# THE LEADER'S ROLE IN MOTIVATING PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS

by

James B. Meeks, Jr.

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Liberty University, School of Business

August, 2020

Abstract

In municipalities throughout the United States, there exists a belief that many public sector workers are unmotivated, disengaged from their work and disinterested in serving the public (Lavigna, 2014). This qualitative case study sought to understand the central phenomenon of the perceptions of public sector leaders in South Carolina for motivating their workers. Herzberg's theory regarding the efficacy of leaders to understand the intrinsic motivational factors influencing worker performance, along with the four aspects of transformational leadership served as the theoretical framework for this study. Franklin (2016) explored the impact of leadership styles using Herzberg's two-factor theory and a variety of leadership theories to assess the relationships of these constructs. Moore (2007) brought forth a significant study on the effect of leadership on organizational effectiveness, having demonstrated a positive relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and the financial, revenue-based results of firm performance. The key findings of the current study indicated that public sector leaders use many techniques to identify the factors for motivating their workers toward improved productivity and customer service, such as highly visible leadership, building close personal relationships and reflective inquiries. The findings appeared to support the expected outcomes at the onset of the study that transformational public sector leaders who understand their workers' intrinsic motivation factors inspire their workers to perform better; increased performance within the public sector organizations may be based, to some degree, upon the efficacy of the leader to recognize and enact various motivational stimuli to inspire their workers across the four aspects of transformational leadership.

*Keywords:* leadership, motivation, public sector, transformational leadership

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_____     Date:_____

Dr. Robert L. Dewhurst, Dissertation Chair

_____     Date:_____

Dr. Kimberly Johnson, Dissertation Committee Member

_____     Date:_____

Dr. Edward Moore, DBA Program Director

Dedication

It is with great pleasure that I dedicate this dissertation project to my wife, Teresa, my sons, Britt and Ethan, and my mother, Betty Meeks. For you have been my inspiration to go beyond what anyone may have expected and to be a model for those that follow. Thank you for your love, support and encouragement during the past 3 years and its many months of focus to produce the results in this dissertation.

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I acknowledge two dear friends and mentors throughout my DBA journey. Dr. Maxwell Rollins, Director of Graduate Programs, College of Business, at Charleston Southern University, and fellow graduate of the Liberty DBA program, Dr. Bridget Dewees, Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness at Claflin University. Dr. Rollins was there with an uplifting word of advice or the loan of a book, or with whatever was needed on many occasions to help pull me through. Likewise, Dr. Dewees, who was an inspiration to me for beginning this journey, provided so much of her expertise in the research and dissertation writing process. Thank you for your reviews of my work and the many words of hope and unfailing optimism along the way. To Mr. Kin Hill, P.E., and to Ms. Dorothy Harrison of Charleston Water System: as we have worked together for nearly 15 years, I have seen firsthand your extraordinary leadership and felt the integrity and compassion for our business and our people. Without you knowing it, these impressions have added greatly to my growth as a leader. Lastly, I thank my dissertation committee for their support, advice, and guidance as I worked my way through the process. I acknowledge Dr. Robert L. Dewhurst my dissertation Chair, as well as Dr. Edward Moore and Dr. Kimberly Johnson, my project Committee Members. Thank you all for your direction in producing an improved dissertation project.

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**Section 1: Foundation of the Study**

In municipalities throughout the United States, there exists a belief that many public sector workers are unmotivated, disengaged from their work, and disinterested in serving the public (Lavigna, 2014). Leaders have a responsibility to provide a motivating environment for workers (Burns, 1978). Many leaders in the public and private sectors are able to inspire workers to higher levels of performance and customer service, while others are not so capable. The difference often is determined by how well the leader perceives and understands the motivating factors that stimulate and incentivize worker performance. This study sought to understand the central phenomenon of the perceptions of public sector leaders in motivating their workers.

One of the most pressing challenges for leaders has been motivating their workers toward higher orders of performance. Section one of this paper will provide a statement of the general and specific problem in this area to be analyzed, as well as the purpose and nature of the research to be undertaken to further understand the topic of motivation. To properly frame the motivational constructs of this study and engage the reader in its design and method, a conceptual framework is established to demonstrate the rationale for the applied motivational and leadership theories as related to the research questions. The integration of Biblical principles, along with the study's relationship to the field of leadership and its practical application within a variety of business environments is demonstrated.

An exhaustive review of the academic athenaeum for literature related to the topics, which details a theoretical foundation of the concepts within public sector organizations is provided. Gaps in the current literature are identified and recommendations for future works are made, leading to the necessity for this study. To begin this study, the reader must first understand

the background of the problem in motivating workers and the importance of the concept in contemporary leadership theory and practice.

**Background of the Problem**

The ability to cultivate and maintain a motivated workforce is an essential element in the success of an organization (Tusha, 2019). Employee motivation is a topic that has intrigued scholars and practitioners alike for many decades and many theories of motivation exist in the literature. The role of the leader in motivating workers has been a topic of discussion and academic interest in recent decades. The research indicated that leadership is a key component of employee motivation, as recognized through: job satisfaction and a willingness to work in teams (Musinguzi et al., 2018), in suggesting ideas and supporting corporate innovation (Fashina, 2019), and in improved productivity (Christian et al., 2018).

Within the expanse of the research there are numerous investigations relating leadership influence and treatment on employee motivation. However, there exists a lack of understanding how the leader's perception and level of understanding of the motivational factors derived from their particular workforce can impact the motivation and engagement of their workers' productivity, often resulting in poor customer service. Understanding the influences and drivers of motivation for their specific employee groups, may allow leaders to capitalize on insights and incentives which results in workers that are more productive, more satisfied and achieve higher levels of affective commitment and organizational commitment (Christle, 2019). A review of the current writings indicates that this phenomenon has not been fully studied in the public sector municipalities of South Carolina.

Tusha (2019) studied the differences in motivational factors for public and private sector workers, having noted a number of similarities and difference across several factors such as

working conditions, autonomy and involvement in decisions and personal growth and career advancement. Similarly, Serhan et al. (2018) agreed that extrinsic motivating factors among public sector workers included pay, working conditions, level of autonomy, participation in decisions and relationships between co-workers and supervision. Conversely, pay increases and monetary incentives had no significant effect on the motivational level for increased effort to produce higher levels of output among workers according to one study in Italy (Belle & Cantarelli, 2015).

Leadership style is also a factor in successful employee motivation (Saad et al., 2018) with transformational leadership appearing as having a significant positive relationship to employee motivation (Lee, 2017; Rodriguez, 2018; Salamone, 2017; Sunyoung & Sang-Choong, 2019), with Riedle (2015) purported that age was also a mediating factor for motivation under the transformational leadership style. The literature also indicated that there are differences in the factors of motivation for public sector workers when compared to those in the private sector. Public service motivation is connected to a parochial affinity for service to the local citizens (Van Witteloostuijn, 2017). Christle (2019) indicated that employee motivation is important in the public sector as the intrinsic motivators for public servants are different than those of private sector workers and are grounded upon a willingness to help their local communities and, in general, society as a whole. Accordingly, organizational fit appears to be a primary factor in employee motivation of public sector workers with Gould-Williams et al. (2015) having contributed that person-organization value alignment is a mediating factor in affective commitment and an affinity for adopting appropriate organizational citizenship behaviors in favor of public service motivation and commitment.

**Problem Statement**

The general problem to be addressed is the lack of leaders' understanding for motivating and engaging their workers' productivity, resulting in poor customer service. The literature indicates that much research has been conducted relating the importance of the leader's role in motivating and engaging employees. For example, Salary (2019) reported that in one sample of workers in a large, southern U.S. city, that 70 percent of the workforce was unmotivated leading to losses in sales and productivity, costing nearly $500 billion each year to local businesses. These losses are directly attributed to the inability of leaders of these workers to effectively motivate them (Salary, 2019). Walker (2015) confirmed that the absence of a leaders' understanding and support of factors that motivate employees' engagement inhibited their ability to provide productive work outcomes. As further evidence, recent studies have indicated the lack of a leader's understanding of subordinate's motivation led to productivity issues among nearly 80% of the subjects studied (Jones et al., 2014; Kerr & Frese, 2017; Rosalis, 2019). In public sector organizations, employee motivations extend beyond the influences of the manager, involving compassion for their home communities, self-efficacy and other factors (Andrews, 2016; Azhar, 2017; O'Leary, 2019). Wyche-Seawood (2019) related that leaders who did not understand the motives of organizational and individual citizenship behaviors had negative implications in worker satisfaction and retention. In municipal associations within South Carolina, Haroski (2015) reported that engaged workers received customer service ratings 20% higher than other workers, inferring that a majority of workers may not be adequately engaged to meet customer expectations. Therefore, the specific problem to be addressed is the lack of leaders' understanding in public sector service organizations in South Carolina, such as city

administrative and public works offices, for motivating and engaging their workers' productivity, resulting in poor customer service.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to extend the academic athenaeum by expanding current understandings of the reasons for poorly motivated public sector workers. Wyche-Seawood (2019), along with Walker (2015), indicated the leader's lack of understanding of the motivating factors of their workforce contributed to an environment of reduced worker satisfaction and ineffective operational productivity. This larger problem is investigated through an in-depth study of leaders' perspectives of motivation in the public sector and the extent to which these leaders understand and utilize motivational factors in assisting their workers to become more productive within the administrative services and public works departments of large to medium-sized municipalities in South Carolina. For the purposes of this study, the criteria, large to medium-sized is defined as city populations greater than 12,000 residents in 2018, as noted in the latest 2010 U.S. Census Bureau statistics. This criterion provides a pool of 32 targeted municipalities to include in the research.

**Nature of the Study**

*Discussion of the Method*

The area of focus of this research project would target individuals in manager or supervisor job titles with immediate responsibility for front line workers, as relevant to the organizational structure of the municipality. This approach provides a wide-range target group of research participants across each municipality from the front line to middle management job types. The study will focus on city public works departments, as organized by the municipality to include maintenance, facility and infrastructure areas such as street maintenance, sanitation and

recycling, electric, gas or water/sewer utilities, storm water operation, as applicable. For the purposes of this study, the criteria: large to medium-sized municipalities with city populations greater than 12,000 residents in 2018, as noted in the latest 2010 U.S. Census Bureau statistics are selected for inclusion for this project. This criterion provides a pool of 32 targeted municipalities to include in the research. The researcher will utilize the members of the Municipal Association of South Carolina, an advocacy alliance for incorporated municipalities within the state and the researcher's personal professional network contacts. An initial letter indicating the nature of the study and requesting the city's permission to participate in the study will be sent two-to-three months prior to the onset of the data collection process. Subsequent contacts will ensue by email and telephone to ensure replies to the affirmative or negation of that city's willingness to allow their public works department to become a subject of the research. Contacts with the public work department managers will be made requesting their voluntary participation, albeit with the supported expectation by their line leadership.

A pilot survey for ascertaining a primary leadership style will be used as the main method for collecting data with the manager and supervisors. Leaders who demonstrate a primary leadership style preference other than the transformational leadership style will not be included in the study. A conciliatory letter of appreciation, along with a summary of their individual survey results will be sent to them.

For those leaders who demonstrate a preference for the transformational leadership style, interviews will be conducted as follow-up to ascertain the perceptions of the leader in understanding the motivating factors of their workers.

As an ancillary step in the research process, for those organizations where permission is granted to access the hourly workforce, focus groups will be utilized as the primary mechanism

for gathering information regarding the actual motivational factors for the front line subordinates of their managers/supervisors. This information will serve as a comparative to verify the accuracy of the understanding each leader possesses regarding the motivating factors of their workforce. The findings from this ancillary step will be documented in the Discussion Section of the paper.

Each interview and focus group session will be recorded. In all cases, the participants' consents and permissions to use their input in the research and findings will be gathered prior to any meeting. Recorded sessions will be transcribed by a professional, third party, contracted transcriptionist.

### *Discussion of the Design*

Because this study of public sector leadership deals with gaining further understanding of the central phenomenon of a leader's understanding of motivation within a focused environment, a qualitative, case study design is proposed for the research approach. Case study designs are referenced in a specific timeframe and seek to derive a detailed understanding of defined social events or human circumstances of the subjects in the study (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative business research methods are used to focus on both the interpretations of the views and perspectives associated with the case study and the clarification of issues remaining from quantitative works (Paivi & Kovalainen, 2016). The case study method was ultimately selected because the proposed investigation is epistemologically focused on the general perspectives of public sector leaders across a wide geographic region within the state of South Carolina, to derive their level of understanding of motivational factors of their parochial workforce. Thereby, allowing the selected approach to compare the factors influencing leader perceptions across regions, rather than a myopic approach for a single entity for which a case study approach is

better suited. The preceding premises provide the rationale for the selected design and method as appropriate for the study.

To address both the primary research questions and their supplemental sub-questions, a sample of voluntary participants in the public works manager role from municipalities across South Carolina with populations greater than 12,000 citizens are considered for this project. Pilot surveys, using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 2015) are to be administered to qualify those leaders possessing a predominantly transformational leadership style for participation in the study. It may be necessary to conduct a follow-up interview with members of leadership to further understand their methods for motivating their workers. Focus groups will be conducted for employee groups, where permitted, to understand the perceptions and impacts of the leader's efficacy in motivating them.

The qualitative interviewing techniques prescribed by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), as well as the procedures for conducting focus group sessions from Krueger and Casey (2015) and Morgan (2019) are being considered as guiding procedures for inquiry during the research. Paivi and Kovalainen (2016) noted that qualitative research involves studying the relationships between people, their existence in the world and their lived experiences. Qualitative research seeks to understand human social issues and their interrelatedness (Creswell, 2014). The central inquiry of this project involves understanding the perspectives leaders possess regarding their workers' motivations. Therefore, after careful consideration, the qualitative, case study design was chosen for this research project.

