Salin et al. (2018), Jenkins (2013) recommended training as a control measure to promote a healthy work environment and educate employees and managers on rights and responsibilities regarding inappropriate behavior, organization culture, and diversity. Caponecchia, Branch, and Murray (2019) supported interventions including bullying awareness training and skills training and development (management skills training). Organization leaders need to monitor and revise training protocol to ensure a universal preventive approach for managing workplace bullying, which should include responsive interventions for all employees (Escartin, 2016).

The data collected from participants' responses and organization training practices confirmed enhanced training is a strategy to educate employees, including HR

managers, on acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, encourage civility among coworkers, and help mitigate employee mistreatment to improve productivity. Previously mentioned in the literature review section, Ajzen et al. (2011) recommended first identifying peoples' behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs; then, present information to people that challenges their beliefs, which may conflict with preferred social behaviors. Also mentioned in the literature review section, Boudreau and Godin (2014) reasoned that beliefs people held determined their behavior; and interventions, which focused on developing peoples' awareness of control over their behavior, will help develop peoples' positive intention to engage in a behavior. Workplace bullying training and intervention programs will include information that challenges employees' beliefs of what constitutes unacceptable and acceptable workplace behavior and help to change individuals' negative behaviors to positive behaviors (Boudreau & Godin, 2014). Training and intervention will facilitate developing employees' awareness of what comprises bullying behaviors, help employees determine and recognize if they exhibited bullying type behaviors, and actions to take and immediately stop intolerable behaviors and engage in acceptable conduct toward coworkers. Training workshops, such as STOPit! promote civility within professional relationships by minimizing demoralizing, bullying behavior through educational games, role playing, and discussions to increase employee participation (Benmore, Henderson, Mountfield, & Wink, 2018). Workshop designers and facilitators focused on the extent by which employees faced bullying, uncivil, and demoralizing behaviors in the workplace (Benmore et al., 2018). Research conducted three months after the STOPit!

workshop facilitated the capture of participants' change in behavior and effectiveness of the enhanced training to minimize bullying (Benmore et al., 2018). Some participants found the workshop beneficial and immediately changed behavior, such as recognizing coworkers may perceive certain behaviors they exhibited as bullying, uncivil, or inconsiderate (Benmore et al., 2018). P2 and P4 corroborated all employees receive enhanced training on acceptable and unacceptable workplace behaviors, including workplace bullying. Recently hired employees must attend *new employee orientation*, which included information on organization culture, employee rights and responsibilities, diversity, conduct guidelines, and the code of ethics. The training included information to educate and make employees aware of their rights regarding civility and respect in the workplace. P1 and P4 explained senior leaders, including the CEO, received enhanced training on harassment and methods to prepare for and immediately manage reports of unacceptable behavior. P4 stated:

Some risk management things that we have done to mitigate is training the whole entire staff, including managers. Last year was a welcomed initiative for a lot of them because people don't know whatever they say is, or can amount to bullying. So, we saw a heightened awareness...because of the training.

A method, which may help HR personnel take decisive action to address bullying, involved dedicated training for HR personnel and spending time in various departments to (a) enhance their knowledge of staff and managers, and (b) gain insight regarding unique cultures and dynamics of assigned business units (“Bullying in the workplace,” 2017). P4 advised training for HR personal included special training on managing a

hostile work environment. P5 explained that HR managers remained *ingrained* in assigned business units, connected individually with staff and managers, and understood team dynamics and department cultures. Kryscynski, Reeves, Stice-Lusvardi, Ulrich, and Russell (2018) argued the importance of workforce *analytics* training, which may help HR professionals develop into more effective business partners. Kryscynski et al. (2018) found support for research on the basis that HR personnel who exhibited high analytical skills created more value for stakeholders and the organization. Carden and Boyd (2013) advocated employers developing a method to measure and track the progress and effective results of an anti-bullying policy. Developing an analytical method would help complete the final phase of Carden and Boyd's RM framework to monitor, control, and assess the anti-bullying policy and make modifications to ensure strategy implementation. Leveraging Jenkin's (2013) risk management approach, training to become proficient in analyzing data may help HR business partners identify bullying risk factors; and evaluate and review control measures to manage and prevent workplace bullying.

Carden and Boyd (2013) mentioned the importance of organization leaders and HR managers to initiate continuous communication using annual *refresher* training to reinforce awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behavior, ensure employees remained cognizant of the policy and consequences, and maintain effective business practice. P2 explained, "We have an entire department dedicated to diversity. We educate employees about that component of our culture at new hire orientation...and then every year we have annual mandatory training, where employees are asked to do a refresher

and take a test to make sure that they still are [*sic*] caught up on that material.” P4

confirmed:

We do have something on bullying...and hostile working environment included in our annual mandatory education. Every employee must take that annual mandatory education and bullying is part of that. If somebody doesn't take the test or doesn't pass the test, he [or she] is not eligible for a merit increase...So, we link that to the merit increases so there is 100% compliance with regard to completing that training every year.

The organization harassment policy reviewed confirmed employees must complete *annual mandatory education* and *annual code of ethics and professional conduct* training. Salin et al. (2019) confirmed a need for well-defined policies, which specify organization leader's viewpoint on bullying. My findings confirmed that enhanced training is a strategy and prevention tool, which HR managers may leverage to minimize bullying and increase productivity.

Theme 2: Encourage Reporting

The *encourage reporting* theme represented a risk management method to alleviate risks for employers and minimize employee mistreatment. Employers should provide confidential reporting options for all employees and include a well-defined escalation plan (Mills, Keller, Chilcutt, & Nelson, 2019). Rai and Agarwal (2018) recommended employers adopt and provide anonymous reporting resources for employees, including a hotline to report incidents. Naseer, Raja, Syed, and Bouckenooghe (2018) referred to the method of *self-reporting* as ideal for victims to

report mistreatment. The method of self-reporting, extensively used by practitioners, comprised details provided by targets regarding their experience when bullied by a perpetrator (De Cieri, Sheehan, Donohue, Shea, & Cooper, 2019). The comments in Table 3 confirmed employers encourage employees to report incidents of bullying and provided methods/resources to submit reports.

Table 3

Theme 2: Encourage Reporting

| Participant | Comment |
|-------------|--|
| P1 | So definitely to hear the person out who makes that [bullying] report, to document it, depending on how serious the allegation is, it triggers a formal departmental investigation, where everyone is being questioned about the workplace and the workplace behavior with standardized questions – and everyone gets [asked] the same questions – [so] as not to lead towards certain answers – and a report is written up – the managers get involved in that; and then a conclusion is drawn, whether or not that constituted a true hostile work environment, or not; and that might result in disciplinary action of that person. |
| P2 | We encourage employees to report things directly to their supervisor. If they are uncomfortable doing that, or if their supervisor isn't available, they can certainly contact human resources directly, or they can contact the compliance office directly; and then if they want to remain anonymous, or if it's after hours, they can either call the hotline, or they can go on and enter an actual 'web report.' Generally, what we normally see is someone will say 'I'm being harassed by my supervisor, or I'm being discriminated against.' There are occasions where we will get an employee reporting that they're being bullied by a coworker. If a report of bullying is received by anyone, they are instructed to inform their supervisor/manager, contact Human Resources, or the compliance office. |
| P3 | We do encourage employees to report bullying to leadership, HR, Risk Management, where appropriate. Everything we do is based on (1) policy, (2) procedure, and (3) practice. We also encourage employees who witness bullying to report it to leadership or HR, as applicable. |

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

Theme 2: Encourage Reporting

| Participant | Comment |
|-------------|--|
| P4 | People know the different avenues and methods to report bullying that has helped us a lot. If someone is experiencing, or has gone through that [bullying], they have a channel of reporting. The first is the immediate supervisor, to report that incident. Then, they have the option to call human resources....We also have an online reporting...There is a safety report that people have access to – a risk management safety report -- they can complete that form and report [any mistreatment]. |
| P5 | It's really more about letting employees know that HR is here for reporting that there's a confidential anonymous line that they can call if they feel that they are being bullied or harassed in any way. So, we do make sure that our employees are aware of our responsibilities and what their responsibilities are as well to report -- and I would say that it is effective.” Once the employee reports, we take action, I think there's nothing like taking action-- that shows the employee who's being bullied that we value them and that we want them to feel like this is a safe environment for them. |
| P6 | We have other methods for people to report concerns, if they're not comfortable doing it in person, or verbally. We have a corporate compliance hotline, which is a phone number, or online -- they can type it in on a website, or they can call an 800 number, and they can be anonymous or identify themselves.. Some people use the safety reporting website, which is really meant for if you have an accident, or a safety concern, however, some people use it for that [reporting bullying], and that's okay. |
| P7 | There's a couple of hotlines, there is a compliance hotline that everybody knows about. So, if you feel like anything's going on in the organization that allows for somebody to be anonymous or to identify themselves. Other than that, they certainly have a human resources generalist or business partner that they can reach out [to]. |