Consideration was given to conducting both the quantitative and mixed methods research for this project. By its nature, quantitative research is focused on explanations between two or more variables based upon hypotheses and statistical analyses and does not typically account for

the social constructs and nuances of the subjects of the study (Silverman, 2011). An abbreviated

survey of the volumes in the prior decade indicate that most of the studies conducted on

motivation have been related to the correlation of variables with statistical analyses (Graves,

2019; Gupta, 2018; Kish-Palos, 2017; Schilling, 2019). Because the proposed interests surround

the realities perceived by leaders and their workers, as well as the social phenomenon

influencing their perceptions, quantitative methods and mixed methods were rejected in the

inquiry's design, allowing the researcher to focus on the socially endemic contexts of the issue

being studied (Paivi & Kovalainen, 2016). To properly fathom these contexts, interviews and

focus groups will be used as the primary vehicles for collecting data. In the rare event that

interviews, and focus groups are not possible, surveys with both closed and free response items

will be distributed as a contingent, secondary resource. NVivo software or similar products are

being considered for coding and further analysis to gain insights from the inputs of the

interviews and focus groups.

     Other qualitative design approaches were deliberated, yet deemed inappropriate for this

study, primarily because the limited number of participants afforded from other such approaches

would not support data saturation required for validity of the study. The narrative approach relies

upon the interpretation of the researcher to decipher the inputs from the participants and does not

proscribe inherent biases or predisposed assumptions of the researcher in the analysis of the

narrations (Creswell, 2014). The case study method was carefully considered by the research as a

potential primary design model. The researcher was compelled to select this method due to its

focused approach on analyzing overlapping evidence from a variety of sources, such as:

interviews, narratives, related documentation, surveys and other historical evidence (Yin, 2018).

The phenomenological method was evaluated. As this method relies upon the lived experiences

of the subjects as related through personal stories and narratives, it was rejected because the researcher felt embellishments by the participants and subject bias in the delivery of the material would skew the responses and produce a negative impact in the results. To complete the dissertation within University's project duration standards, ethnographic designs were eliminated, as these designs require a significant, prolonged commitment to understand the cultural nuances behind a phenomenon.

**Research Questions**

Research questions in qualitative studies are used to confirm the purpose of the study by inquiring the meaning, relevance or process of the central case being analyzed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To accomplish the purpose of the research, the following central research questions are proposed.

**RQ1:** To what extent does leadership style effect the perceptions of leaders of public sector workers within the large to medium-sized municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that motivate their workers toward higher productivity?

**RQ1a:** Sub-question - How do these perceptions enhance or inhibit the productivity of workers?

**RQ2:** To what extent does leadership style effect the perceptions of leaders of public sector workers within the larger municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that engage their workers that enable customer service?

**RQ2a:** Sub-question - How do these perceptions enhance or inhibit the engagement of workers to provide good customer service?

**RQ3:** What are the perceptions of public sector workers within the larger municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that motivate and engage their productivity and customer service efficacy?

**Conceptual Framework**

A theoretical or conceptual framework establishes the academic foundation for the concepts that are being deployed in the study (DBA, 2018). A graphic illustration is generally used to explain the theories, variables and interaction of other important factors demonstrated in the research (Miles & Hubermann, 2014). This section outlines the theories of motivation and leadership that underlie the perception of managers in stimulating their workforce toward optimized performance. A graphical representation of the interrelationship of these theories in leader's desire to have excellence in their workers' outcomes is illustrated.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework*
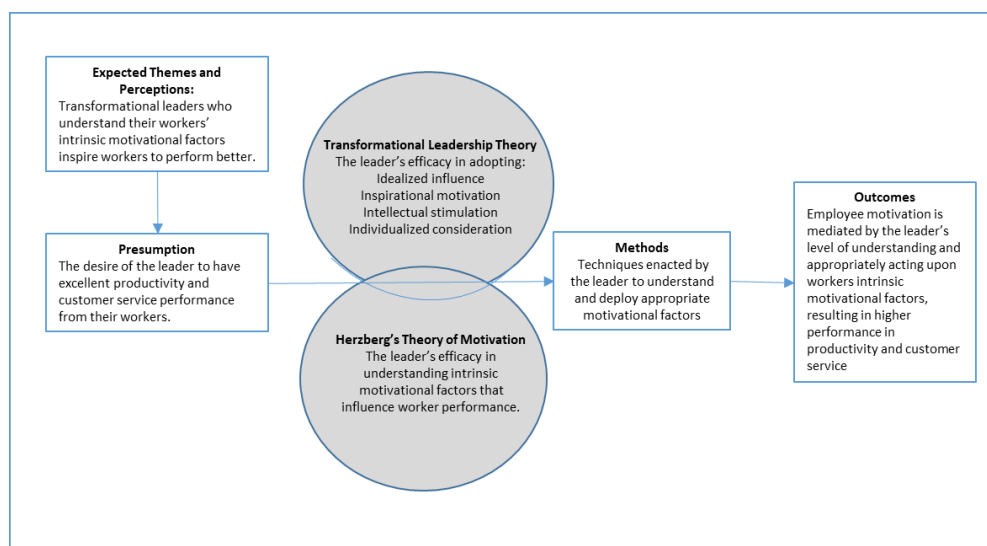


The theoretical/conceptual framework for this research is based upon the foundational work of Herzberg's theories of motivation (2017) and the postulated empirical findings of Bass and Riggio (2005) and Burns (1978) on transformational leadership. As this study's premise centers around the transformational leader's perceptions and approach to understanding the intrinsic motivators of his or her workers and its resulting influence on worker productivity and customer service outcomes, these theories provide the cornerstone for the inquiry and research

for this investigation. The research questions and sub-questions from this study seek to address how well leaders who possess a transformational leadership style understand and act upon the appropriate intrinsic motivational factors that align with their staff's motivational needs to stimulate and inspire them.

### *Discussion of Concept 1: Herzberg's Theory of Motivation*

Frederick Herzberg (2017) noted the interplay between worker attitudes, their work setting and several psychological variables that impact the perceptions of the worker about their supervisor, the personal value of work being performed, how they are to be recognized and how they think about themselves. In the 1950s, Herzberg interviewed professionals about factors they attributed to their job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction (Hardy, 1990). The resulting study compiled a list of intrinsic factors related to satisfiers and extrinsic factors, such as bureaucracy, salary, policy administration etc. that were espoused as detractors, known as hygiene factors to the employee's satisfaction (Hardy, 1990). Intrinsic motivational factors remain relevant in the dynamics of contemporary leadership, as well as for this research study, in establishing a basis for effective management across several aspects of the leader-worker relationship, for example: employee satisfaction, affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors (Ohana, 2016), all of which have been shown to have positive impacts in both productivity and customer service (Okinyi, 2015).

### *Discussion of Concept 2: Transformational Leadership*

James Burns (1978) provided the foundation for transformational leadership theory, having purported that the basis of leadership is meeting the needs of followers and those leaders who understand and fulfill the needs of their followers become more capable in motivating their workers to higher levels of performance (Northouse, 2019), and as such, assist them in reaching

their highest potential through a self-awareness of the need to support the organization's mission

(Bass, 1990). Transformational leadership theorizes four determinants that compel one's

leadership behaviors in this manner: idealized influence, or the modeling of desired traits;

inspirational motivation, or conveying commitment to a shared vision; intellectual stimulation,

which challenges workers' entrenched thinking and encourages innovation and creativity; and

individualized consideration, a person-to-person approach to leadership involving listening,

coaching and relationship building (Northouse, 2019).

### *Discussion of the Relationship Between the Concepts*

When a leader exercises one of the four traits of transformational leadership, or a

combination on of the four traits, he/she may better understand the intrinsic factors that stimulate

employees toward a shared vision, higher orders of thinking and exceptional performance

beyond what the employee thought possible (Northouse, 2019). Maffei (2019) asserted that the

ability to motivate workers was related to the ability of the supervisor to create meaningful

relationships and an understanding of the motivating factors of their workers, which resulted in

higher employee satisfaction and retention among public sector workers. Leaders possessing an

efficacy toward transformational leadership proved highly capable in establishing interventions

that inspired intrinsic motivation among workers (Salary, 2019).

### Definitions of Key Terms

The following are definitions of terms used throughout the research study.

*Herzberg's Two-factor Analysis of Motivation:* Herzberg's theory of motivation involves

two factors that operate independently of each other: motivators and hygiene factors (Herzberg,

2017). Motivators are those elements within the job itself which propel a person to want to

perform the task; examples are achievement, recognition and growth (Herzberg, 2017). Hygiene

factors, while not an essential element of the job itself, may cause the worker to be demotivated if they are not present; examples are working conditions, supervisory relationships and remuneration (Herzberg, 2017).

*Idealized influence:* describes the actions of leaders in modeling appropriate behaviors for their followers to emulate into their work practices. This phenomenon requires the leader to possess high ethical standards and moral conduct in building the trust of their constituents (Northouse, 2019).

*Individualized consideration:* relates to the degree of empathy and understanding a leader extols in their relationships with workers and is demonstrated by the level to which the leader strives to meet the needs of the individuals and those of the workgroup as a whole (Crede et al., 2019).

*Inspirational motivation:* involves imparting a shared vision to followers, along with the establishment of performance expectations beyond the self-interests the workers themselves (Altunoğlu et al., 2019). Strategic symbolism and appeals encourage the intellect and emotions are used by the leader to drive achievement beyond what their followers thought possible (Northouse, 2019).

*Intellectual stimulation:* engages the thinking of the workforce as the leader solicits ideas to new approaches to solving problems, drive improvements and create new innovations regarding work processes (Northouse, 2019). Communication, trust and openness are key competencies of this transformational factor (Altunoğlu et al., 2019).

*Intrinsic motivation:* involves psychological constructs within the essence of a person, such as initiative, self-efficacy, satisfaction and service, which engage behaviors favorable to the accomplishment of work as a means to its own end (Kruglanski et al., 2018).

*Motivation:* A generally accepted definition of motivation is the desire or reason for someone supporting a cause or performing a task (Northouse, 2019). In the context of public sector work environments, for the purpose of this study, motivation includes three graduated attributes: self-interests, career advancement and service and appreciation (Prowle, 2016).

*Public sector:* Pynes (2013) defined the public sector as a variety of organizations that are wholly owned or partially controlled by a governmental entity, established to serve the needs of the citizenry of a community, city or nation. In the context of this paper, the terms public sector workers and public service workers are used interchangeably.

*Public works:* involve public sector services, such as street, rail and subway maintenance, garbage control, sewer and water systems, electric and gas utilities, among others which may be both publicly financed and managed through a governmental entity or those which may be contracted through a third party and either publicly or privately financed (Prowle, 2016).

*Transformational leadership:* refers to a style of leadership interaction which inspires workers toward idealized organizational goals, corporate values, and motivates them to aspire toward higher order achievements above their parochial interests (Northouse, 2019). Several terms below are espoused from Transformational Leadership Theory: "idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration" (Northouse, 2019, p. 169).

**Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations**

*Assumptions*

There were several assumptions made in the context of this study across three categories: the theoretical aspect, the research design and the data collection aspect. A primary theoretical assumption made is that leaders possess the desire to employ workers that are motivated and

engaged and leaders install programs and interventions that stimulate the motivational factors of their workers to impact productive outcomes and customer satisfaction. Another theoretical assumption is the belief that certain leadership styles induce greater efficacy of the leader in stimulating employee motivation. A third theoretical assumption, which is very relevant to the problem, is that public works managers, due to their proximity to members of the community receiving their services, recognize a higher professional value for having a motivated workforce.

There are several assumptions existing in the research design and the collection of data. The first of these involves the collection of data using the Multiple Level Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 2015) as an appropriate pilot instrument to qualify the participants' continuation in the study. The MLQ relates the frequency in which the respondent enacts certain behaviors across multiple leadership styles, rather than a single-focused depiction of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 2015). Given that the MLQ is a self-rating inventory, assumptions of bias are a concern for the researcher along with the participants' level of applied thoughtfulness to completing the MLQ. The instrument was delivered to participants electronically using a web distribution software. Tourangeau et al. (2018) reported that the type of device (e.g., laptop, cellphone or tablet) used to complete the survey may have some minimal effects on the data quality and reliability of the results.

Other assumptions in the data collection process include: (a) the data collected in the sampling was representative of those within the population of managers and employees in the public sector of South Carolina; (b) the responses provided from those participating in the study were reflective of their professional, honest opinions and based upon their own perceptions and not those of others outside of the study; and (c) the subjects of the study acted as voluntary

participants and were not coerced by management or others in their organizations to participate in the study.

*Limitations*

Limitations are defined as the factors of research, typically beyond the examiner's control, that inhibit the examiner's ability to gather information or accurately draw conclusions (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The limitations of this study involve the sample size, differences in corporate cultures and general cultural perceptions of worker motivation across the public sector in South Carolina. Constraints are noted in the qualitative research method in deselecting from the study leaders who did not possess an affinity for the transformational leadership style. The organization must also maintain metrics for productivity and customer service either at the departmental or corporate level. Samples of such metrics include overall customer satisfaction ratings, staffing hours per service provided, overtime costs, and service response-time rates.

Another distinctive limitation concerning the timing for this research project is the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and its consequences for societal interaction. Social distancing, alternative operating hours and work schedules, along with quarantine and sheltering requirements create a concern for gaining access to organizations. Their willingness to participate in the study could be impacted by competing business objectives with production outages, financial challenges and staffing shortages. Also, social distancing limitations may inhibit ordinary face-to-face interviews and prohibit normal focus group exchanges.

*Delimitations*

Delimitations involve the boundaries of the research and relate those factors which are not considered as a part of the study (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The delimitations for this research include the time and location, the classifications of managers and employees participating in the

study, selected aspects of the problem. The time and location of the study is established for the January through April 2020 in municipalities across South Carolina. Only those organizations who matched the criteria established for selected aspects of the problem were incorporated into the research.

The criteria set forth the following conditions. The municipality must be contained within the State boundary of South Carolina. Municipalities with populations of 12,000 and above were qualified to participate; those with populations below 12,000 were not included in the research. The research focused on front-line leaders in public works departments in qualified municipalities. In many instances, the job title of these leaders varied from director, to manager, to supervisor and to coordinator in one case.

Regardless of the leader's official title, the leader must have provided the immediate, day-to-day supervision of the workgroup in order to be included in the study. Those leaders that did not provide the immediate supervision to the front line workforce were excluded from the study. Employees were qualified by their reporting line relationship to the subject-leader. The employees who reported to another leader other than the supervisor selected for the study were not included.

**Significance of the Study**

Each study must reflect its significance as an academic or applied resource. The central idea of this study is to assist public sector leaders in understanding the importance of correctly perceiving the motivational factors of their workers. These perceptions may impact their ability to encourage improved worker outcomes. While numerous quantitative studies have been conducted, little research has been undertaken to understand the perceptions of leaders in the

public sector of South Carolina in this regard. This study seeks to fill the current gap with an initial response to the expressed problem statement.

Workers formulate opinions about the organizations in which they work through a complex network of experiences and interactions, both those internal to the work environment and those external to the organization, that frame the intrinsic factors driving their motivation (Serhan et al., 2018). Tusha (2019) indicated that employee motivation served as a fundamental component in an organization's ability to meet its objectives. Successful organizations are typically those that understand the intrinsic needs of their workers and respond favorably in addressing those needs (Serhan et al., 2018).

### *Reduction of Gaps*

While much research has been conducted with quantitative analyses to understand the relationship between leadership style and various dependent variables (Fashina, 2019; Marshall, 2019; Vo, 2019; Walker, 2019), the current project seeks to examine the perceptions of leaders regarding their workers' motivational needs and fill a gap in the academic literature regarding leadership influences across public sector organizations in South Carolina. This study seeks to contribute to the understanding of leaders' perceptions of motivation in public organizations across a regional demographic.

Cook (2018) noted that public sector workers tended to attain satisfaction from several intrinsic motivators derived from their service to their local communities, and while many of these satisfiers were based upon their perceptions of the agency in which they worked, the nature of the work they performed, its recognized contribution to society and, most importantly, the relationship they had with their supervisor, conclusions were still open regarding the impact of the supervisor's efficacy in relating the motivating factors successfully. Sahir et al. (2018)

provided that further research was necessary to understand the impact on intrinsic motivators as constraints to achievement, autonomy and retention across a broader spectrum of geographic and cultural regions. Washington (2017), upon completion of a qualitative study emphasizing intrinsic motivations of public sector workers in Mississippi, agreed that additional consideration was required in multiple populations and regions to attend the findings within the practice of public administration. To better understand the relationship between leaders, human motivation and performance outcomes in the public sector, further study is needed across demographic regions, particularly in organizations where systemic changes and organizational strategies were implemented to enhance worker performance (Lymon, 2019). Public workers considered the fulfillment of both their value of altruism and personal commitment to upholding a societal responsibility as a reward for their service over the financial returns for their work; however, other demographics such as regional analysis, worker seniority and generational factors were not fully understood in this regard (Chang et al., 2017).

Many quantitative studies have been conducted relating leadership style to motivation. Nientied and Toska (2019) analyzed transactional styles against organizational commitment, motivation and performance levels, having recommended further qualitative investigations to complete the understanding of the influence of various leadership styles on worker motivation. In contrast, transformational styles were significantly related to encouraging employee motivation and satisfaction over those leaders with predominantly transactional or laissez-faire styles (Musinguzi et al., 2018). Musinguzi et al. (2018) suggested that research must continue to realize a fuller understanding of the mediating factors influencing motivation to produce innovative solutions to more effective leadership approaches. Transformational leaders in the public sector tended to be more effective at inspiring their workforce in the absence of financial, career and

other incentives typically found in private sector organizations (de Gennarro, 2019). Political influences and governmental bureaucracy were seen as moderators to such success, necessitating future research to further comprehend transformational leadership and its affects within public administration (de Gennarro, 2019). Andersen et al. (2018) and Jensen and Bro (2018) reported that understanding the effects of transformational leadership on public sector motivation were complex, having found that an affinity for this style of leadership purports linking the intrinsic motivators of the workforce to the vision of the organization, requiring future research from a variety of organizations and geographic areas to confirm this finding.

### *Implications for Biblical Integration*

Jesus, as the Great Shepherd, modeled the leader's role in motivating his disciples, his first-century followers and his present-day believers when He speaks to the humility of the meek, the greatness of the downtrodden and the strength of the peacemakers and those that are persecuted (Matthew 5: 1-11 English Standard Version [ESV]). He calls his people salt and light referring to the importance of their good works not only on the earth but for the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5: 13-19, ESV). In these words, Jesus is captivating the intrinsic motivations of his audience with a compelling vision of the future and their worth in it. Likewise, a transformational leader must do the same as our Lord. Transformational leaders must execute great adeptness in perceiving the needs of their followers and a skilled adaptation of these need toward a new vision of future possibilities (Northouse, 2019). Leaders who developed deep relationships with their employees were found to provide more motivating environments where the employees felt a stronger organizational commitment leading to less job stress and higher retention (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2017). In kind, the words from 1 Peter provide a foundation for this research project as it relates that leaders are to be shepherds of the people that are assigned to

their care and to do so with a willing heart for serving them by modeling appropriate behaviors and treating them well (1 Peter 5:2-3 ESV).

Boyd et al. (2018) reported that a sense of service to the home community is a primary motivator for employees in public sector organizations and recommend managers invoke this sense of service as they set forth organizational strategies. Similarly, Keller and Alsdorf (2012) stated that Christianity and its higher calling to a greater good, modeled the selflessness required of any leader regardless of their vocation.

As spirituality relates to employee motivation, Bhatti et al. (2016) found that deriving motivators attached to an employee's spirituality: their sense of goodness, integrity and wholeness, was significantly related to improving their motivation to perform at higher levels. Spirituality and work motivation was explored by Rezapour et al. (2016), Ghazzawi et al. (2016), Afsar et al. (2014), and Belwalkar et al. (2018) with each indicating that a devout belief in God and a faith orientation mediated worker motivation which, in turn, influenced their level of employee satisfaction and work performance. Separate studies by Garg (2017) and Moon et al. (2018) indicated that an employee's belief in God mediated their intrinsic motivation to perform well and meet the expectations of the job as a part of their overall employee satisfaction.

### *Relationship to the Field of Study*

This study is designed as a cross-section qualitative project exploring the perceptions of leaders and motivation. The significance of this research is to identify leadership characteristics that impact the motivation of workers toward higher productivity and customer service within the public sector. The central idea of this study presumes that as a leader gains a greater understanding of the factors that influence intrinsic worker motivations and becomes more adept at deploying appropriate interventions that enhance and stimulate these factors, worker outcomes

will be positively impacted. The findings of this research can be applied to other entities in the public sector seeking to improve the productivity and customer service orientations of their workforce. Understanding the leadership style of the leader and their perception of motivational factors of their employees may help organizations to pursue policies and actions that guide transformational behaviors and establish leadership development initiatives that promote healthy workforce climates conducive to employee engagement yielding improved productivity and customer relations. Stimulating the intrinsic motives of public sector workers, in turn, increases their affinity for supporting the greater public interest within their home communities (van Witteloostuijn et al., 2017). As such, this research may also enhance societal contributions by helping public service managers improve their organizational performance and increase efficiency levels as a part of daily operations, thereby rendering improved services to their key communities.

**Literature Review**

The purpose of this study is to further understand the reasons for poorly motivated public sector workers. The central question of this research seeks to clarify leaders' lack of understanding of the motivating factors of their workforce in public sector organizations. Thomas (2015) addressed the complexities that public administrators face in motivating their employees, having emphasized the importance of public officials' understanding of the motivational needs of their employees and its effects on promoting productivity and delivering expected service levels. Wyche-Seawood (2019), along with Walker (2015), indicated that failure to understand this linkage contributed to an environment of reduced worker satisfaction and ineffective operational productivity. Janković (2018) analyzed leadership influence in public utilities and its impact on employee motivation, having found that the leadership style of these

managers, as well as other ancillary aspects, such as the ethical behavior, work environment factors and the ability of the leaders to gain acceptance and commitment from the workers toward the organization's goals, directly resulting in an impact on financial success.

The literature provides various definitions for leadership from the theoretical, academic perspective to those of operational practicality. For the purpose of organizational leadership, this paper's definition of leadership defers to four components of the leadership-follower relationship rendered by Gandolfi and Stone (2017): (1) a leader will emerge from a group; (2) followers must be willing to adhere to the leader's assertions; (3) those assertions must be associated with some type of directed thought, perception or action required of the followers; and (4) these actions must be related to some goal or objective for the group to attain (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017).

Leadership is an imperative for effective operations in public organizations (Morton, 2019). Public sector leaders have the responsibility to impact positive social change through the development of meaningful policies, the efficient management of operations and the inspiration of motivated associates to dutifully execute their assigned roles in satisfying the greater public good (Morton, 2019). Leadership theory among public service sector leaders indicated that when managers set forth performance outcomes against the employees' altruistic motivations, workers are more engaged and more committed to their work and the achievement of those work outcomes (Simpson, 2017). The level of motivation and commitment to service among public sector workers appeared to be mediated by leadership style of the employee's immediate manager (Simpson, 2017).

Moore (2007) brought forth a significant study on the effect of leadership on organizational effectiveness, having demonstrated a positive relationship between

transformational leadership behaviors and the financial, revenue-based results of firm

performance. However, Ward (2017) provided that there remains a lack of understanding of the

deeper relationships between leadership skills and motivation. As such, an understanding of the

nature and theory of motivation in the workplace must be attained, as well as an understanding of

the influence leaders have on the conditions impacting motivation among their workers.

Motivational and leadership theories serve as the framework for this research project. This

review seeks to extend the academic athenaeum by exploring the related literature and

classifying the findings into four general categories for analysis: (1) general aspects of

motivational theory; (2) employee motivation, productivity, and customer service; (3)

motivational theory in the public sector; and (4) leadership systems and organizational theory in

the public sector. Motivational theories and the transformational leadership theory will be

analyzed, and a variety of past studies will be examined to formulate a basis for the research to

be conducted in the dissertation project.

**General Aspects of Motivational Theory**

For the purposes of this study, motivation is defined as a psychological construct in

which a leader attempts to stimulate employee satisfaction and engagement in the workplace

(Bass et al., 2003; Burns, 1978). In relation to the leader's role in motivating workers, Burns

(1978) reflected a basic definition of motivation as arousing, stimulating or satisfying the

motives of another. Regarding the leader's perceptions of employee motivation, McRee (2018)

reported that interventions by management to alter how a worker felt about the purpose or worth

of the task or how they perceived various cognitive aspects of the work, increased levels of

motivation and job satisfaction. In turn, leaders participating in such interventions learned

significant factors to stimulate the thinking and engagement of their subordinates McRee (2018).

Such actions that stimulate the engagement of employees are founded in motivational theories that drive human performance. Motivation theories abound in contemporary management science, with those of Maslow, Herzberg, McClelland and Vroom serving as the foundation to the study of human motivation in the workplace.

*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*

Maslow created a five-layer model recognizing human needs (Maslow, 2013). Maslow's fundamental work explained a needs hierarchy by which humans satisfy needs in progression as they seek to reach self-actualization or the highest potential of themselves (Maslow, 2013). The lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy: safety and psychological, reflect extrinsic needs, while the higher levels: belonging, esteem and above, are driven internally as intrinsic needs (Ahmed, 2017). Maslow's theory proposed that the lower level need must be satisfied before an individual will seek to fulfill upper level needs (Pignatelli, 2016). Maslow's theory remains relevant in a modern world context among employers in creating work environments conducive to improved engagement and productivity of its workers, expressing contemporary attempts of companies like Google, Southwest Airlines, Valve Software and others to motivate their workforces (Stewart et al., 2018). These organizations set forth compensation plans, offer ancillary benefits, promote job security to satisfy psychological and safety needs, establish positive corporate cultures that encourages teamwork and esprit de corps, provide training and career growth to meet belonging and esteem needs, while engaging their intellectual capabilities in problem solving and challenging projects to address self-actualization (Stewart et al., 2018). The use of Maslow's hierarchy of needs was found to be an essential component in creating work environments that engage employees to become more satisfied and productive (DiMaggio, 2019; Stanley, 2017; Stoyanov, 2017; Vignesh, 2016).

Relevant to the premise of this particular research project are two recent findings. Taylor (2019) showed where interpreting Maslow's theory of needs was influential in the implementation of the transformational leadership style to derive employee satisfaction and their motivation to accomplish corporate goals. Dimaggio (2019) confirmed that when managers possess a greater, deeper understanding of the needs of their employees, they can have a greater, deeper impact on motivating them toward the objectives of the organization. Maslow's hierarchy provides governing officials excellent tool for challenging employees toward higher orders of contribution to the company (DiMaggio, 2019).

### *McClelland's Needs Theory*

McClelland's needs theory suggested that humans satisfy their needs through interrelating with their environments (Stietz, 2019). McClelland (1987) expressed human motivation as a primary determinant of behavior, appearing as either conscious intent or as unconscious intent, depending upon their perceptions of themselves and their environment. Motivation occurs across three independent aspects: the need for affiliation, the need for power and the need for achievement (McClelland, 1974). The need for achievement refers to one's drive to accomplish goals in accordance to a given standard; while the need for power infers the intent to influence and control the actions of others, the need for affiliation is the desire for association with others and belonging to interpersonal social networks (Robbins and Judge, 2019). The need for achievement is was detailed as a learned need by McClelland which was confirmed by Arnolds and Boshoff (2003), who also indicated that job satisfaction and motivation was correlated to individuals' needs for achievement. Employees in separate studies by Eisenberger et al. (2005), Liu and Wohlsdorf-Arendt (2016), and Doeze Jager-van Vliet et al. (2017) reflected that motivation was espoused in a supportive culture that recognized the

McClelland's three needs theory. The need for achievement facilitated the perceived motivations

of educators in meeting the needs of their staff members, thereby improving their performance

levels (Kane & Alline 2018). The achievement of goals was a motivator among employees who

felt their satisfaction needs for autonomy and relatedness were met (Duchesne et al., 2017).