Encourage reporting aligned with response planning, the second phase of Carden and Boyd's (2013) RM framework. Spurgeon (2003) advised that the objective of RM is not to *completely remove* risk but to *minimize* exposure to risk and any harm linked with

victims' tolerance levels. It is not feasible for employers to eliminate risk entirely from the workplace, or even society, but it is possible to control risk to a certain extent (Spurgeon, 2003). Response planning represented employer responsibility to prevent or reduce workplace bullying, which included providing resources to support employees and encourage reporting (Carden and Boyd, 2013). Researchers agreed, although subjective, self-reporting included valuable, factual information and enabled understanding of a victim's perception on bullying (De Cieri et al., 2019; Naseer, Raja, Syed, & Bouckennooghe, 2018). Mackey et al. (2018) found self-reports ideal for a study depicting how individual employees' differences may influence inclinations toward perceptions and responses when mistreated in the workplace. The researchers emphasized the importance of self-reports because bullied victims have first-hand experience to evaluate and report perceptions of the workplace environment and interpersonal conflicts with coworkers (Mackey et al., 2018). Mackey et al. advised oftentimes perpetrators exhibited covert bullying behaviors, not easily observed by other employees. Therefore, self-reporting comprised a resource for victims to report abusive behavior in a confidential manner (Mackey et al., 2018). P2, P3, and P5 agreed encouraging employees to report bullying prompted employees to inform a supervisor, HR business partner, risk management, or compliance of bullying experienced in the workplace.

Carden and Boyd (2013) explained employees' participation is a key component of the response planning phase to mitigate workplace bullying. Kravitz (2014) emphasized employees should document and report mistreatment. Beck (2018), a law firm partner, presented a legal viewpoint on methods to avoid and resolve workplace

bullying. The employment lawyer advised that employees and employers have separate obligations, respectively, to (a) report bullying incidents so the employer was aware, and (b) act immediately to protect the victim and investigate the issue to avoid a lawsuit and further disruption in the work environment (Beck, 2018). P5 agreed that HR managers made employees aware of their responsibility and leadership's responsibility to report bullying.

To encourage employee participation, employers should provide resources and tools to help victims recognize and protect themselves from mistreatment. In addition, employers should provide internal or external impartial sources to capture reports (Simpson & McPherson, 2014), including a confidential hotline and complaint process to report mistreatment (Beakley, 2016). Oliveira, Pascucci and Fortin (2018) advocated an *empowerment approach* by which employers (a) empowered victims, (b) disciplined perpetrators, and (c) focused on the organization culture and internal power dynamics, which may contribute to employees exhibiting unacceptable behavior. The goal for empowering victims involved advance direction and making employees aware of workplace bullying to empower/enable victims to take-action and report mistreatment (Oliveira, Pascucci, & Fortin, 2018).

As mentioned before, the reporting process should include a clear plan to resolve victim complaints. HR managers and senior leaders should ensure the successful implementation of a program to alleviate and preemptively address bullying in the work environment. HR managers may provide support for an anti-bullying program by establishing procedures to immediately investigate and resolve reports of bullying

(BRMT, 2012). Dumay and Marini (2012) presented a RM approach and explained if management understood how workplace bullying was committed the knowledge may facilitate initiating controls to prevent the phenomenon. The RM approach comprised collecting evidence from the viewpoint of both the victim and bully (Dumay & Marini, 2012). Carden and Boyd (2013) recommended starting with identifying bullying behavior type of risks and documenting reasons for the behavior (recording behaviors and actions related to the risk). Salin et al. (2018) found secondary interventions included a complete investigation and immediate action to interview and collect information from all parties involved in the incident. Prompt action helped stop unacceptable behavior and reminded employees of expected workplace behaviors (Salin et al., 2018). P4 corroborated reports of bullying required immediate investigation and action to make victims feel safe and provided opportunities for HR managers to educate employees and remind them of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Beck (2018) and Faran (2018) agreed management and HR managers should investigate employee complaints immediately. P5 validated, “once the employee reports, we take action. I think there's nothing like taking action that shows the employee who's being bullied that we value them and we want them to feel like this is a safe environment for them.” Responding to complaints promptly should also result in capturing credible information while victims, witnesses, and other stakeholders have a clear recollection of events (“How to Conduct an Investigation,” 2018). The organization policies and guidelines I examined included content encouraging employees to immediately report complaints, concerns, and violations so responsible leaders and HR managers may take prompt action.

The process of reporting bullying behavior and the escalation plan included not only the victim self-reporting and HR managers' immediate intervention, but also bystanders' perspectives. Often, bystanders observed unacceptable behaviors exhibited by a coworker, which required reporting. Coyne et al. (2017) asserted bystanders were more than likely the first observers to witness bullying and able to report incidents, or intervene to dissuade bullying behaviors before HR, or managers become aware of incidents. Nielsen and Einarsen (2018) agreed investigations should include evidence collected from victims, the alleged bully, and witnesses. P3 corroborated HR managers encouraged employees, in advance, to report bullying they witnessed to leadership, or the HR business partner. Namie and Namie (2018) contended bystanders were not usually helpful in bullying situations. The researchers argued, in a Workplace Bullying Institute study, 35.5% of bystanders advised or supported targets, 16% did nothing to help victims, and 45.6% acted against the target on behalf of the perpetrator (Namie & Namie, 2018). To ensure effective witness intervention, it was important for bystanders to understand and distinguish bullying behavior from other behaviors prior to reporting an incident. Hellemans, Dal Cason, and Casini (2017) found results from a study on *bystander helping behavior* highlighted training as important to increase witness awareness and identification of bullying incidents between coworkers. Similarly, Lassiter et al. (2018) discovered from a study on *best practices to develop bystander intervention training* that instruction should guide employees on identifying workplace bullying, appropriate time to intervene, and how to obtain assistance. P4 advised employee awareness for bullying behaviors increased after a mandated harassment training. P4 stated, "and then people

started thinking ‘you know what, the bullying may not be happening to me, but it is happening to my coworker; my coworker is not speaking up, maybe I should speak up.’” P4 also confirmed the number of reports regarding employee unacceptable behaviors increased because of the training.

The organization harassment policy I reviewed, which defined unacceptable subtle and not so subtle behaviors, included specific procedures to (a) report mistreatment, (b) verbiage on the importance of early reporting and intervention, (c) investigation process, (d) confidentiality requirements, (e) consequences/disciplinary actions, (f) non-retaliation policy, and (g) list of required employee training to mitigate employee mistreatment. The organization conduct guidelines reviewed included detail defining (a) acceptable and unacceptable behavior, (b) what did not constitute workplace bullying, (c) immediate reporting process, (d) employees’ responsibilities, (e) department managers’ responsibilities, and (f) HR managers’ responsibilities. The organization code of ethics and professional conduct reviewed included a list of resources to report concerns and make inquiries, such as a compliance hotline and website for anonymous reporting.

Data collected from P4, P6, and P7 verified that HR managers, management, and employees were aware, in advance, of available, anonymous internal, external, and online resources to submit self-reports when experiencing, or witnessing bullying behavior displayed by a coworker. Study findings confirmed encouraging employees to report mistreatment represented a resource for victims and bystanders and a prevention tool, which HR managers may utilize to minimize bullying and increase productivity.

Theme 3: Develop a HR Business Partner Model

The theme *develop a HR business partner model* denoted a risk management strategy to help mitigate workplace bullying. HR managers have an important role within organizations to shape the workplace into a positive environment for employees, and as such, are vital to identifying, managing, and preventing workplace bullying (Catley, Blackwood, Forsyth, Tappin, & Bentley, 2017). As mentioned in the literature review section, Fusch et al. (2016) agreed HR represented the *core* function for businesses. A redesign of HR separated the function and workload into three support systems: centers of expertise (COE), managing HR operations (within shared services), and HR business partners (Friedrich & Rajshekhar, 2018; Marchington, 2015). Organization leaders depended on COE to preside over planned project design, HR operations to perform processes efficiently, and HR business partners to direct efforts toward workforce management company needs (Friedrich & Rajshekhar, 2018). Specifically, HR business partners had responsibility for an assigned business unit, or department, within an organization. In this context, workforce management corresponded to a set of HR procedures, correlated to operating activities, intended to increase employee productivity and maximize profits (Perla, Nikolaev, & Pasiliao, 2018). The shift in workload allocation may afford HR business partners more capacity to develop HR strategic policies with a focus on advocating positive occupational safety and health practices (De Cieri et al., 2019), align HR work with organization strategic demands (McCracken, O’Kane, Brown, & McCrory, 2017) and add value to the enterprise through increased productivity.