Manik (2016) related that transformational leadership mediated achievement motivation and

organizational climate toward more productive employees and increased organizational

performance.

Regarding the need for affiliation, Volmer et al. (2019) reported that employees who

networked daily with their peers and other contemporaries tended to be more productive and

more satisfied than their colleagues who did not engage in regular networking activities. The

findings described the moderating role of the need for affiliation and proficient daily task

performance (Volmer et al., 2019). The need for affiliation carried a significant positive

relationship to team building and productive business performance outcomes (Herrmann et al.,

2016; Kouwenberg & Thontirawong, 2016; Stoverink et al., 2018).

Regarding the need for power, people possessing a need for power typically prefer

dominance or control over a given situation and appreciate being recognized as the controlling

member (Knicki & Fugate, 2016). An individual's personal perception of power is moderated by

intrinsic motivation differently between temporary workers and permanent employees, with a

non-linear association between the variables among temporary workers and a direct linear effect

among permanent staff members (de Jong et al., 2019). Goal orientation, leadership motivation,

and power sharing was the research focus of London et al. (2019) who purported that dominance

by power-seeking leaders, coupled with an exchange or transactional mindset, hinders gender

equity; whereas leaders possessing prosocial attributes tend to wield their organizational power

more responsibly in ways that support gender equity and promote career development initiatives among females. Trust continues to appear in the literature as a major component in the relationship between leaders and subordinates. Håvold and Håvold (2019) explored the connection between power, trust and motivation, having found that power levied through coercive means yielded a negative effect on followers. Leaders that judicious executed referent and reward power were much more able to gain the trust of their constituents, resulting in enhanced employee satisfaction and performance increases (Håvold & Håvold, 2019).

The relevance of McClelland's work to this study centers on the leader's ability to reach their employees' intrinsic, personal motivations within McClelland's three primary needs areas to stimulate higher orders of productivity and customer service. As an example, Asamani et al. (2016) noted that nurses' productivity increased by nearly 20% when leaders tapped their achievement motives.

### *Herzberg Factor*

In the 1950s, Frederick Herzberg explored worker perceptions against other factors such as their work environment, the relationship with their supervisors, a number of accompanying psychological variables related to the work they performed, and how they considered the outcomes of their work against their personal values (Herzberg, 2017). Each of these factors were shown to have stimulated their levels of job dissatisfaction and/or their levels of job satisfaction (Hardy, 1990).

Intrinsic motivational factors remain relevant in the dynamics of contemporary leadership, as well as for this research study, in establishing a basis for effective management across several aspects of the leader-worker relationship, for example: employee satisfaction, affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors (Ohana, 2016), all of which have

been shown to have positive impacts in both productivity and customer service (Okinyi, 2015).

Beygatt (2018) statistically confirmed Herzberg's theory of motivational and hygiene factors to

overall job satisfaction, while Caldwell (2019) predicted that the transformational leadership

style was positively associated with those managers who understood the importance of creating a

meaningful workplaces using their knowledge of the intrinsic motivators that inspire their

workforce.

The challenge for leaders in applying these motivation theories is to properly assess the

work environment, as well as the psychological needs of the incumbents and deploy the

appropriate stimulant to motivate the achievement of higher order performance from workers as

recognized through increases in productivity and customer service (Mello, 2015). This challenge

occurs across demographic aspects involving culture, race, gender, and generational issues.

Thomas (2015) explored the relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and

employee satisfaction as related to demographics of those participating in the study, as well as a

number of extrinsic aspects, having noted that motivation in both aspects were associated to job

features such as reward and recognition, working conditions, career achievement and perceived

upward mobility.

Sayegh (2017) offered that other factors beside the work environment itself contribute to

the complexity of employee motivation. External factors such as anxiety, defined perceptions of

job satisfaction and work-life balance across generations led to the need to adapt management

styles situationally in order to optimize their efforts in motivation (Sayegh, 2017). Brown-

Crowder (2017) studied the impact of a number of demographic factors such as age, gender and

culture among others, having found significant differences in how various demographic factors

impact the perceptions of work styles and approaches for accomplishing work. Employees from

different generations have varying expectations of what they value from the workplace and therefore approach work differently (Brown-Crowder, 2017). Generational differences between leaders and workers create difficulties for the leader in perceiving the motivational technique to apply, often leading lapses in productivity and performance due to mistrust and miscommunication (Brown-Crowder, 2017). Alexander (2014) and Sledge (2016) discovered similar findings regarding the motivational factors among Generation Y employees and provided that these employees are stimulated by a range of factors from affiliation, recognition, involvement in decisions and incentive pay. As a part of their motivation equation, Generation Y workers appreciated work that elevated their feeling of self-worth and the achievement of social good, often communicated as environmental sustainability and levels of responsibility within the organization (Alexander, 2014; Johnson, 2015). Wiggins (2016) analyzed a number of motivational theories: Maslow's hierarchy, Herzberg's two-factor theory and Vroom's expectancy theory, having concluded that millennial workers and leaders derive satisfaction and increased motivation from and number of intrinsically-based factors such as: public recognition and involvement in job opportunities promoting independent thinking and self-reliance.

**Employee Motivation, Productivity and Customer Service**

Contemporary business environments are driven by global competition and ever-pressing demands from customers. Motivating employees to meet the productivity and quality standards for cost-effective, quality products and services that optimize the value proposition to the customer becomes a significant challenge for firms in today's economy. Paul et al. (2016) sought to understand the variables that comprised effective customer service, having examined overall satisfaction metrics and differing trends between public and private sector organizations. Those factors deemed significant in impacting an employee's ability to provide service quality

expectations included: product knowledge, responsiveness to problems with innovative solutions

and the speed and quality of transactions involving the customer (Paul et al., 2016). Focusing on

the needs of the customer and attentiveness to their demands for quality, service and delivery

comprise the customer satisfaction equation.

Hwang and Lee's (2019) public self-awareness was an important variable in customer

service. Effective public self-awareness is associated with attentiveness, affective commitment

and customer-centric behaviors in providing exceptional customer service to clients and patrons

(Hwang & Lee, 2019). These intrinsic traits demonstrate the complex mix of variables that

managers must address to properly motive their employees. The difficulty faced by managers to

properly motivate their workforce in an environment of organizational change was recognized by

Dugovicova (2019), having noted the dependence of motivation on job satisfaction. The

leadership of an organization is responsible and ultimately accountable for providing an enriched

work environment which fosters the intellectual and emotional needs of its workers, which is

best caused by addressing both internal and external stimulus (Dugovicova, 2019).

Acknowledging and responding to employees' needs provides increased engagement, improved

retention and enhanced overall performance in production and financials (Beygatt, 2018).

Improving the quality of service delivery outcomes was the focus of a study by Adaku et

al. (2018). This research team explored customer satisfaction levels with their customer service

representatives in a claims processing system (Adaku et al., 2018). Customer satisfaction and

performance as indicated by a time-to-process-claims metric were positively influenced when a

redesign of the system interface occurred to meet the needs of workers to eliminate wasteful

procedures and lean six sigma methods (Adaku et al., 2018). Executive support was a predictor

of quality control and customer satisfaction when programs aimed at building and managing

customer relationships were executed in public sector organizations (Al-Arafati, Kadir & Al-Haderi, 2019). In fact, the study showed that relationship management and quality outputs are essential in deriving customer satisfaction which can lead to competitive advantage through return customer sales and increased time-to-market for new products (Al-Arafati et al., 2019).

*General Implications for Employee Motivation on Productivity*

Employee productivity and its relationship to employee motivation has received high regard within the science of management theory due to its importance to organizational advancement and competitiveness (Jerome, 2013). Employee productivity is a form of performance expectation in most organizations. Productivity, as a business metric, is generally attached to a unit of output anchored to a conformance in expected quality, delivered within a given time allocation (Jerome, 2013).

As this study's theoretical basis relies upon the concepts of Herzberg's motivational factors, Le (2014) confirmed that recognition and advance from Herzberg's factors were statistically significant to job satisfaction and employee engagement, having recommended that employees desired growth and learning opportunities as a part of their increased satisfaction which led to increased productivity. Worker motivation within healthcare resulted in performance improvements, engagement and production increases when the workers trusted their organizational leadership and felt the leaders had an interest in them and their career goals (Brooks, 2015).

Culture was found to directly impact job performance and employee productivity among public workers in a 2018 study by Saad and Abbas. Alignment with company values, agreement with cultural rituals and attraction to characteristics that develop pride in the company were the primary leading indicators for employee motivation. Contributing components in employee

motivation and productivity advancements dealt with how the organization managed change, built teamwork and comradery, and positioned goal achievement as a work priority (Saad & Abbas, 2018). Likewise, fostering an organizational culture of caring and worker autonomy was found to have enhanced worker intrinsic motivation, leading to more efficient performance (Radakovich, 2016). Alston (2017) provided that four factors: support from leadership, appropriate assessments of individual and team performance, professionalism, and career development, which positively and significantly correlated with employee motivation and improved productivity.

Knowledge sharing, organizational learning, and coworker relationships were fundamental contributors to motivation and improved performance in separate studies of educators by Ceesay (2018) and Olivo (2018). Birasnav (2014) related that knowledge sharing in service industry work environments was enhanced under transformational leadership styles in comparison to transactional styles. While Li et al. (2014) confirmed the relationship between transformational behaviors and knowledge sharing and indicated that it fostered a culture of fairness, affiliation and innovation, which in turn inspired employees to openly engage in organizational learning and knowledge sharing. Benchmarking, information sharing, and organizational learning were exposed as important factors in employee motivation toward customer satisfaction within the public sector (Rahman & Al Joker, 2018; Tuya & Tuya, 2019). Leveraging human intellectual capital and engaging employees as a stakeholder created impetus for improved motivation, resulting in more productive business outcomes through reduced cycle time for information processing and decision making (Tuya & Tuya, 2019). Organizational learning and information sharing was linked to citizen-centric innovation toward service delivery strategies in the public energy and water utility sectors (Rahman & Al Joker, 2018). These two

studies offer insights into how public companies may use organizational learning to improve requisite knowledge of employees in managing customer relationships to increase customer engagement and satisfaction.

Dealing with rapid change and uncertainty is prevalent in public sector leadership roles. Transformational leaders were found to be highly effective over other public sector leadership styles in endearing change initiatives among their workers and in managing change, particularly where it is associated with long term goals (de Gennaro, 2019). Tapping into followers' intrinsic motivators was discovered to be the advantage to managing employee perceptions and making the changes more acceptable (de Gennaro, 2019), improving organizational performance and productivity.

In the retail sector, Metz (2018) reported impact of achievement motivation among retail managers, having found that job commitment and work environments conducive to family-life to have been a statistically significant component of job satisfaction, resulting in increased productivity and retail unit performance. Deploying strategies that affect the intrinsic motivators of retail employees to increase their productivity were confirmed by Addair (2019). Leaders played an important role for success by modeling the expected workplace behaviors for subordinates and setting high performance goals for their workers (Addair, 2019; Tulgan, 2014). Motivation combines with other psychological constructs to impact productivity. Gyulakopyan (2019) purported that leaders who possessed self-efficacy and a mastery in communicating performance feedback recognized enhanced responses from their workers for improved results. Leaders employing social cognitive theory as a model of motivation also saw positive influences on business outcomes (Buff, 2019). However, Wrobleski (2019) demonstrated a mediated effect of the linkages between motivation, job satisfaction, leadership in the team environment among

primary school educators and their principals. The leadership style of these principals was not indicated as a part of Wrobleski's study. Recognition of work efforts and a deliberate involvement in addressing the concerns of employees greatly impacted job satisfaction and motivation (Wrobleski, 2019). Vo (2019) seemed to confirm the correlation that job motivation was not significantly dependent upon job satisfaction; however, other variables such as age, tenure, and gender were factors in degrees of employee motivation. Pueschel (2015) related various elements of organizational culture on productivity; these included employee engagement, levels of autonomy quality of work life, leadership modeling of culture and growth opportunities.

Effective leaders engage quality relationships with all levels of employees, thereby multiplying their leadership effect by transferring their learning and beliefs in order to engage and change the thinking of their constituents to increase individual contribution to organizational performance improvement (Leadership Development, 2017). Leadership style was highly correlated to overall employee productivity with those styles that facilitate coaching, and organizational learning having a greater impact on performance results over those styles which do not reflect such attributes (Weiner, 2018). Similarly, a positive and significant relationship leadership style and employee productivity was shown by Akpovirovo et al. (2018) where participative styles amplified motivation responses that impacted productivity outcomes. Ward (2018) advocated the transformational leadership style as a principle for effective systematic management of production and performance increases, having cited employee involvement, employee engagement, the establishment of clearly communicated strategies and goals and positive associate relations as the primary contributors to improved outcomes in the banking firms of the study.

*General Implications for Employee Motivation on Customer Service*

The perceptions of the customer experiences are another factor driving customer satisfaction. Customers that experience enjoyable moments before, during and after the sales transaction account their probability to return their business which drives sales and profitability. Leaders must continually provide a satisfying work environment, respect and dignity, training and recognition as a part of motivating their employees to provide such perceptions of service.

Customer perceptions of service level satisfaction and employee motivation was connected positively where the employee's expressed desire to assist the customer and fulfill their requests led to significant improvement in employees' awareness of customer needs (Ashima, 2017). Ashima (2017) also indicated the importance of creating a climate emphasizing quality in the business to customer exchange. Customer satisfaction through perceptions of service, quality and interaction, is considered a critical element in sustained business success (Park, 2019). Such constructs were significant in the emotional connections made by customers with the company through their experiences in evaluating their re-visitation choices (Park, 2019). Chen et al. (2019) discussed the role of customer engagement in business success along with the psychological implications for creating emotional ties to customers during their point-of-service business transaction. Two engagement levels are established: potentially engaged customers and totally engaged customers that evolve from the levels of perceived trust the customer feels were present during the transaction (Chen et al., 2019). Impressions of customer service were influenced by several factors in service organizations (Ganeshan & Nagarajan, 2017). Improved customer retention was noted when employees were motivated to provide exceptional service which impacted the probability that the customer will return and led to improved market share and profitability (Ganeshan & Nagarajan, 2017). Moon et al. (2019) purported that employee

motivation played a significant role in providing unparalleled levels of customer service as employees shifted toward customer-oriented thinking as a part of their daily roles and interactions with their customers. The intrinsic motivation for customer-oriented thinking was espoused in job creativity as a link to intrinsic motivation which, in turn, positively influence job performance among service workers (Moon et al., 2019). In a very practical approach, Palma et al. (2019) noted that companies that can motivate the customer orientation of employees by stimulating employees to affect certain triggers among customers during their interactions can engage customers to participate in generating innovative ideas aimed at value-creation for the company. Such trigger factors as generating affiliation with the company, building their sense of community and recognizing their expertise increased satisfaction levels among customers. However, in contrast to Palma et al. (2019), Saad and Abbas (2018) had previously determined that customer orientation was negatively associated with employee productivity and overall job performance.

Total quality management and lean systems appeared to be very effective in both improving the productivity and quality parameters of organizational performance, but also the job satisfaction and customer satisfaction parameters as well (Antony et al., 2017; Gomes et al., 2019). Total quality management was found to improve a company's systematic approach to process and product methods, having yielded advancements in quality and process controls, during which employees were engaged in the cycles of learning. This engagement motivated the employees to higher levels of contribution and resulted in their own satisfaction in the overall job and the tasks they performed, which created more affective customer relationships (Gomes et al., 2019). Earlier, Antony et al. (2017) had reported similar findings with lean six sigma methodologies within the public sector to improve operational efficiencies and effectiveness in

meeting the increasing demands of the public for cost control, quality of service and customer

satisfaction. As an ancillary benefit, employee motivation increased where bureaucratic red-tape

was removed and employees were allowed to free engage in process improvement initiatives

(Antony et al., 2017). Customer satisfaction arose was a result of the employees' improved job

satisfaction (Antony et al., 2017). Involving employees in lean six sigma or other quality

improvement processes, such as total quality management, have been found effective in

enhancing important business metrics for employee motivation and engagement, quality,

delivery and customer satisfaction (Antony et al., 2017; Gomes et al., 2019). In an earlier study,

employee motivation was a predictor of customer satisfaction among Turkish/Cyprian public

service organizations (Iyikal & Celebi, 2016). Along with quality of service, reliability and

service delivery were also important element in basic customer service satisfaction (Iyikal &

Celebi, 2016).

　　　Luu et al. (2018) predicted that complimentary leadership styles for ambidexterity

between leaders and workers were effect in creating positive public service motivation among

front line service workers. When associates perceived an ambidextrous style, one that drove both

explorative and exploitative behaviors, they were motivated to improve customer value creation

(Luu et al., 2018). Morton (2019) analyzed public sector leadership through the appreciative

inquiry lens, having determined that transformational leadership and servant leader styles were

highly effective in motivating public employees to achieve the greater public good. Positive

social change was attained when leaders focused their organizations on building trusting

relationship with their workers, extolled the value of social responsibility among their workers

and understood the motivating factors to inspire their workforce to be committed to service

(Morton, 2019). Thomas (2015) addressed the complexities that public administrators face in

motivating their employees, having emphasized the importance of public officials in understanding the motivational needs of their employees, as well as the ability of public servants to interact proficiently with the public. These factors showed how employee motivation and deft communications skills can be utilized to drive customer satisfaction in the public sector.

**Motivational Theory in the Public Sector**

In the public sector it is a generally accepted premise that intrinsic satisfiers, like those related to serving the greater public good, provide much of the motives for employee motivation, engagement and satisfaction. For example, Lymon (2019) concluded that while advancement and financial incentives correlate with motivation, in public service, organizational citizenship and a duty to community superseded such extrinsic motivators in stimulating organizational commitment and performance outcomes. To the contrary, Wyche-Seawood's (2019) research indicated that public sector motivation is not reliant solely upon citizenship behaviors, but rather the employees' reasons for engaging appropriate citizenship behaviors.

Maslow's work, as well as the tenets established by Herzberg provide the established fundamentals for reliable applications for understanding motivation within the public sector. Koustas (2019) related both Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theories among Grecian public service workers to determine the motivating factors between public and private sectors, having found that there were significant correlations for the different perceptions of workers in the two sector regarding motivators such compensation and promotions sustaining the private sector and effective commitment and community affiliation motivating public workers. However, the study indicated the need for significant improvement in the efforts of leaders to improve conditions facilitating these motivational factors in the public arena (Koustas, 2019). These findings support those of Celik (2014) regarding public service

motivation having little to no relationship to job satisfaction among public managers in Turkey; but they possessed a high value for empathy and sacrifice in service to their home communities. Public service motivations were moderated by fairness orientations of executive managers in non-profits, according to Cook (2014) which contributed to increases in employee satisfaction and organizational commitment levels (Cook, 2014; Pandey & Stazyk, 2008). The leader's understanding of the factors that enhance motives for accomplishing work in either the public or private sectors was the focus of a study by Tusha in 2019. In either sector, motivation was directly related to performance outcomes, but not directly related to job satisfaction and engagement (Tusha, 2019).

### *Implications for Employee Motivation on Public Sector Productivity*

Public sector employees have long suffered the reputation of being unmotivated and unproductive with a lack of due concern for the citizenry they serve. This generality is often an unfair evaluation of the commitment that many, but perhaps not all, public service workers possess in the dutiful execution of their daily tasks. Holt (2018) described that governmental and public sector employees must have an alignment of their personal values to those of the organizations in which they serve in order for their leadership to become effective on providing appropriate motivational platforms and methods. In the pre-employment stages, an assessment of a future candidate's affinity to serve, along with an evaluation of the degree of the public service motivations espoused within their personal values sets to determine if they are a qualified, right-fit candidate for sustained public sector employment (Holt, 2018). Teo et al. (2016) postulated that the correct person-organization match was the best condition for improving levels of productivity and enhancing long-term job satisfaction. The authors also noted that creating such

a match between the variables was an effective method for reducing workplace stress (Teo et al., 2016).

Productivity, as an employee performance metric, seemed to have been related to leadership influence along with demographical aspects such as age, role and tenure (Palma et al., 2017). Palma et al. (2017) revealed that motivation is connected to the employee's desire to help others, thus driving increased productivity for public servants with this trait over those employees who had a lesser degree of a desire to help others. Other factors related to public workplace performance and employee motivation were the levels of support workers received from leaders in the execution of their tasks and their mutual relationships with their counterparts and co-workers (Ullah et al., 2017). In contrast, however, Steijn and van der Voet (2019) submitted that bureaucratic structures, rigid authoritarian procedures and red-tape processes normally associated with public sector services negatively influenced employee job satisfaction and subsequently decreased employee productivity. In turn, productivity was positively impacted when leaders modeled appropriate ethical behaviors and individualized consideration for building trust in support of their organization's culture changes involving ethics, performance and public service commitment (Lee et al., 2019). Kjeldsen and Hanson (2018) confirmed that while it is wise that leaders use to good advantage the public service motivations of their workers, it is the red-tape and bureaucratic mentality of public sector organizations that often stymie employees' internal drive to increase productivity. Hierarchical structures and red-tape procedures perceived as non-value adding had a negative impact on goal achievement and job satisfaction in public organizations (Kjeldsen & Hansen, 2018).

Lee (2015) queried whether public service motivation was related to organizational experiences such as goal achievement, levels of autonomy and affiliation or rather to personal

attributes such as self-efficacy, need for achievement and locus of control. The results indicate that establishing specific challenging job-related goals which improvements the public condition and transformational leadership were primary antecedents for motivating public sector workers (Lee, 2015). Contributing to a worthwhile cause that added value to the home community stimulated the motives of a majority of public sector employees in a study by Graves (2019), having reported that several aspects motivated public servants participating in her study: (1) professional growth and the opportunities for engagement of new skills, (2) worthwhile work that transferred substantive benefit to the community and (3) the work itself was motivating when the prior to considerations were met (Graves, 2019). Likewise, Battaglio and Gelgec (2017) provided that the empowerment of public sector employees and appealing to workers' public service motivations can act as levers in effecting productivity and overall job performance in Turkish public sector roles. In general, Turkish public servants understood their role as servants and leaders that leveraged stewardship in their motivational approaches were highly successful in create work environment conducive to improved job satisfaction and enhanced service to the communities and districts in which they supported (Battaglio & Gelgec, 2017).

Mavhungu and Bussin (2017) investigated the mediating effects between individual levels of productive performance, the manager's relationship and interactions with the employee and the resulting level of motivation perceived by the employee importance of the individual level of performance when diagnosing performance issues in the public sector by focusing on the mediatory role of motivation in the relationship between leadership and public sector worker productivity. There existed a positive, statistically significant relationship between the perceived leadership style and employee job performance in the subject public sector roles of the study (Mavhungu & Bussin, 2017).

Organizational socialization when paired with training opportunities, a fostered sense of pride for the work performed and activities which promoted employee socialization was a contributing factor in motivating public workers over monetary compensation, which led to improved retention and employee productivity (Brooks-Immel, 2014). Likewise, programs that offer social outlets and work-life balance was found to be favorable in motivating governmental millennial employees (Spurlock, 2016). Conversely, Wyche-Seawood (2019) related that leaders who did not understand the motives of organizational and individual citizenship behaviors had negative implications in worker satisfaction and retention.

***Implications for Employee Motivation on Delivering Public Sector Customer Service***

Customer service is an important component of organizational success for either private of public entities. However, many governmental organizations suffer from public perceptions of the lack of interest and motivation for meeting the needs of the customer (Morton et al., 2016). The relationship between employee satisfaction and customer service was confirmed by Iacob (2015) where the author stated that significant positive effect between the two variables indicated that the service levels were mediated by employee motivation. Li et al. (2019) affirmed these findings and added that although most public organizations, because of their monopoly status, do not compete for customers, a commitment to customer satisfaction remained a necessity, nonetheless. Customer orientations of service level employees in public sector organizations was significant in the perceptions of customers toward the public entity (Li et al., 2019).

The literature indicates a concern for the lack of customer service initiative from employees in the Indian public sector banking industry. Customer satisfaction in the banking industry is an emerging concern among public sector banks in the Indian financial industry (Kant & Jaiswal, 2017; Tata & Vijaya, 2017). Kant and Jaiswal (2017) categorized and ranked the

urgency to improve customer services into several focused dimensions: responsiveness,

corporate image, reliability and empathy to stymie the encroachment of privately-held banking

entities into the industry. Tata and Vijaya (2017) contributed that innovation, capital investment,

restructuring monetary policy to optimize fiscal performance and, most importantly, a systematic

process of measurement for institutional performance were the key elements needed to improve

the customer service aspects of public service banking institutions in India. Metrics were

demonstrated as effective antecedents for improved customer and productivity outputs as noted

by Liu and Yen (2016) who analyzed bus passenger complaints among public bus service

contract providers. Complaints were logged, categorized and analyzed for trends which led to

action plans, including technology upgrades, the implementation of sustainability initiatives for

more efficient operations and improved passenger experiences (Liu & Yen, 2016). Such service

deployment strategies were advocated by Sandhu et al. (2017), who compared private and public

financial centers, having noted that bank executives need to understand the cause and effect

relationships between the interaction of employees and customers at the point of transaction to

determine which factors might be influencing customer satisfaction. Public sector institutions

have consistently been surpassed in terms of their customer orientation and willingness to derive

customer satisfaction as a first priority (Krishnan, 2016; Sandhu et al., 2017).

Junginger (2016) expressed that overcoming customer satisfaction problems related to

employee motivation in the governmental sector, required significant policy change, agility to

adjust approaches as customer needs dictate and the willingness to accept such challenges head-

on. Job redesign, policy re-orientation and a fundamental transformation of the approaches used

in servicing the public are necessary elements in successful change; however, despite that most

public sector workers carry a service-orientation for their community, governmental

organizations with their entrenched bureaucracies and red-tape are the least motivated to change in favor of more customer-centric practices (Junginger, 2016).

**Leadership Systems and Organizational Theory**

The role of a leader in an organization is to influence the behaviors of workers toward the values, goals, mission and vision of the organization (Daft, 2013). Daft (2013) noted that the legacy of an effective leader will be shaped by (a) the ability of a leader to meet the needs of their followers, (b) the impact of the leader's actions on their followers, (c) the leader's ability to motivate an intrinsic, long-term commitment to the interests of the company among employees, and (d) the leader's ability to engage in effective behaviors themselves. Agboli Chukwura (2016) explored leadership styles and behaviors and their impact upon employee motivation, having contributed that various leadership styles, including authentic leadership, transformational leadership and servant leadership, all styles which seek to fulfill the needs of followers, showed slightly improved results in driving improved performance among workers to meet the organization's mission. Moore (2007) indicated that organizational effectiveness was mediated by leadership style and gender, although given comparable business results for all genders, the breadth of the leadership behaviors of females occurred in a narrower scope than that of their male counterparts.

The leader's role in meeting the psychological needs of subordinates was key to a study by Burch (2018), wherein moderate correlations with motivation and organizational commitment were noted where the servant leadership style and authentic style were prevalent. Trust, responsibility, professional growth, autonomy and open communications were among the attributes that employees found increased their intrinsic motivations to perform better (Burch, 2018). Leadership style as related to self-determination and job satisfaction with employee

motivation, where leaders possessing a higher degree of self-determination and personal satisfaction with their job roles were slightly more capable in addressing the motivational factors of their subordinates, resulting in more productive work environments (Hernick, 2017). Entrepreneurial spirit and resiliency, as leadership attributes, were significantly related statistically to employee motivation when leaders possessed a transformational leadership style and deployed McGregor's Theory Y motivational techniques (Schilling, 2019).