Through training and years of HR experience, HR business partners embody the ability to engage with employees and leaders effectively (Friedrich & Rajshekhar, 2018). Researchers recommended organizations maintain a *separate department* to investigate and manage workplace bullying, which may help minimize the impact of the mistreatment on employee stress and performance (Faran, 2018). In other words, HR business partners should work as a cohort group of problem solvers, in partnership with leaders, to strengthen the effectiveness of the group to prevent, or minimize workplace bullying. Findings of this study confirmed the need to develop a HR business partner model to mitigate and manage the prevention of workplace bullying effectively as described by the direct quotations in Table 4.

Table 4

Theme 3: Develop HR Business Partner Model

| Participant | Comment |
|-------------|---|
| P2 | We encourage managers to partner with human resources and compliance – especially if they’re considering taking some kind of disciplinary action against an employee who they know has made any kind of report. If we get a report of bullying, we work with HR. HR will do the investigation, and in situations where there seems to be a culture issue in the department, or there have been multiple reports of activity, then HR will <i>partner</i> [emphasis added] with organizational development to kind of do a scan of the department, and attack it from 2 different angles, to try to determine exactly what’s going on and figure out the best way to move forward. |
| P4 | We have a great response system here...each of the business partners are responsible [for a certain business unit]; all employees have their contact information or email addresses. |
| P5 | We have a HR ‘business partner model,’ and those HR business partners are |

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

Theme 3: Develop HR Business Partner Model

| Participant | Comment |
|-------------|---|
| P5 | very ingrained and very much [involved] in the departments that they support. So, they [HR business partners] are often enough to also understand what the dynamics of the department are, and what the different personalities etc., are of the managers. Often times, it's not the managers that necessarily are bullying anyone. Often times, it's a team member. It's really about making sure that the managers know how to address it, and that they understand not to do anything until they get their human resources business partner involved so that it could be a formal investigation. |
| P7 | Anonymous complaints of any kind are certainly helpful, we'll try to address it, but it's difficult if you don't know who's dealing with the situation. Other than that, they certainly have a human resources generalist or 'business partner' that they can reach out [to], the HR answer center. |

Develop a HR business partner model correlated with the final phase of Carden and Boyd's (2013) RM framework, monitoring and controlling workplace bullying. The final phase involved monitoring workplace bullying policy effectiveness, controlling processes and procedures to guarantee strategy implementation, evaluating policies and strategies frequently, and modifying policies and strategies when necessary (PMI, 2017). Researchers specified the importance of involving HR in the monitoring and controlling phase (Carden & Boyd, 2013; Jenkins, 2013). Similar to Friedrich and Rajshekhar (2018) and Marchington (2015), Botter, Gonçalves Rosa, and Campos Lima (2018) stated that the HR business partnership reorganization delineated the three functions COE, shared services operations, and HR business partners. Botter et al. (2018) expanded the functions and responsibilities to include corporate HR and operational implementation. As

mentioned in the literature review section, the risk management method included maintaining efficiency in the prevention of risk to create value for the organization (PMI, 2017). Researchers expounded the need to reorganize the HR niche and unite HR business partners with department managers to create value for the organization (Botter et al., 2018). Ulrich, Brockbank, Ulrich, and Kryscynski (2015) highlighted that the relationship between HR managers and department managers represented a partnership, integrated with the business strategy, which influenced organization results. P2, P4, P5, and P7 advised the organization HR support function included a HR business partner model. P5 corroborated, when faced with a bullying situation, managers know the process to address the issues and understand not to take any action until they contact their human resource business partner to start a formal investigation. P4 explained:

Our model is a *business partner model* [emphasis added]. It's not a traditional HR model where we have working silos. We are a line of business. Everything that goes under my line of business, I'm the point of contact, so people are aware of who to contact. That's a good thing.

Important facets of the RM framework included HR and senior leaders' cooperation and participation during the anti-bullying process (Carden & Boyd, 2013). P2 advised leaders encouraged department managers to partner with HR managers and compliance when addressing bullying reports and disciplinary actions. P2 further explained HR managers partnered with organizational development to work collaboratively to investigate issues and determine the best method to move forward. McDonnell and Sikander (2017) emphasized HR personnel's important strategic business

partner role within organizations and acknowledged HR practitioners should possess advanced skills to enact change. As change agents, HR managers help shape the work environment. The HR change agent strategic role also contributed to organization sustainability (Zhang, 2019). Baran, Filipkowski, and Stockwell (2018) agreed HR methods contributed to organizational change and HR personnel should possess intuitive skills to detect and respond to the changing work environment. This premise reinforced the need for HR business partners to possess HR analytics capabilities, and the skill to utilize HR analytics to implement policies and make decisions based on data analysis (King, 2016; Marler & Boudreau, 2017) to create value for organizations.

Ingham and Ulrich (2016) concluded *best in class* HR teams demonstrated collaboration within respective teams and with organization leaders; and each team represented a *partnership* within a HR business unit, which produced specific outcomes to achieve organization objectives and create value (Ingham & Ulrich, 2016). Ulrich and Grochowski (2018) concurred from a recent study on nine dimensions, which comprised building a best in class HR department. General dimensions included developing expertise in relevant disciplines and maintaining a strong business acumen (Ulrich & Grochowski, 2018). Strategic dimensions encompassed working as architects to develop business solutions, collaborating with department managers, and understanding the business domain, market, industry, and how the HR function sustained business outcomes (Ulrich & Grochowski, 2018). As change agents, HR managers may help create procedures to investigate and resolve reports of bullying while demonstrating support for the anti-bullying policy (BRMT, 2012). HR strategic responsibilities incorporated

performance appraisals, employee training, and developing and executing organization procedures and policies (“Bullying in the workplace,” 2017). Because HR managers’ strategic responsibilities and processes enabled shaping the work environment and expected behaviors, the strategies also facilitated dealing with bullying problems (“Bullying in the workplace,” 2017). P5 apprised that the organization HR business partner model comprised HR managers *ingrained and involved* with assigned business units, who understood department dynamics and diverse managers’ personalities, which facilitated supporting business units in matters, such as investigating reported workplace bullying incidents.

The organization HR documents I examined confirmed HR personnel were responsible for developing, approving, and consistently reviewing the organization conduct guidelines. The conduct guidelines included detail prescribing HR personnel’s responsibility to also work in collaboration with department managers to promptly investigate and document all reported incidents of inappropriate behavior, which included bullying, and review reports to ensure consistent application of the organization’s policies and conduct guidelines. Cowan, Clayton, and Bochantin (2018) affirmed HR managers’ primary role included implementing organization policies and procedures, effectively. The strategic HR viewpoint enabled HR managers to exhibit more influence in creating and implementing policies and procedures (Cowan, Clayton, & Bochantin, 2018). Study findings, HR documents, and existing literature confirmed developing a strong HR business partner model helped improve effective business practice and created value for the organization because HR business partners crafted, monitored, and enforced

workplace bullying prevention policies and strategies designed to minimize workplace bullying and increase productivity.

Theme 4: Implement Policies and Guidelines

The theme *implement policies and guidelines* comprised a risk management method to prevent workplace bullying, as theorized by Carden and Boyd (2013). Developing and implementing policies and guidelines is an important HR responsibility. HR managers function as architects within an organization to design, manage, and enforce policies, to achieve business strategies (Ulrich, Brockbank, Ulrich, & Kryscynski, 2015). Salin et al. (2018) regarded policies as the other primary method of intervention, which like training, included a process to build leadership and employee awareness about bullying. HR policies and guidelines on workplace bullying clearly defined bullying and non-bullying behaviors and communicated organization leaders' expectations, procedures to manage incidents, reporting processes, ramifications, and follow up procedures (Wall, Smith, & Nodoushani, 2018). Findings of this study confirmed the need for organizations to develop policies and guidelines to mitigate workplace bullying as depicted in Table 5.