In the public education sector, Ayuba (2018) showed that teacher results were improved when their school leadership understood their concerns and supported their needs, having postulated that well maintained facilities, compensation and training opportunities were continuing factors to teacher motivation, which yielded quality education outcomes. Wilson (2017) stipulated that the leader's character and commitment to lead were instrumental in affecting employee intrinsic motivation and building trust. Recurring themes from Ward's (2017) research regarding the influence of leadership on sparking employee motivation toward improved performance include: modeling behavior, respect and dignity for all workers, emotional intelligence, and effective use of rewards.

**Transformational Leadership**

Organizational performance outcomes are improved by leaders who build positive relationships with their workers (Al-edenat, 2018). The transformational leadership style seeks to motivate workers to higher order of performance through interactions that raise the morality and ethical aspirations of individuals (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Exhibiting transformational leadership behaviors to develop such relationships directly facilitated improved business results and worker satisfaction (Al-edenat, 2018). According to Burns (1978), effective leadership under the transformational style rely upon trust, transparency, role modeling, and strong emotional

connections with their workers to inspire higher orders of thought and effort in the workplace. Vito et al. (2014) confirmed that transformational leadership theory is highly correlated to power and influence in the leader/follower relationship process. The four factors of Bass's (1985) transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Northouse, 2019) have been shown to impact quality control (Omar, 2017), employee motivation and job satisfaction (Caldwell, 2019; Wrobleski, 2019), overall performance and employee productivity (Addair, 2019; Gyanchandani, 2017), all seemingly based up the style's correlation on forming long-term relationships with workers (Jackson, 2017).

While idealized influence involves the role modeling of leaders, along with a congruence between the leaders' actions and their direction toward expected behaviors for their constituents (Robbins & Judge, 2019), the inspirational motivation aspect of transformational leadership involves establishing emotional connections and the display of optimism and enthusiasm toward a compelling and meaning vision for the future (Knicki & Fugate, 2016). Sahibzada et al. (2016) established that role modeling and setting forth a vision that captured their followers' intellect, imagination and emotions were directly and proportionally related to job satisfaction. As leaders in public universities amplified these factors of the transformational leadership style, job satisfaction among their associates was found to improve (Sahibzada et al., 2016). Similarly, in public utilities across Kenya, Africa, job engagement was stimulated when leaders both extolled the values of the organization and patterned their employee interactions and business behaviors likewise (Otieno et al., 2019), or simply put: 'walked the talk.' Value congruence and setting forth directives significantly moderated the relationship between job satisfaction and transformational leadership (Langat et al., 2019), as leaders inspired the actions of workers and

their motives through persuasive, compelling dialogues to engage participative decision making (Salas-Vallina & Fernandez, 2017). As a human resource intervention, inspirational motivation techniques by supervisors were found to have mediated employee satisfaction and happiness at work (Salas-Vallina & Fernandez, 2017). However, the leader's ability to derive interested audiences was mediated by the perceived integrity of the leader, hence the integrity of the messaging creating a negative effect on acceptance and performance in achievement of the vision (Smothers et al., 2016).

Intellectual stimulation refers to a leader's ability to invite open dialogue with employees to question the status quo and bring forth innovative ideas for improving the organization's products and processes (Knicki & Fugate, 2016). Such conversations lead to opportunities for the individualized consideration of transformational leadership, which builds upon the intellectual and emotional connections with employees where encouragement, empowerment and coaching create bonds of respect and admiration for the leader (Knicki & Fugate, 2016). Peng et al. (2016) analyzed the impact of intellectual stimulation of CEOs on their workforces and purported that rapid change either in the firm or within its industry could be associated with the outcomes for product and process innovation as leaders used the transformational style's intellectual stimulation to build positive employee relations and promote meaningful work roles for their employees. Team learning is positively affected when leaders intellectually stimulate and engage workers' knowledge and creativity in problem solving, leading to improved productivity and performance (Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2018). Empowerment leading to more productive work outcomes was significantly related to intellectual stimulation shared by leaders (Smothers et al., 2016).

Transformational leaders provide a clear organizational vision as a focal point for creating change and setting forth new directions aimed at advancing the mission of the firm (Northouse, 2019). Such leaders are effective as their style and behaviors give life to the organization through their charisma, role modeling and the encouragement of their constituents (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Transformational leaders stimulate the self-confidence of their followers by intellectually engaging them in organizational problems and sparking their creativity toward innovative solutions (Chen et al., 2016; Rashkovits, 2019).

Transformative leaders were effective in creating positive change when they demonstrated individualized consideration, care and concern for each of their followers and behaved in a manner that clearly communicated a genuine understanding of the follower and their needs (Jackson, 2017). These constructs are ratified through the motivational theories of Maslow, Herzberg and McClelland (Alfayad & Arif, 2017; Joseph, 2015; Rybnicek et al., 2019; Vijayakumar & Saxena, 2015). Transformational leaders incessantly promote prospective innovative methodologies, and solutions to improve productivity, customer service and overall business performance (Northouse, 2019). Transformational leaders stimulate the self-confidence of their followers by intellectually engaging them in organizational problems and sparking their creativity toward innovative solutions (Chen et al., 2016).

**Figure 2**

*Model Depicting the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership, Motivation and*

*Business Performance*
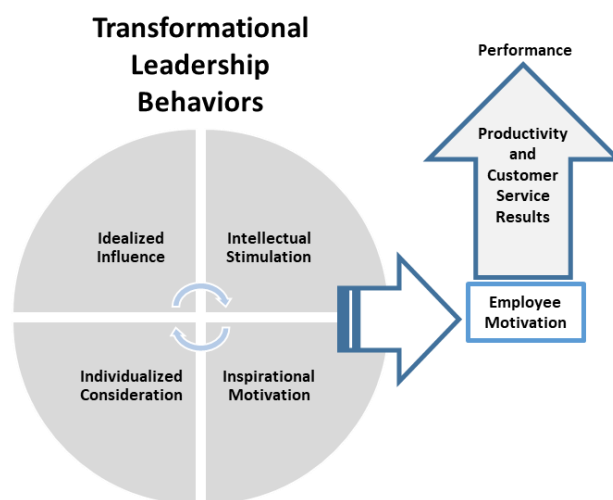


Organizational theorists have shown where the transformational leadership style is effective in motivation workers due to its reliance on the development of trusting relationships between the leaders and their followers. Crede et al. (2019) stated that transformational leadership, worker performance and organizational citizenship behaviors as significant predictors of business outcomes across countries and cultures. While Dartey-Baah and Addo (2018) wrote that transformational leaders enabled improved results, it was Altunoğlu et al. (2019) who purported that trust mediated the variable of worker citizenship behavior, emulating those of their charismatic, transformational-styled leader. Also, trust was mediated by the development of close personal relationships with followers, resulting in a revolving cycle between more effective work environments and higher worker performance (Altunoğlu et al., 2019).

Higher worker performance and productivity were moderated by trust and organizational learning where transformational leadership behaviors existed (Vashdi et al., 2019). The transformational leader was seen to have motivated their followers to pursue professional growth

opportunities and a personal commitment to achieve organization's vision (Vashdi et al., 2019).

Burns (1978) noted that transformational leaders recognized and sought fervently to fulfill the

needs of their followers, identify motives for performance and engage the follower in pursuit of

higher order goals. Transformational leaders not only seek to accomplish work, but to influence

the workers themselves toward a higher morality (Burns, 1978). Leaders presenting this style of

leadership are often described as trustworthy, charismatic, intelligent and inspirational by their

constituents (Bass, 1985), having a profound effect on the intellectual and emotional engagement

of their followers (Amankwaa & Anku-Tsede, 2015).

Bass (1985) purported that the idealized influence construct required leaders to

demonstrate values, system, culture and action of the people employed under their charge.

Modeling behavior affects the creative nature, productivity and overall performance of an

organization (Gyanchandani, 2017). Gyanchandani (2017) investigated leadership styles among

IT managers and its effects on team performance where professional growth, employee

involvement and support through individualized consideration drove heightened teamwork and

organizational commitment.

### Transformational Leadership and Employee Motivation

Transformational leadership has been widely researched from several different

perspectives (Northouse, 2019), including its effects on employee motivation, employee

productivity and customer service results. The complexity of global business, accelerated

technology, the intricacies of managing human capital and entrepreneurial factors in

contemporary markets have created a substantial impact on leadership acumen (Toufaili, 2018).

The transformational leadership style provides a critical element in the dynamic leadership of an

organization involves developing and effectively communicating a corporate vision of the future

and inspiring employees toward the achievement of the vision (Toufaili, 2018). Weller et al. (2019) reported that transformational leaders communicate with clarity and visionary descriptors when informing employees about the firm's mission and setting expectations for a high performing workplace.

Transformational leaders develop close relationships with their employees, seek to understand the intrinsic motivators of their workers and drive their performance to higher levels (Riedle, 2015; Smith, 2017). Breevaart et al. (2014) noted that it was the influence of daily interactions by the transformational leader that drove engagement of subordinates. Franklin (2016) explored the impact of leadership styles using Herzberg's two-factor theory and a variety of leadership theories to assess the relationships of these constructs. The findings indicated that laissez-faire leaders motivated those workers who desire more autonomy in work-related decisions and choices, while Herzberg's hygiene factors stimulated the workers of transactional leaders (Franklin, 2016). The transformational leadership style led to greater increases in productivity (Franklin, 2016), including the promotion of safer work practices (Hoffmeister et al., 2014).

Perceptions of the leader played a significant part in the motivation of workers. El-Zayaty (2018) studied 17 Egyptian companies and the perceptions workers held regarding the behaviors of their organizational leaders, having indicated that transformational leaders influenced enhanced job performance, career advancement and employee productivity over other leadership styles. Employees became highly motivated and highly receptive to new challenges when treated as stakeholders, which led to positive effects in productivity (El-Zayaty, 2018). In support of the current findings for transformational style, Rosalis (2019) confirmed that transformational

leadership styles positively impacted worker motivation, whereas transactional and laissez-faire styles did not have an impact on motivation.

In separate studies, Good (2019) and Smith (2017) indicated that understanding intrinsic motivation was significant in the leaders' abilities to derive improved sales and production results from the workforce. Additionally, Good (2019) showed that employee resiliency to achieve higher order goals was also positively impacted when the leader identified and addressed worker's intrinsic satisfiers. The worker's level of internal need to achieve and some level of external motivators, such as incentive bonuses, moderated the ability of the leader to appropriately influence motivational levels (Good, 2019). Good's (2019) work expanded the research of Downing (2015) who compared the effects of various leadership styles on employee motivation. Transformational, charismatic and servant leadership styles were found to substantially enhance performance through addressing the intrinsic motives of employees, while employees that were more motivated by extrinsic factors preferred a transactional leadership style (Downing, 2015). Conversely, Walker (2015) revealed that leadership style was not related to motivational levels; that laissez-faire styles were more likely to positively stimulate worker motivations. However, Walker's (2015) research confirmed that the absence of a leaders' understanding and support of factors that motivate employees' engagement inhibited their ability to provide productive work outcomes.

Given the complex, high demand and rapidly changing work environments within the healthcare profession, transformational leadership has been seen to strategically improve the quality of work and performance efficiencies of nurses, with inspirational motivation having occurred as a direct, leading variable in generating more productive outcomes (Suratno et al., 2018). In fact, Vatankhah et al. (2017) strongly encouraged administrators in the healthcare

profession to proliferate transformational leadership behaviors among their executive and

managers within all disciplines to drive worker productivity and quality patient outcomes.

Vatankhah et al. (2017) purported that productivity was moderated by the increased emphasis of

leaders to model behaviors and engage the intellect of their constituents in active decision

making.

**Transformational Leadership in the Public Sector**

One of the attributes of transformational leaders, inspirational motivation, focuses on

providing a clear line of sight between the company's vision, the role of their employees within

the vision, the intellectual and emotional stimulation to desire it and the confidence to

accomplish beyond the expectations (Andersen et al., 2018). This premise regarding this

motivational phenomena of transformational leadership applies equally to the public sector and

creates an underlying effect of employee engagement and increased satisfaction from public

workers (Jensen & Bro, 2018) while achieving the goal. Transformational leadership was found

to be significantly effective in increasing motivation among public service employees where the

leader exhibited a focus on serving the local community as a part of their overall leadership style

(Andersen et al., 2018). Likewise, Jensen and Bro (2018) confirmed that transformational styles

supported overall employee satisfaction where workers felt intrinsically driven to accomplish

their tasks in the interests of public service. It was recommended that public service leaders focus

on aligning the personal values of their workers with those of their public organizations in order

to facilitate conflicts in goal setting and value incongruence (Bao & Ge, 2019; Jensen et al.,

2019). Decision making and autonomy were exposed as primary motivators and job satisfiers

among federal agency employees, where Transformational leadership supported public service

motivation, leading to ancillary benefits for the agency of motivational factors such as perceived

competence of co-workers, autonomy and control of decisions impacting the workforce, and the need for achievement (Atan & Mahmood, 2019; Garcia, 2017). The transformational style also facilitated employee socialization, leader affinity and person-to-organization suitability in Korean Public service roles (Kim, 2018).

Federal government workers were the topic of a study by Black (2015) which focused on their views of the motivational techniques of their leadership. The research discovered several topics which impacted motivation among the study group: job competency, relatedness of tasks to their defined organizational role, mentoring systems, acknowledging and stimulating their intrinsic motivators and levels of autonomy in decision making (Black, 2015).

### *Implications for Transformational Leadership on Employee Productivity*

Leadership style was a predictor for improved employee productivity (Akpovirovo et al., 2018; Atan & Mahmood, 2019; Tulgan, 2014; Weiner, 2018). Alqatawenah (2018) stipulated that competitive advantage was significantly enhanced when the transformational leadership style was predominant in the organization, plays a major influencing several variables, such as employee job satisfaction and employee development for improving employee productivity. Transformational leadership enabled organizational change (Abbasi, 2017), promoted innovation (Al-edenat, 2018) and encouraged affective commitment and citizenship behaviors among their followers (Jackson, 2017). Productivity was positively impacted when the four key elements of transformational leadership were implemented as the leaders sought to build effective work relationships with their subordinates, ensured the understanding of clearly articulated goals and engaged their employees in decisions (Ward, 2019). Ward (2019) also noted that teamwork, modeling behaviors, encouragement and an effective reward system impacted productivity, supported teamwork and increased organizational profits. Participative leadership also improved

morale and promoted more productive outcomes in light industrial applications (Akpovirovo et al., 2018).

The overriding themes in the research indicated transformational leadership as a correlator for employee motivation and increased productivity (Linehan, 2014). Achieving productivity goals were facilitated under transformational leadership models which promoted the issuance of clear operational instruction in implementing high performing workplaces (Weller et al., 2019). Jena et al. (2018) showed that trust, leadership style and productivity were closely linked with the transformational leadership style more favorable in fostering trusting relationships and more engaging interactions with employees. Such interventions into employee job satisfaction led to higher levels of productivity through the resulting perceived feelings of respect and well-being from their management (Jena et al., 2018). Altunoğlu et al. (2019) recognized trust as a significant mediator to leadership effectiveness in transformational leadership models. Perceptions of fair treatment among employee groups moderated perceptions of trust among portfolio managers in Middle East Markets (Abozaid et al., 2019). Conversely regarding trust as an antecedent to productivity, trust was indicated as a mediating factor between performance of workers and transformational leadership in small manufacturing environments (Ugwu et al., 2016). Ugwu et al. (2016) sought to demonstrate the relationship between transformational leadership and trust as a predictor of in-role performance of factory workers, where their results showed that transformational leadership was significantly related as a predictor of improved performance outcomes. Their results also indicated that transformational leadership was more powerful than the variable of trust in motivating employees toward higher productivity (Ugwu et al., 2016).

The effect of fairness and transformational leadership on job satisfaction enhanced intrinsic motivation of employees and created a workplace environment conducive to improved productivity (Abozaid et al., 2019). The researchers reported that managers needed to implement the four key factors of transformational leadership for sustained business output improvements (Abozaid et al., 2019). As reported earlier, transformational leaders' intellectual stimulation aspect built worker competency leading to substantially enhanced worker contributions toward overall organizational performance (Atan & Mahmood, 2019). However, contingent reward structures impede the effectiveness of the transformational leadership style (Linehan, 2014). Higher order needs fulfillment by leaders was significant in improved productivity outcomes while improving ethical assurances among the workforce (Linehan, 2014).

Rathnaraj and Vimala (2018) discussed the role of transformational leadership for enhanced job satisfaction in public sector organizations in India, having noted that as leaders are charged with effectively guiding the will and efforts of their workers in pursuit of the organization's goals, transformational styles are preferred among workers in their study of governmental employees in the State of Tamil Nadu. Transformational style served as a catalyst over other leadership types in stimulating employees to produce higher quality and increased productivity in their service roles (Rathnaraj & Vimala, 2018). In applying the four key elements of transformational leadership to employee motivators such as perceived feelings of well-being, creativity, teamwork and job enrichment, during periods of organizational growth, it was found that enhanced levels of belonging, harmony and both individual and team productivity were improved (Baker, 2019). Constructs that were considered counter to productive business and performance outcomes included unethical behaviors and lack of commitment to the goals and team (Baker, 2019).

A multi-level analysis in the education sector, provided that transformational leadership among public school principals, when deployed in an environment that allowed creativity and innovative ideas to flourish, were able to motivate teachers in both adaptability and productivity, compelling teacher job satisfaction (Nir & Piro, 2016). Afsar et al. (2014) as ratified in a separate study by Dust et al. (2014), described the effects of transformational leadership as empowering to employees and thereby driving their innovative ideas for process improvement. Rogers (2017) seemed to have detected a causation in such workplace environments with transformational leadership manifesting a sense of obligation among employees.

Social exchange and transformational leadership greatly influenced workplace climates which yielded organizational citizenship and productivity in public colleges (Rogers, 2017). Such environments stimulated the intrinsic motives and compelled workers to readily perform above and beyond the call-of-duty (Rogers, 2017). Transformational leadership behaviors produced impassioned workers who were willing to devote overtime, more effort and felt obligated to serve their organization (Rogers, 2017), all of which increased worker productivity and overall business performance. Such interventions led to more productive outcomes through reductions in employee turnover. In separate studies by Watts (2017) and Shahsavan and Safari (2017), transformational leadership demonstrated a significant role impacting retention and turnover, with Watts (2017) indicating a relationship between employee engagement and transformational leadership for increasing retention and Shahsavan and Safari (2017) having presented a correlation between affective commitment and transformational behavior styles in mediating turnover.

*Implications for Transformational Leadership On Delivering Customer Service*

Customer service is the cornerstone of success in both private and public sector organizations; however, building a culture of customer-centric thinking is a challenging prospect for many organizations. Supporting employees with the skills to anticipate the needs and desires of their customers and to provide accurate and timely responses to their satisfaction drives the operative for leadership behaviors to optimize the customer service acumen of employees. Organizational leaders provide a critical link in creating customer orientation culture and an attentive, responsive climate (Herhausen et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2018). Leadership style and its perception by employees was confirmed as a moderator between service quality and customer satisfaction (Pantouvakis & Patsiouras, 2016). Kim et al. (2016) seemingly sought to prove the old adage "satisfied employees create satisfied customers" in their study examining the relationship between the quality of leadership behavior and customer satisfaction, having related that job satisfaction did positively impact customer satisfaction. Similarly, leaders that empower decision-making among their workers and provide quality two-way communications were seen to create a positive customer orientation in their interactions with customers (Aryee et al., 2019).

Effectively changing the organizational culture in becoming more customer oriented required inspirational role modeling, by all leaders, but particularly by the worker's immediate manager or supervisor (Morgenroth et al., 2015). Role modeling, along with the development of positive relationships with employees which included fostering consensus among team members, was viewed as other important component of building customer orientations (Herhausen et al., 2017). The effects of appropriate role modeling, including ethical leadership was ratified by Kia et al. (2019) for improving both customer service and employee performance. However, Moon et

al. (2019) added that the motivation for customer oriented thinking was espoused in job creativity as a link to intrinsic motivation which, in turn, positively influence job performance among service workers.

The relationships between proactive customer-centric behaviors and transformational leadership style was the subject of a study by Jauhar et al. (2017), who submitted that in service organizations, employee were appropriately motivated to provide proactive service attention to their customers where their supervisors more frequently demonstrated transformational leadership behaviors. Proactive responses created an efficacy for delighting the customers in higher satisfaction levels to the point that the researchers strongly suggested that managers enact transformational styles among supervisors across those organizations in the study (Jauhari et al., 2017).

Quality management (TQM), lean six-sigma methods, and performance excellence are all seen to have provided substantial contributions to the efficiencies of business and production processes. Omar (2017) explored the impact of transformational leadership in companies which pursued quality management and performance excellence as business platforms. The goal orientation and worker skill development attributes of transformational leadership, as well as personal development, were contributors to the intrinsic motivation of employees which yielded affective commitment and ownership of the company's goals (Omar, 2017). As such, Burawat's (2019) study complemented the work of Omar (2017), having noted that productivity and customer focus were positively impacted in organizations implementing lean six sigma practices and transformational leadership styles (Burawat, 2019). Lean practices are accommodating in all organizations (Burawat, 2019), including public sector firms. Employee motivations toward continuous improvement initiatives were strengthened where executives set forth on improving

work conditions allowing workers to function with more input and suggestions for project improvements and more discretionary decision making (Stadnicka & Sakano, 2017). Engagement factors such as these were seen to be effective across a wide spectrum of company types and geographic locations (Stadnicka & Sakano, 2017).

The open communications, employee engagement and trust building attributes recognized in the inspirational motivation and individualized consideration aspects of transformational leadership were found to have moderated continuous improvement practices which heightened productivity improvements and customer responsiveness (Burawat, 2019). Burawat (2019) further recommended that firms focus on the triad of customer involvement, communal involvement of employees in decisions and advice using transformational leadership methods and supplier involvement to optimize effective operations. Such aspects of management appear to have a positive effect on work behaviors through creativity and more innovative customer focused business outcomes. Santoso et al. (2019) demonstrated that innovative work behaviors were moderated by transformational leadership and employee self-efficacy in the Indonesian public telecommunications industry. The increase in worker innovation to problems positively impacted worker performance, productivity and customer response (Santoso et al., 2019). The residual effects of supervisory-level transformational leadership in idealized leader behavior and intellectual stimulation sparked recurring episodes of optimism and confidence in leadership, leading to workplace innovation and creativity as a result (Gashema, 2019). Gashema (2019) verified that there existed a statistically positive linkage between the variables of creative worker performance and the transformational style in a sampling of Rwandian public sector banks. The challenging thinking environment and intellectual stimulation afforded to employees by

transformational leadership was found to influence employee competence and thereby improve performance (Wahid et al., 2017).

Employee engagement resulting from transformational leadership methods improved customer service outcomes (Condos, 2016). Paliet (2016) purported that nurse in public healthcare recognized improved patient satisfaction outcomes based upon their leader's ability to create a culture of openness, trust, collaboration and participative decision-making for those element effecting their work environments. Transformational leadership methods facilitated a customer-centric orientation, allowing nurses to deploy critical thinking skills in patient care (Paliet, 2016). Bailey (2016) examined the four elements of transformational leadership and its influence in deriving higher orders of customer satisfaction in the banking industry of the Midwestern United States. Transformational leaders were found to have positively influenced bank tellers who, in turn, provided better customer service than those tellers who perceived their supervisor to have a leadership style other than transformational. The positive work atmosphere created by transformational leaders led to improved job satisfaction and, because of the relationship between an employee's perceptions of their supervisor and intention to leave the company, higher employee retention was recognized along with the impact on positive customer relations.

Turnover intention coupled to transformational leadership and improved customer satisfaction results was ratified by Lum (2018) as the focus of a study analyzing its relationship to the predictive effect job satisfaction associated with transformational leaders. Following a Baron and Kenny series of regression analyses, transformation leaders and their influence on job satisfaction was a valid predictor for the mediating effect on employee retention, which supports the business rationale for deploying enhanced leadership skills through transformational-styled

behaviors to reduce the costs of recruiting and training, as well as mitigating productivity losses from disgruntled workers who seek to leave the organization (Lum, 2018). This construct inferred that tenured workers to utilize their expertise and expanded knowledge of the work system to better satisfy their customers (Lum, 2018).

Allowing employees to participate in decisions whether by the soliciting inputs, seeking advice or consensus building increases job satisfaction. The effects of transformational leadership in this regard is found to have been positively related to improved customer relationships and customer retention, which was particularly noted as vastly contributive in high performance work systems (Weller et al., 2019). Employee engagement was confirmed as a positive contributor to improved customer engagement and customer service (Condos, 2016). Transformational leadership was significantly related to enhanced employee engagement results, primarily in the areas of physical engagement and emotional connection, but not significant to cognitive engagement (Condos, 2016). Condos further noted that the returns recognized from implementing transformational leadership development schemes offset its costs, justifying the benefit to organizations that may struggle with high turnover and poor customer satisfaction (2016). To spark the intrinsic motivations of call center employees, Cavazotte et al. (2018) and Wolter (2017) recommended the implementation of the transformational leadership model as remedy in stimulating customer-centric service attitudes. Call center employees often face long hours dealing with challenging customers with little to no performance incentives for their effort (Wolter, 2017). Transformational leadership was an important element in customer service management to drive employee engagement and superior performance in meeting or exceeding the customer expectations (Cavazotte et al., 2018; Lum, 2018; Wolter, 2017).

**Conclusion**

*Summary and Findings*

This literature review began by reiterating the purpose and objective of this research project. The general aspects of motivational theory including the foundational works of Maslow, McClelland and Herzberg were discussed. Employee motivation and its general implications for productivity and customer satisfaction were analyzed. With the general tenets for worker motivation having been established, a discussion of these aspect as related to the public sector was investigated. The review continued by an investigation of leadership systems and organizational design. Transformational leadership was defined and its relationship to employee motivation was explained through the performance variables of employee productivity and customer satisfaction.

The findings from the review of the literature have indicated that sufficient quantitative research exists across a various spectra of industries, cultures and geographic locations to resolve that employee motivation and leadership style are statistically correlated. The transformational leadership style, with its focus on developing the individual worker through intellectual stimulation and emotional enrichment, has been demonstrated to have a significant, positive, statistical relationship for improving the performance parameters of productivity and customer satisfaction (Adaku et al., 2018; Breevaart et al., 2014; Burch, 2018; Riedle, 2015; Smith, 2017).

Factors impacting human motivation within the context of employment were found to also have been affected by leadership style (Caldwell, 2019; Downing, 2015; Weiner, 2018). Transformational leaders who appealed to their employees' specific intrinsic motivational factors, were able to contribute substantially to improved business outcomes through enhanced worker performance and value-creation for the customer (Al-Arafati et al., 2019; Ashima, 2017;

Park, 2019). Such findings held true for public sector organizations as well (de Gennaro, 2019; Janković, 2018; Simpson, 2017). This review has demonstrated the basic relevant relationships between leadership style, employee motivation and the business outcomes for productivity and customer satisfaction. As such, continued research to understand the phenomena behind the leader's influence upon the variables governing intrinsic motivation in the public sector is established in the literature as the central theme of this qualitative research project.

**Implications of the Study**

*Limitations to the Literature Review*

This review sought to discover the body of knowledge regarding the relationship between employee motivation, the transformational leadership style and their effects on employee productivity and customer satisfaction, with a particular focus on these effects in the public sector. These aspects were the basis for the review and formed the criteria for those publications which appear in this paper. This criterion was necessary due to the enormous volumes of studies devoted to the topics. There were several limitations experienced in the compilation of the literature review. This section identifies the primary limitations which inhibited the writer's ability to analyze the information and address the inquiries of the research.