Table 5

Theme 4: Implement Policies and Guidelines

| Participant | Comment |
|-------------|---|
| P3 | Everything we do is based on policy, procedure, and practice. Employees also need to know the conduct policies and guidelines that exist. Leadership also needs to be sensitive to the situation and know the guidelines. |

(continued)

Table 5 (continued)

Theme 4: Implement Policies and Guidelines

| Participant | Comment |
|-------------|---|
| P4 | We have a policy that very clearly says what is defined as unacceptable and [our company] has a couple of policies. One is conduct guidelines. We have listed what conduct is acceptable and what conduct is not acceptable in one place. So, each of those have the definitions -- we have clearly defined what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. All levels of team members [are] held accountable to standard x of the code of ethics. Any violations is [<i>sic</i>] dealt with [using] progressive disciplinary process. The strategy would be that people who are experiencing bullying, they need to understand what is considered bullying and what is not considered bullying. Having that clear understanding -- just because I don't like you doesn't mean that is bullying. There are times where actual action is taken -- either [a] policy violation, or an infraction with regard to conduct guidelines -- <i>that</i> [emphasis added] is definitely bullying. |
| P7 | As far as workplace bullying, number one is that everybody in the organization, through policies, through our education, through our practices and conversation, knows that we do not have a tolerance for bullying, for harassment -- any kind of unlawful harassment is not going to be tolerated here; and then making sure that they know what to do, that there is help available if they feel like they are a victim of that. |

The theme to implement policies and guidelines aligned with Carden and Boyd's (2013) risk management framework. The RM method denoted creating value by maintaining efficiency in the second dimension, prevention (PMI, 2017), to mitigate bullying in the work environment. Workplace bullying is an occupational safety and health issue for employees and organizations (Lassiter et al., 2018). The phenomenon affects employees' productivity and well-being, organization financial condition, and establishes an unhealthy work atmosphere (Magee, Gordon, Robinson, Caputi, & Oades, 2017). Within the context of safety and health laws, Squelch and Guthrie (2012)

proposed a RM approach to reduce workplace bullying, ensure a safe environment for employees, and manage occupational safety and health in the workplace. Catley et al. (2017) advised that HR managers are critical to the design and implementation of strategies to manage and prevent workplace bullying.

Using the RM approach, HR business partners may develop and implement policies and controls to manage the risk of bullying occurring in the workplace, monitor, review, and evaluate reported incidents. De Cieri et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of HR designing strategies to prevent workplace bullying, with an emphasis on promoting positive occupational safety and health results. P2 advised that HR business partners responded immediately to reports of workplace bullying, even during night hours, which involved contacting the security team to escort employees when necessary to ensure their safety and well-being. In addition, HR and leaders ensured a victim was no longer exposed to a perpetrator's mistreatment by immediately removing the accused person from the work environment. P2 explained:

I would say that if we had a report of bullying...meaning, if it's behavior that happens every single day, we would consider that to be very serious....If it were something like that – an employee who is bullied day after day, after day – we would put that in the category of there's an immediate threat that we need to address – we need to mitigate it immediately and then deal with the investigation and follow up and make sure there's no safety issues and that this person isn't continuing to be exposed to that type of behavior.

The organization code of ethics and professional conduct reviewed contained standards, which specified maintaining a safe work environment, promoting a culture of safety, and prohibited employees engaging in unacceptable behaviors of any type. P4 and P6 confirmed the organization provided a safety reporting website for employees. The website includes a risk management safety report form, which employees may complete to inform of concerns regarding personal safety, including bullying. P5 advised HR business partners and department leaders considered all allegations of workplace bullying as *serious* offenses and the organization policy required immediately placing alleged bullies on leave (a) to make victims feel safe in the workplace during the investigation, and (b) reassure victims that business unit leaders and HR cared about their safety and well-being and valued them as individual contributors to the organization. Implementing HR bullying policies is important, but management must reinforce this step in the process by committing to bullying prevention initiatives that address occupational safety and health indicators (Catley et al., 2017; De Cieri et al., 2019). Initiatives included workplace bullying prevention education and training and creating a culture of civility and respect in the work environment (De Cieri et al., 2019). P4 advised, “we take bullying very seriously. Whenever there is a report of bullying, we investigate. Through that, we are able to educate and also take appropriate action so that people feel safe.” The organization code of ethics and professional conduct reviewed contained another standard, which specified *promoting a culture of respect by treating individuals with dignity, courtesy, respect, and maintaining an inclusive culture*. It is important to note

that the well-being of a bully is also a critical aspect to facilitate bullying interventions, successfully. P1 advised:

Bullies are people who have an anger problem. They're not necessarily bad people. They have right now a really bad problem and so we need to figure out what that is and help them just as much as we need to help the person who has been bullied. And sometimes they are brilliant employees, brilliant people. We don't want to throw them away. Often, they do get coaching. So, in those *in between cases* [emphasis added] that are not so vile...I've worked with them quite a bit, so they get sent to me. So, I do some anger management with them.

Carden and Boyd (2013) presented the RM framework utilized by HR managers to identify, monitor, control, and minimize workplace bullying. Findings presented by Qureshi et al. (2014) championed prevention at the organization level incorporating improvements to the work environment, which included structured policies and procedures to minimize occurrences of mistreatment. HR managers and senior leaders should ensure successful implementation of a program to mitigate and proactively address bullying in the workplace by creating procedures to investigate and resolve complaints of bullying (BRMT, 2012). HR managers and senior leaders may provide support for an anti-bullying policy by (a) creating policies and guidelines, which include a description and examples of bullying behaviors; (b) ensuring policies and guidelines include immediate actions and consequences; and (c) designing and delivering a training and prevention program (BRMT, 2012). Caponecchia et al. (2019) defined a *workplace bullying policy* as a document outlining senior leaders' and HR managers' dedication to

prevent workplace bullying, which may be a separate policy, or incorporated with harassment, or conduct policies. A workplace bullying policy defines pertinent behaviors and probable penalties, identifies individuals to contact, and summarizes reporting and investigating procedures (Caponecchia et al., 2019). The planned result for designing a workplace bullying policy is demonstrating leadership and HR dedication toward prevention, furnishing information, and increasing employee awareness of bullying in the work environment (Caponecchia et al., 2019). The organization policies and guidelines I examined included processes and procedures for employees to report allegations and detailed HR, compliance, and risk management responsibility to immediately investigate claims of policy violations. P3 and P4 confirmed organization policy, conduct guidelines, and code of ethics existed, which defined acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. The organization conduct guidelines I reviewed included detail describing what *was* and *was not* bullying behaviors. P3 affirmed, “there is a policy that mentions *bullying* specifically and mistreatment. Bullying is mentioned in the code of ethics, conduct guidelines and policy on sexual harassment.”

Researchers debated design of a policy should incorporate a *health and safety* method, whereas other practitioners supported a *complaint policy* method (Cowan et al., 2018). With a health and safety approach to policymaking, the focus was *bullying behavior placed employee health and safety at risk* (Cowan et al., 2018). Contrariwise, with a complaint policy approach, the focus was documenting bullying incidents, meeting with the victim to capture the incident, and a formal process to determine the best approach in response to a complaint (Cowan et al., 2018). Workplace bullying policies

detailed organization leaders and HR managers' obligation to deal with bullying incidents immediately and enabled employees to articulate complaints and concerns (Ritzman, 2016).

The organization policies, procedures, and guidelines I examined incorporated a health and safety approach *and* complaint policy approach. The two approaches depicted leadership transparency and intentions regarding employee health and well-being, and made employees aware of expected behaviors and HR managers' and leadership responsibility to intervene immediately and address reports of bullying and other inappropriate behaviors. Findings confirmed the need for organizations to develop policies and guidelines to prevent workplace bullying and ensure employees' well-being. HR documents and existing literature on effective business practice confirmed the need to design and implement a policy to prevent workplace bullying, increase productivity, and create value for the organization.

Theme 5: Enforce Zero-Tolerance Policy

The enforce a *zero-tolerance policy* is another theme derived from study findings to mitigate workplace bullying. A zero-tolerance policy requires employees to change unacceptable behavior, or face consequences, including termination. Oade (2018) declared organization managers may engage in certain actions to demonstrate commitment to developing and maintaining a zero-tolerance culture to prevent workplace bullying. Guest (2017) concurred zero tolerance for bullying in the workplace comprised a HR practice focused on creating a positive environment, which was a precursor for employee well-being. Like the theme *implement policies and guidelines*, findings

confirmed enforcing a zero-tolerance policy also represented a prevention method for workplace bullying as described in Table 6.

Table 6

Theme 5: Enforce Zero-tolerance Policy

| Participant | Comment |
|-------------|---|
| P1 | Well, it [bullying] is used [<i>sic</i>] as a thing that we do not accept – and that is in the code of conduct. If that [bullying] happens more than once and we speak to the person and they [<i>sic</i>] do not change behavior, we fire them [<i>sic</i>]. So, to me, that is addressing bullying, and that is an organizational initiative to show to team members, this type of behavior is not tolerated at the team member level and not at the senior leadership level. |
| P3 | There is a zero-tolerance policy – where people are held accountable. Other employees see this, which sends a message to all team members and leaders that it won't be tolerated. If leadership doesn't address it, everyone will know it! Then, there will be turn over – good employees will leave. |
| P5 | There's a fine line between bullying in the workplace and people feeling like they're being discriminated upon. So, finding those differences between one and the other is obviously for the Human Resources team, because neither one of them are to be tolerated, we have zero tolerance for both.... It [bullying] is not acceptable here. We lead by example. Employees in high-level positions have been fired because of actions that were bullying. Employees know that such behaviors will be dealt with – and the fact that we have zero tolerance at our organization. If someone wants to work here, they need to know that there are certain codes of conduct and values that we feel strongly about. |
| P7 | So when you talk about what strategies we use-- risk management strategies, again, I think I'll go back to something that we've done just recently, which is focused on sexual harassment and bullying of that sort, in light of the #metoo movement, and all of the attention that has been placed on sexual harassment and that form of bullying and workplace harassment, we really felt like it was a perfect opportunity for us to reinforce our zero tolerance on any kind of harassment in this organization. |

The zero-tolerance policy theme aligned with Ajzen's (1985) TPB. The TPB enabled understanding of how to change peoples' negative behavior (Ajzen, 2011), such

as bullying. A robust, enforceable policy may provide HR managers with the necessary processes and procedures to minimize potential difficulties, including bullying, and take steps to coach perpetrators toward *changing unacceptable behavior*, particularly if the organization culture comprised zero tolerance for specific types of improper behavior (Wall et al., 2018). Hollis (2015) advised leaders set the tone for managing and minimizing bullying behavior in the workplace. HR managers and leaders should devise and implement a zero-tolerance policy that aligns with the organization culture and work environment (Pastorek, Contacos-Sawyer, & Thomas, 2015). Solutions to mitigate workplace bullying included zero tolerance for the mistreatment and creating employee awareness that HR and leaders will intervene and address inappropriate behavior immediately (Hollis, 2015). Oade (2018) concurred some steps managers may take to hold bullies accountable for unacceptable behavior and demonstrate support for victims, while creating a culture of zero tolerance for bullying, involved (a) coaching for the bully to develop self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and *change unproductive behavior*; (b) raising employee awareness of what *is* and *is not* bullying; (c) creating and implementing an anti-bullying policy; (d) providing a method for reporting bullying incidents; and (e) coaching for victims to allow them to recuperate from the bullying experience, regain eagerness for their job and the workplace, and learn ways to circumvent future mistreatment to protect their well-being. The organization risk management harassment policies and HR conduct guidelines I inspected included content to inform employees that unacceptable conduct of any type was prohibited, would not be tolerated, and the consequences for engaging in such behavior, which confirmed the need for a zero-

tolerance policy. P1, P3, P5, and P7 confirmed that the organization enforced a zero tolerance for workplace bullying and other forms of mistreatment through policies, guidelines, codes of conduct, and taking immediate actions to stop the alleged bully and protect the victim.

The TPB factors that may drive human action are (a) beliefs concerning possible consequences of a behavior, (b) beliefs concerning normative expectations of others, and (c) beliefs regarding the existence of aspects, which may help or hinder performing a behavior (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013). Ajzen (1985) theorized that behavioral beliefs formed a person's positive or negative attitude about a behavior, normative beliefs created what a person perceived as social pressure regarding the behavior, and control beliefs created perceived behavioral control. Ajzen and Sheikh (2013) and Boudreau and Godin (2014) agreed the main construct of the TPB was intention, which determined people's behavior. Close, Lytle, Chen and Viera (2018) agreed intention determined behavior, and ascertained that intention to perform a behavior resulted from people's (a) attitude about a behavior, (b) perceived social pressure regarding the behavior, and (c) perceived behavioral control. Behavioral, normative, and control beliefs may form a person's intention to bully a coworker (the behavior). Ajzen indicated that an individual may behave in a deliberate or planned manner. Contrariwise, research conducted by Johnstone and Lindh (2018) extended the TPB and indicated that behavior was frequently unplanned and somewhat *unconscious*, particularly under influence of prevalent social pressure and external influences, like family. HR managers may use the TPB constructs to understand and change the behavior of a bully, whether the behavior was planned or

unplanned. Leveraging the constructs may enable HR managers to deal with employees' behavior, whether conscious or unconscious, when they take part in bullying a coworker. Because the TPB pertained to a person's intent to perform a negative behavior, HR managers may also use the constructs to design and frequently update zero-tolerance policies, workplace bullying training, and intervention programs that may help minimize bullying and increase employee productivity. P7 advised:

As far as workplace bullying, number one is that everybody in the organization, through policies, through our education, through our practices and conversation, knows that we do not have a tolerance for bullying, for harassment; any kind of unlawful harassment is not going to be tolerated here; and then making sure that they know what to do, that there is help available if they feel like they are a victim of that [bullying].

P3 explained:

We have a zero-tolerance policy. We conduct trainings so employees will know what their rights are in the workplace. Employees also need to know the conduct policies and guidelines that exist. Leadership also needs to be sensitive to the situation and know the guidelines. There is a policy that mentions *bullying* [emphasis added] specifically and mistreatment. Bullying is mentioned in the code of ethics, conduct guidelines, and policy on sexual harassment.

P1 confirmed the zero-tolerance policy:

If we see repeated misconduct, even in a high-level leader, we will not tolerate that....If that [bullying] happens more than once and we speak to the person and

they [*sic*] do not *change behavior* [emphasis added], we fire them [*sic*]...we do not allow people to behave like that and when we become aware of it, some action will happen. It's documented, it's investigated, it's being [*sic*] addressed with reinforcement of *this behavior is not accepted, you have to change; if you do not change your job is on the line* [emphasis added]....the OD [organizational development] person would probably work with an HR representative...together with a manager, on trying to stop that [bullying], trying to *modify behavior* [emphasis added], explaining why this [bullying] is not acceptable and what expectations there are instead.

P5 corroborated the zero-tolerance policy that P1 confirmed:

We take those reports [of bullying] very, very seriously. The organization has zero tolerance for bullying. So, they automatically will go in and do an investigation and, depending on what the investigation shows, depending on the severity, or on the specifics of the situation, those employees most definitely will go into a final written [warning]. If it ever happens again, they're terminated; they don't go through the complete disciplinary process. However, there have been instances where we've had to terminate immediately, because after the due diligence has been done, there was definitely cause.

Contrasting viewpoints for a zero-tolerance policy presented by researchers supported victims taking charge of their well-being and not depending on HR managers, leaders, or a zero-tolerance policy for total protection from a bully (Hurley et al., 2016). Hurley, Hutchinson, Bradbury, and Browne (2016) stated that employees participating in

a survey reported mistrust for organization leaders for lack of response to bullying reports, leaders tolerating bullying, and leaders protecting bullies. Results were employees disregarded the zero-tolerance policy citing widespread mistrust in organization procedures, leaders tolerating bullying behavior, perceiving leadership did not care about their well-being, and significant loss of personal resources (Hurley et al., 2016). In other literature, Hassankhani and Soheilil (2017) cited issues with a zero-tolerance policy for intolerable behavior and identified *unclear definitions* of hostile, unacceptable behaviors as one problem with some zero-tolerance policies. Sperry (2018) concluded that although organization cultures may include a zero-tolerance and reporting policy, internal employee alliances may work against established policies and circumvent bullying reports by denying, ignoring, or minimizing the seriousness of reported incidents. The contradictions posed by researchers do not indicate that a zero-tolerance policy cannot work within certain organizational cultures. P1 confirmed the effectiveness of a zero-tolerance policy for bullying within the organization and stated:

I think based on our turnover numbers in a strong economy...we have a low number of turnovers, much lower than most organizations. We have really...high engagement numbers, which has a positive link to productivity; and I think both of these numbers would be low. We have high customer satisfaction. If you look at that to assess productivity. Our financial situation is very good. That wouldn't be the case if productivity would be [*sic*] low. We won a lot of awards when it comes to diversity. I think that would be really difficult if this was a place where bullying happens a lot. I think diverse team members would probably suffer more,

and I think it would be difficult to win awards. Every year we are at the 89th percentile, so we are almost in the top 10 of comparable organizations...in terms of our team member engagement; So, we are incredibly proud of that.

Kolb and Ricke (2018) advised the basis of a zero-tolerance policy comprised a deterrent mechanism for *individuals* who engaged in unacceptable behavior. Kolb and Ricke (2018) argued that no research existed to support the assertion that individual or interpersonal conflict was the sole cause of bullying. Therefore, an integrated model combining individual, organization, and work team dynamics enabled a more complete and persuasive explanation why bullying occurred in the workplace (Kolb & Ricke, 2018).

The study findings, risk management policies and HR guidelines confirmed the need for a zero-tolerance policy. Current literature expanded the TPB and strengthened the theory premise that bullying evolved from unplanned, planned, conscious, or unconscious behavior. Study findings also confirmed enforcing a zero-tolerance policy was an effective strategy for organizations to minimize bullying in the work environment and increase productivity.

Applications to Professional Practice

The evidence from the findings that support the five themes aligned with the two conceptual frameworks, peer-reviewed literature on effective business practice, training protocol, HR and risk management policies, and code of ethics and professional conduct, which form the basis for why and how the findings are applicable to the professional practice of business. The focus was to derive strategies HR managers may utilize to

identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity (see Figure 1). Five themes emerged as strategies: (a) enhanced training, (b) encourage reporting, (c) develop HR business partner model, (d) implement policies and guidelines, and (e) enforce zero-tolerance policy. The findings showed approaches HR managers and executives used to identify and minimize workplace bullying and increase employee productivity. Figure 1 illustrates the alignment of the five strategies (themes) with the TPB constructs and the workplace bullying framework.

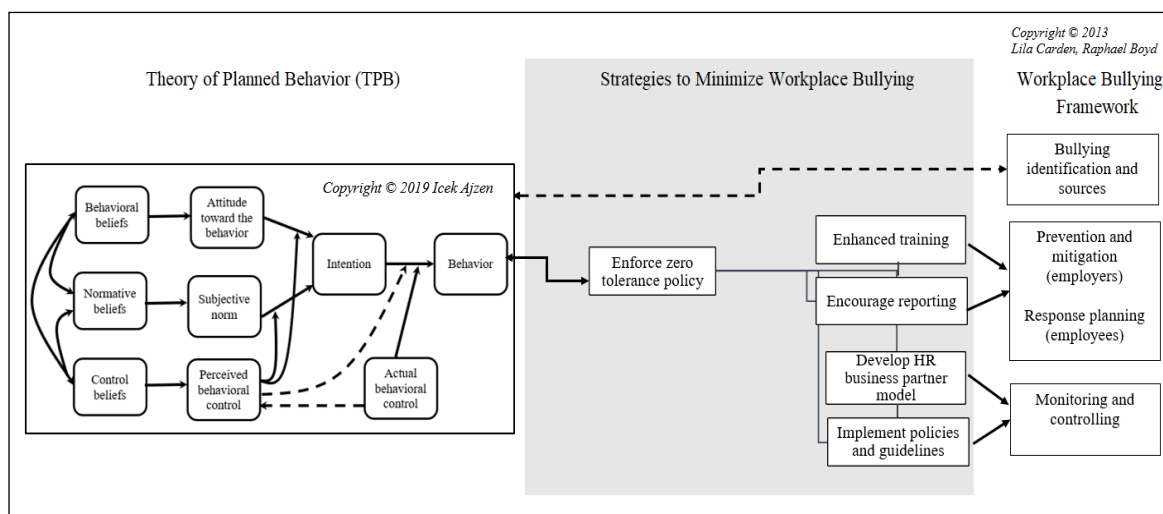


Figure 1. The five strategies (themes) to minimize workplace bullying aligned with the TPB constructs and workplace bullying framework. From “Theory of Planned Behavior,” by I. Ajzen, 2019, retrieved from people.umass.edu/aizen/tpb.diag.html with permission. Copyright 2019 by Icek Ajzen. Adapted with permission of the author; From “Workplace bullying: Utilizing a risk management framework to address bullying in the workplace,” by L. L. Carden and R. O. Boyd, 2013, *Southern Journal of Business & Ethics*, 5, 8-17. Copyright 2013 by Lila L. Carden and Raphael O. Boyd. Adapted with permission of the authors.

Enhanced training is a strategy to educate employees, HR managers, and organization leaders on acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, encourage civility among

coworkers, and help mitigate employee mistreatment to improve productivity. Enhanced training will increase employee awareness about bullying, policies, and available resources to manage mistreatment. The process of reporting bullying behavior provides a resource for employees to alert management of mistreatment, empower bystanders to participate in the self-reporting process, and ensure documentation of policy violations. Findings for encouraging employees to report mistreatment represented a key strategy in the goal for organizations to promote a work environment where employees feel safe to report bullying and remain confident HR managers and leaders will act promptly to investigate incidents.

The HR business partner role represented a key function within organizations to create a positive, safe, and nurturing work environment. With the HR manager role as the driving force to shape work environments, management can work collaboratively to discourage employees from engaging in unacceptable behavior and provide key resources employees need to navigate the environment and survive mistreatment, such as a reporting system, person of contact, employee assistance program, and policies to promote awareness. Findings confirmed the need for organizations to develop and implement policies and guidelines to prevent workplace bullying. Most organizations already have a workplace bullying policy or harassment policy containing content pertaining to workplace bullying, which may require update on occasion. Enforcing a zero-tolerance policy enables HR managers and leaders to hold employees accountable for intolerable behavior in the work environment and requires employees to change behavior considered as unacceptable, or face consequences including termination.

Findings extended knowledge in the discipline for HR managers and leaders to incorporate work teams, organization, and individual aspects to ascertain reasons for bullying occurrences.

Study results indicated that HR managers need strategies to help identify, manage, monitor, and prevent workplace bullying. Effective implementation of workplace bullying strategies, such as encouraging reporting, implementing a zero-tolerance policy (Bambi, Guazzini, De Felippis, Lucchini, & Rasero, 2017), and enhanced training, may help foster the development of a work environment of civility and mutual respect where employees feel safe. Based on the afore mentioned reasons, applicable to business practice, I concluded that the findings, HR documents, conceptual frameworks, and literature review addressed the research question: What strategies do HR managers use to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity?

Implications for Social Change

Findings from this study may contribute to social change by building people's awareness and educating individuals about workplace bullying. The application of study findings by organization leaders provide opportunities for tangible improvements through a decrease in lawsuits and healthcare costs, due to a reduction in the number of bullied victims who need counseling. Study findings offer improvements for employees, which facilitate a better work environment, improved health and well-being, and increased employee productivity. Promotion of the HR initiatives could occur internally to employees and externally to the community to improve awareness and prevention of workplace bullying (De Cieri et al., 2019). Reduced bullying has a positive influence on

social harmony, within organizations and individual's homes, and in the community.

Reduced bullying may minimize tension and stress in relationships and enhance respect and acceptance in society.

Recommendations for Action

Employees are more likely to share a common understanding of behaviors expected, rewarded, and penalized, when leaders implement planned workplace bullying practices, effectively (Sheehan, McCabe, & Garavan, 2018). The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore successful strategies HR managers used to identify and reduce workplace bullying to increase productivity. Based on study findings, I propose some actions HR managers may use to identify and minimize workplace bullying to improve employee productivity. HR managers need to understand five themes identified as the basis for the recommended actions: (a) enhanced training, (b) encourage reporting, (c) develop HR business partner model, (d) implement policies and guidelines, and (e) enforce zero-tolerance policy. HR managers, organization leaders, employees, and individuals in society represent stakeholders who should pay close attention to study results. Dissemination of results and recommendations for action mentioned below will occur through publication of this study, conferences, and training for HR managers and leaders on strategies to mitigate workplace bullying to increase productivity.

First, HR managers should provide enhanced training for all employees to educate them, encourage civility, and mitigate mistreatment. Training workshops, in-person advanced training for bullies, and online training represented methods of delivery. Training comprised a support tool to help set boundaries regarding appropriate and

inappropriate behavior (Ritzman, 2016). To reinforce knowledge learned about workplace bullying and unacceptable behavior, HR and leadership could require offenders to participate in delivering training on workplace bullying and policies to future policy offenders (Lewis-Pierre, Anglade, Saber, Gattamorta, & Piehl, 2019). Training should take place annually and require all employees complete each module with a set passing score.

Second, employees should feel encouraged and safe to report when they experience bullying, or observe bullying as a bystander. The reporting process should be simple (Catley et al., 2017), easy to access, such as online, or an anonymous hotline, and include a clear escalation plan. HR policies and guidelines should include information on the reporting process and procedures for employees. Reporting policies should include content prohibiting retaliation against employees for reporting bullying incidents (Park, Bjørkelo, & Blenkinsopp, 2018), any other forms of mistreatment, or policy violations.

Third, HR managers function as organization business partners and change agents to develop the work environment, create and implement policies, and help prevent workplace bullying. HR business partners' responsibilities included partnering with other business units, such as risk management and organizational development to investigate, document, and resolve reports of mistreatment or policy violations. The role of strategic partner also includes HR business partners providing support and guidance for victims of bullying and coaching perpetrators when required.

Fourth, organizations need policies to guide employees regarding key aspects, such as acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, rights and responsibilities, and processes

and procedures to report bullying behavior. Policies, guidelines, and a zero-tolerance policy for bullying may exist as stand-alone directives, or incorporated with other existing policies, such as a harassment policy. HR managers should facilitate creating and implementing policies, update policies as needed, and communicate policies to employees through training modules, workshops, or mandated training for perpetrators.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research could focus on the limitations or expand the findings of this qualitative case study to explore additional strategies HR managers could use to identify and minimize workplace bullying to increase productivity. Five themes generated from this study comprised (a) enhanced training, (b) encourage reporting, (c) develop HR business partner model, (d) implement policies and guidelines, and (e) enforce zero-tolerance policy, which represented a starting point to broaden practitioners' knowledge for each theme and the findings. Future researchers could attempt to confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge of the relevancy of each strategy explored in this study to improve individuals' negative behaviors and minimize workplace bullying. Future researchers may also leverage this qualitative study as the basis to design a quantitative study using each theme.

Limitations of this study, which future researchers can address include (a) permission was attainable to interview only certain personnel and gather only certain data; (b) this study only included HR managers and executives who had a minimum of five years HR experience and authority to make decisions concerning employee' well-being; and (c) this study comprised one, small-to-medium-sized organization in Central

Florida. Future research may include expanding the geographical location and industry to include large-sized organizations. This study comprised a single case study. Future research could involve a multicase study to explore multiple cases, understand and explain differences and similarities among the cases, replicate the cases, and explain why the cases had certain predicted or contrasting results. Future research could involve a robust study to follow up a few months later and determine the effectiveness of strategies implemented by HR managers to minimize bullying.

Reflections

As the researcher and main source of data collection, an important step in the DBA process was obtaining consent from participants to engage in my study. The scheduling process was lengthy due to conflicting schedules and participants' limited availability. I had to remain patient and allow participants to reschedule interviews as needed. I learned to appreciate and respect their time and competing commitments. I enjoyed interviewing and connecting with participants. All participants were professional and courteous, which made interviewing them a great experience. I worked to mitigate biases and preconceived ideas or values pertaining to participants by utilizing and following an interview protocol for all participants, being honest and transparent with participants, and remaining open to change during the interviews, member checking, and transcript review process. I spent considerable time and effort establishing rapport with participants to gain their trust and allow them to feel comfortable during the data collection process.

I appreciated that the DBA doctoral process allowed me to gain a new skill pertaining to NVivo, which I can add to my curriculum vitae for future professional endeavors. When I first began my DBA journey, I felt overwhelmed by the process, contemplated the long journey ahead, and had a feeling of apprehension. As I journeyed through the process, and finally began compiling data from interviews, I started to feel a sense of excitement at the idea of completing my study and sharing the findings with my colleagues and other practitioners. Prior to starting my DBA journey, I worked in the professional sector and did not have an appreciation for the hard work and dedication required to attain a DBA degree. Fast forward to now, and I have gained a genuine appreciation and respect for my peers who made this journey before me and for those who will come after me seeking their DBA degrees.

Conclusion

From the classroom to the boardroom, from the school place to the workplace, bullying is a phenomenon some individuals experienced from childhood to adulthood. There are 2.8 million businesses (small, medium, and large) in Florida and 33.5 million businesses in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Although it is not feasible to prevent or minimize workplace bullying in all 2.8 or 33.5 million businesses, we can each do our part, beginning with one organization at a time to eradicate bullying, improve society and businesses, and help increase employee productivity. Starting with a safe, respectful environment as the guiding principle, we have the potential to create nurturing and safe environments at work, in our homes, and in the community.

Based on the various roles of HR managers to deal with professional and organizational responsibilities, employee complaints, and the daily challenges identified, I question how HR managers can possibly find an equilibrium for the conflicting functions of employee advocate and strategic business colleague. The solution derived from a unique concept comprising a HR business partner model. While shaping organizational culture and values, HR personnel help build corporations, which contribute to shaping societal values through corporate responsibility initiatives. However, accountability for complaints and behavior should occur company-wide. Responsibility to reduce bullying and help create a healthy culture should be everyone's responsibility, not just HR managers' and leaders' obligation. Stakeholder scope of organization policies and guidelines should also apply to customers, prospective applicants, contractors, consultants, and vendors. These individuals may have the propensity to exhibit bullying behaviors and mistreat employees, or each other. By including these stakeholders in organization policies and guidelines, leaders, risk management, compliance, and HR may work proactively to ensure compliant conduct and behaviors in the business environment and the safety and well-being of all potential stakeholders who interact daily.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Interview Questions

A. IRB Approval

Prior to interviewing participants, I will obtain approval from the Walden University IRB to begin collecting data. Once the IRB provides approval, I will contact the organizational leader and request contact information for at least five HR managers and above who must meet the requirements to participate in the study.

B. Contact with Participants

- After receipt of participant information from the organizational leader, I will contact each participant, introduce myself, explain the purpose of the study, criteria to participate and ask each participant if he/she meets the criteria. If the participant does not meet all the criteria, I will employ the “snowballing” method and ask the participant to recommend a co-worker who may meet the criteria. If the participant meets the criteria, I will ask the participant if he/she would like to review an invitation and consent form to decide if he/she would be interested in participating. I will email a Letter of Invitation and Informed Consent Form to the participant to voluntarily participate in the study.
- The Letter of Invitation and Informed Consent Form will include the criteria for participants to verify that they qualify to participate.
- Criteria -- Participants must be HR personnel who hold a manager-level or above position, have a minimum of five years HR experience, have authority to make decisions regarding employee well-being, and have prior knowledge implementing workplace strategies.
- The email invitation will include directions for participants to sign and return the attached consent form, by email, within 24 hours of receipt, select a preferred meeting location, (a) on the organization premises, or (b) another place of his/her choosing, and provide 3 dates and times when the participant is available to meet for an interview.
- After receipt of the consent form, schedule the interview and email participant an invitation containing the date, time, and location; and include the 9 interview questions in the email invitation.
- 48 hours before the interview, call each participant to confirm participation, meeting place and time, and answer any questions. Reschedule interview as needed.

- 24 hours prior to the interview, email meeting reminder to participant and include the 9 interview questions.

C. Interview Protocol

I will interview at least five participants and collect data using nine open-ended questions. During a step in the process (see step 7 below), I will advise participants of the interview protocol for their understanding. The interview protocol consists of the following steps:

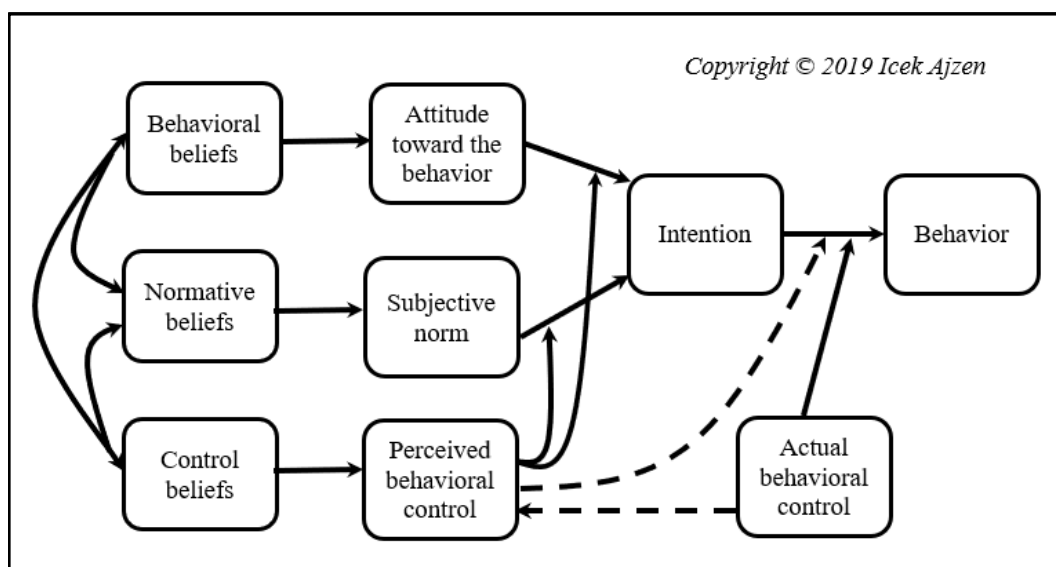
1. Arrive at the organization office, or a location preferred by the participant, at least 20 minutes prior to the start of the interview session.
2. Set up smartpen recorder and backup recorder by connecting them to a power source (to ensure uninterrupted recording) and place the recorders and smartpen dot paper on the table for immediate use.
3. When participant arrives, greet participant and introduce myself.
4. Engage in brief conversation with participant for a couple of minutes to break the ice and make participant feel comfortable.
5. Thank participant for taking the time to respond to the invitation to participate.
6. Ask for signed consent form, if participant did not email the signed form prior to the interview session.
7. Reconfirm participant meets the criteria to participate in the study.
8. Give participant a copy of consent form.
9. Ask if participant has any questions and answer any questions.
10. Explain the interview protocol to participant.
11. Explain the research topic and remind participant of the purpose of the study.
12. Remind participant the interview session will run for 45-60 minutes, will be recorded, and advise two recording devices will be used to ensure complete capture of the session.
13. Ask participant for permission to begin recording interview.
14. Turn on both recording devices.
15. Record the date, location, time, and pseudonym for the participant. The pseudonym will be the same confidential identifier on my copy of the consent form.
16. Begin inquiry driven interview session by asking the first question (see interview questions listed below this interview protocol)
17. After participant responds to the first question, I may ask additional questions to clarify the answer given. This same question-answer-clarification process will occur until all 9 questions are answered.
18. After all questions are answered, inform participant the interview session has ended and record the 'end time' for interview session.
19. Thank participant for his/her time and participation.
20. Collect recorders, notes, consent form, and organization documents provided such as procedures, training protocol, and website information and store securely in my briefcase. Lock the briefcase, then leave the premises.

21. Approximately 7 days after interview, schedule member checking follow up interview with participants to confirm interpretation of the data collected.
22. Approximately 7 days after interview, provide a copy of paraphrased transcript of responses to 9 interview questions to participants (for transcript review).
23. Ask participants to confirm the accuracy of their paraphrased responses within 7 days of receiving the interview transcript.
24. Based on participant responses, follow-up with any questions for clarification and make corrections as needed to the data interpretation.
25. Repeat steps 1-24 for each participant.
26. Determine if “snowballing” is needed to reach data saturation.
27. If additional interviews are needed, schedule the meeting and repeat steps 1-24.
28. Follow-up with a thank you email to all participants.
29. Complete the data collection process.

D. The following is the list of open-ended interview questions:

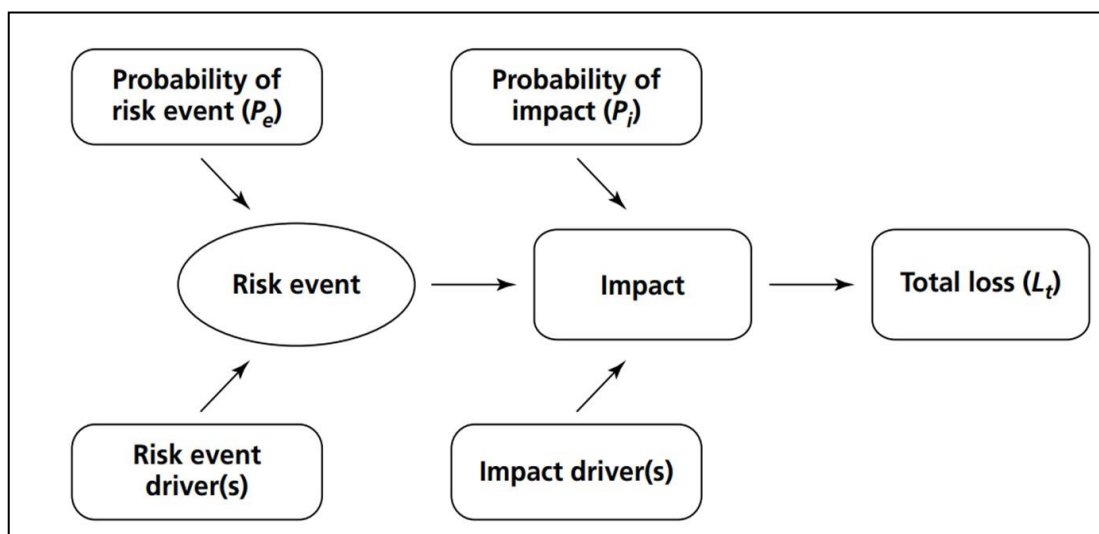
1. What behaviors do employees report as “bullying?”
2. How are human resources employees instructed to respond to reports of bullying?
3. How effective is the training provided for human resources employees to respond to incidents of bullying?
4. What initiatives aid those who have experienced workplace bullying?
5. What risk management strategies have you implemented to mitigate workplace bullying?
6. What effect do your strategies for addressing bullying have on organizational productivity?
7. What other strategies might assist human resources employees to respond effectively to workplace bullying?
8. How does your organization’s culture facilitate the prevention of workplace bullying?
9. What additional information can you provide to help me understand your response to workplace bullying?

Appendix B: Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)



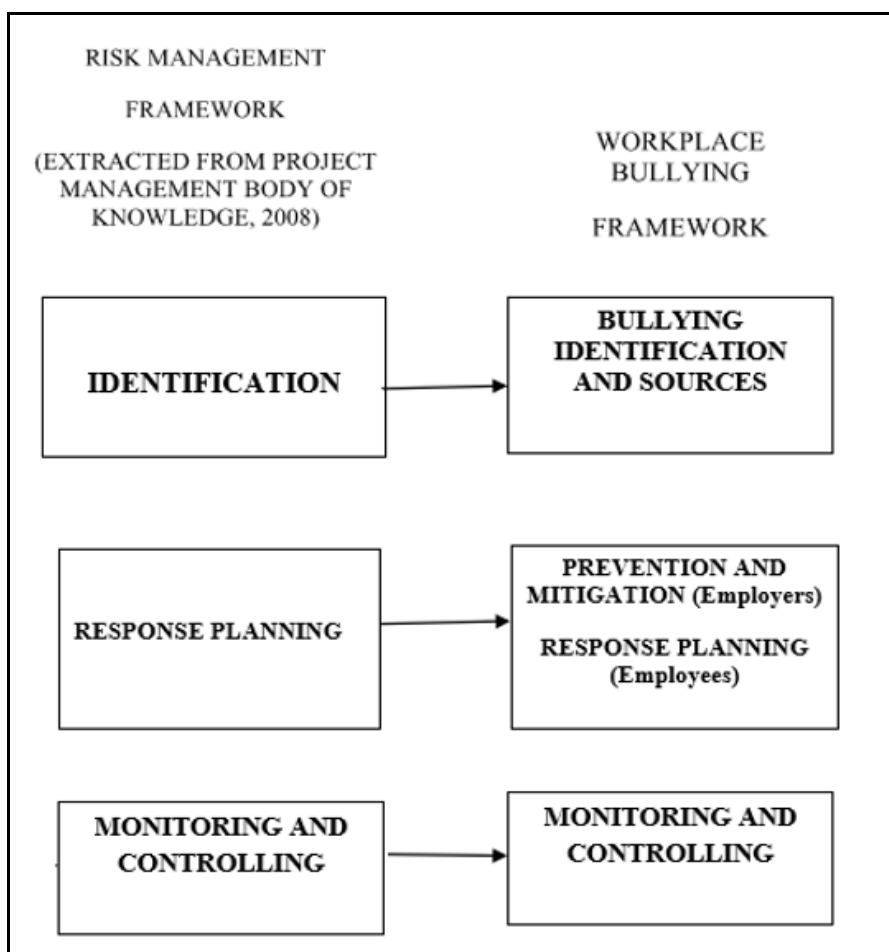
From "Theory of Planned Behavior," by I. Ajzen, 2019, retrieved with permission from people.umass.edu/ajzen/tpb.diag.html. Copyright 2019 by Icek Ajzen. Adapted with permission of the author.

Appendix C: Proactive Risk Management – Standard Risk Model



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Appendix D: Workplace Bullying: Risk Management Framework



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