A first observation is the period containment for the research being within the last three to five years of publication. For the most part, only research between 2014 and 2019 were addressed in the research. Earlier works deemed essential to the foundation of the theory and application of the topics were included. Another, rather obvious, observed limitation is the researcher's complete reliance on the previously published findings and the availability and access to appropriate studies addressing the research criteria. While there were 197 pieces of literature analyzed in this review, there were several instances where some articles were removed

from consideration because either only the abstracts were available and the full text could not be located or in fewer cases, the only available text was written in a language other than English. In two cases, only the articles' citations existed.

Relevance to the research criteria served as the primary exclusion. The adherence to the selection criteria for the research and the noted general exclusions may imply a sample bias, which occur as a third limitation to the study. The researcher acknowledges this limitation and applied a systematic checklist to the selection process to promote consistency and reduce undue discrimination against exclusions. Another limitation acknowledged by the author are potential personal biases in selecting certain articles and excluding others toward preconceived outcomes and interpretations. As such, to promote adherence to the generally accepted standards of qualitative research (Lamont & White, 2005), the author sought contrasting views from the literature throughout the research process to reduce biases and referred to the both the general and specific problem statements of the project to assure alignment to the nature of the problem. The limitation of the semester-based duration for the study created a time constraint to the analysis process. Further study will be required to achieve a full grasp of the extended knowledge within the volumes.

*Gaps in the Literature and Recommendations for Future Studies*

Despite the volumes devoted to the topic of motivation, both private and public organizations still suffer from unresolved leadership issues and unmotivated employees. The conclusions and findings elucidated in this review lend themselves to apparent and significant gaps in the current literature. This section will identify these disparities and address recommendations for future works.

While copious volumes are produced relating the quantifiable, statistical relationships between the theories of motivation and the variables of business performance, insufficient research exists to fully comprehend how the leader's level of awareness and understanding of the motivational factors of their employees impacts business performance. More importantly, a gap exists in how such applied factorial knowledge deployed by leaders to create motivational interventions may have on performance. Given this void across the breadth of the academic athenaeum, it was found that little to no research was available on how this phenomenon occurs in public sector organizations, particularly in South Carolina.

Further qualitative inquiries are necessary to assess the conditions impacting employee motivation for both public and private entities. Such studies will provide insights into resolving the disparities in the leader to employee motivational equation. This dissertation research project will not only seek to understand the factors contributing to poor motivation among public service workers, but also seek to address and complement the academic findings regarding the insights of how leaders may improve their understanding of the motivational factors of their employees and deploy effective initiatives that have a positive impact on business metrics for customer service and productivity.

**Summary and Transition to Section 2**

Section 1 of this paper defined a general and specific problem in the area of motivation which led to the purpose of this study and nature of the research to be undertaken to further understand the topic. Contemporary motivational constructs and the leadership theories underpinning the social science for this study were established using a conceptual framework to illustrate the relationships and interactions between the concepts. The integration of Biblical principles was provided to demonstrate the pragmatic application of the Christian faith within

modern business practices. The current literature was compiled to understand the breadth of evidence regarding motivation and the transformational leadership style, as well as their relationship to the field of business leadership and their practical application within a variety of business environments. Gaps in the present literature works were identified; these voids led to the necessity for this study.

Having established the background and foundation for the study, Section Two will begin the qualitative research process to understand the leader's role in motivating public sector workers through the theoretical lens of motivation theory and the transformational leadership style. Section Two will establish the research design and method for this qualitative study, a description of the instrument to be utilized, the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire [MLQ] and an account of the purposive, population selection and the data collection method. The role of the researcher as well as the selection criteria and roles for the participants of the study will be explained.

**Section 2: The Research Project**

Section 2 reports the qualitative research approach and process to understand the leader's role in motivating public sector workers through the theoretical lens of motivation theory and the transformational leadership style. Section 2 establishes the research design and method for this qualitative study and includes an account of the purposive, population selection and the method for collecting data. A description of the instrument to be utilized as a pilot process in the study: The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire [MLQ], and the instrument's reliability and validation criteria from the vendor are provided. The role of the researcher along with the selection criteria and roles for the participants of the study is explained. The analysis process of the qualitative data collected is described, as well as the saturation and triangulation methods to derive validity and reliability of the research process and its findings.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to extend the academic athenaeum by expanding current understandings of the reasons for poorly motivated public sector workers. Wyche-Seawood (2019) and Walker (2015) indicated the leader's lack of understanding of the motivating factors of their workforce contributed to an environment of reduced worker satisfaction and ineffective operational productivity. This larger problem is investigated through an in-depth study of leaders' perspectives of motivation in the public sector and the extent to which these leaders understand and utilize motivational factors in assisting their workers to become more productive within the administrative services and public works departments of large to medium-sized municipalities in South Carolina. For the purposes of this study, the criteria, large to medium-sized is defined as city populations greater than 12,000 residents in

2018, as noted in the latest [2010] U.S. Census Bureau statistics. This criterion provides a pool of 32 targeted municipalities to include in the research.

**Role of the Researcher**

Stake (2010) indicated that the researcher plays a critical role in assuring integrity of the qualitative research process. There are several aspects to which researchers must give care and consideration: integrity and ethical considerations, credibility and competency in the research procedures such as collecting, analyzing and processing the research data, reliability and validity of the research results and methods for the presentation of the findings (Meredith, 2018). This section describes the bases and applications for addressing these elements within the current research project.

**Ensuring Integrity and Ethical Considerations**

Bias or other factors which may prejudice the objectivity of the researcher or the compromise the methods and findings can be severely detrimental to the integrity and ethics of the research process (Shay, 2019). Shay (2019) identified the following types of bias which can prejudice the researcher:

1. Confirmation bias which the researcher loses objectivity in interpreting data toward his or her desired outcomes rather than reporting the results as found.

2. The question-order bias influences the participant's responses to subsequent interrogatives.

3. The leading question bias stimulates participants'' responses toward a given answer reflecting the researcher's bias.

Meredith (2018) reported that a primary source for bias comes from the researcher's prior knowledge and experience and recommended mindfulness practices to remain alert and open to the inputs of participants rather than subjugating these to their own impressions and experiences.

Monitoring and reducing bias in the process is a fundamental responsibility of the researcher in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). This qualitative research's perspective is emic through the researcher's employment in a leadership role in the public sector and through professional associations and municipal networks. As such, this examiner must exercise mitigation strategies to avoid conflicts and biases in the investigative, analysis and reporting phases of the project.

The following methods are being deployed in this project to mitigate interferences from all such biases:

1. A standard instrument [the MLQ] with known validity and reliability assurances will be issued to participants.

2. A third party will be contracted to receive initial survey responses so that any individual participant's survey responses are not known to the researcher, only that they are prequalified for continuing in the study on the basis for their preference in exhibiting the transformational leadership style. Managers that do not relate a preference for the transformational style will not be included in the study's subsequent research stages.

3. Oversight and approval of the research process from Liberty University's Doctoral of Business Administration doctoral committee and faculty are used to identify potential biases in the proposed research process.

4. Permissions from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board are also to be achieved in assuring that a stringent compliance to the highest ethical procedures for this research are observed.

5. Credible and competent research processes in accordance with given research standards and scholarly standards from known research authors and social scientists are utilized in the execution of the research procedures.

**Ensuring Credible and Competent Research Procedures**

Roberts and Hyatt (2019) indicated that credibility in qualitative research refers to the extent to which procedures for validity, reliability and dependability were deployed to establish integrity of the process and accuracy of the results. To ensure the adherence of this project's research proceedings to this standard, the following measures are established: validity occurs through the use of a standard instrument, the MLQ, to qualify participants, and saturation and triangulation methods are enacted to verify the findings. Standard and competent qualitative research methods acquired from renown research authors, such as Creswell (2014, 2019), Stake (2010), Paivi and Kovalainen (2016), and Creswell and Poth (2018) are applied as a control measure of this study.

The investigator's research background was qualified through the prior project completions of a Bachelor's Essay in 1990 (Aziz et al., 2002), and an unpublished Master's Thesis in 1993, along with several professional certifications: as a Certified Governmental Auditing Professional, a Senior Professional in Human Resources certification and a certified Senior Auditor with the National Baldrige Quality Program. As further verification of this researcher's individual competency, the research plan was approved, and its execution was overseen by the faculty of the School of Business, Doctoral Studies at Liberty University. For an

additional layer of scrutiny and qualification, an independent Institutional Review Board from the same University ensured the project's compliance with Federal guidelines by reviewing its research procedures for completeness in meeting the ethical standards and participant treatment parameters for the subjects involved in the study. Such parameters included informed consent, securing protection of private information and confidentiality and to protect the participant from harm, stress or embarrassment (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019).

Enlisting procedures to protect the confidentiality of the participants is a paramount concern. For example: in this project, organizations agreeing to participate in the study are designated with an identifying alphabetic code once their interest is confirmed by their governing official. No other reference to the company's name, location or other potential identifying features are mentioned in the course of the study. Once participants are designated as eligible following the MLQ survey, they are assigned an identifying number code to secure their anonymity for the remainder of the study. The role of the researcher in ensuring credibility and competence in this research project is to follow the expressed research guidelines of the University and the Institutional Review Board.

**Identifying Participants**

As previously noted the participant pool is founded among public works leaders in large to medium-sized municipalities, defined as city populations greater than 12,000 residents in 2018, as noted in the latest 2010 U.S. Census Bureau statistics. Volunteer participants in the study are categorized and culled by their preferred leadership style as indicated by the MLQ instrument.

As an ancillary step in the research process, for those organizations where permission is granted to access the hourly workforce, focus groups were utilized as the primary mechanism for

gathering information regarding the actual motivational factors for the front line subordinates of their managers/supervisors. These participants were identified and selected by the host organization.

**Collecting, Analyzing and Processing Research Data**

The researcher conducted face-to-face or telephone interviews to collect the impressions and perceptions of the leader for understanding the factors that motivate their workers. The next step of the study was to review the customer service and productivity metrics of their department or organization to ascertain the impact their transformational leadership style on such business measures. The investigator adopted methods for assuring bias mitigation in the collection, analytical, and deduction phases of the research.

The role of the researcher in obtaining factual, truthful interpretations of the interview data collected is to rely upon hermeneutical principles for interpreting the plurality of impressions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), wherein the theoretical frameworks of Transformational Leadership and Herzberg Theory were exercised as a control measure to assure appropriate interpretations of the information collected. Thematic dispositions are used to analyze the data collected. The researcher utilized the impressions of the participants for interpreting the numeric value, reliability, and results of their own productivity and/or customer service metrics to avoid examiner bias in this data processing step (i.e., How do they -the participants- interpret their business measure as improved, reduced or unchanged as a result of their efforts to motivate their employees?). The role of the researcher is to apply preliminary conclusions for the project from these observations.

For those organizations allowing focus group participation, the role of the researcher is to facilitate the group discussions in accordance with standard practices for objectivity, such as a

structured interview with funnel-dimension formats (Morgan, 2019), techniques for open-ended questioning, which allows participants to freely construct their responses (Krueger & Casey, 2015) and the utilization of thematic dispositions to analyze the data collected. In all phases of the research for the collection, analysis, and processing of data, the handling of such with adherence to the recognized standards of research design as set forth by the Institutional Review Board becomes the primary role of the researcher.

**Ensuring Reliability and Validity of the Research Results**

In qualitative research, reliability and validity of the research results are achieved through saturation and triangulation. Saturation is defined as the point of the research where no further new insights or data properties are being readily discovered, and triangulation is noted as the process of verifying the findings from differing sources to provide justification for the identification and translations of themes related in the findings (Creswell, 2014). The role of the researcher in reliability and validity is to mitigate limitations to the discovery process. Such limitations include the researcher being seen as intrusive to the privacy of the participant, the researcher's ability to gain sufficient rapport with the subjects involved in the study, and the availability and release of documents to the researcher (Creswell, 2014).

**Methods for Presentation of the Findings**

The presentation of the findings occurs through a formal, written representation of the findings as deciphered and formulated by the researcher. The role of the researcher is to determine the best means for relating the findings in a manner that remains objective, yet balances the need to engage the reader, especially for those who may have participated in the study (Creswell, 2013). To achieve this critical balance, Weis and Fine's (2000) pointed for responsible report of self-reflective for critical consciousness writing, as noted by Creswell

(2013) was implemented. These points include concern for "theorizing beyond the words of the participants, decoupling my responsibility from my interpretations, [understanding] my political reflexivities, and [awareness of how] my analysis (and writing) offered an alternative to common sense or the dominant discourse" (Creswell, 2013, p. 216). Creswell (2013) also advised the writer to understand and meet the needs of the audience using appropriate language and structures, along with using several different manner of expressions to relate to various audience types.

The use of iterative syntheses to process responses to the research questions and deduce the facts from the fieldwork's findings provide a sound mechanism for preparing the content of the report and its presentation (Stake, 2010). Written text of the project's report conforms to the American Psychological Association's (APA) Seventh Edition guidelines for academic writings. The use of figures and tables provide visual aids to the written text and often condense the complexities of the literary into easy-to-read formats. Such techniques were implemented by the researcher to ensure the quality of the presentation and its accurate reflection of the findings from the fieldwork.

**Role of the Participants**

This project relies on the participation of public sector organizations and the accessibility to the managers and workers primarily in their public work departments. Gaining access to participants occurred on a voluntary basis for public organizations in South Carolina who met the population threshold and other established criteria to qualify to participate. Some initial publicity about a potential study was circulated through the leadership and members of the Municipal Association of South Carolina and the South Carolina Chapter of the American Water Works Association to initiate curiosity and generate interest in organizations who may potentially like to

participate in the research. Further access, formal notifications, and consent agreements occurred

under the guidance and direction of the administrators of Liberty University and Institutional

Review Board.

Shay (2019) noted several participant biases:

1) Friendliness bias wherein participants agree with the researcher's assertions so as not

to disappoint the examiners.

2) Social acceptance bias which causes respondents answer with a higher regard for

socially acceptable answers rather than their own honest viewpoints.

3) The habituation bias infers the participant's identical responses to closely worded

questions.

4) Those related to sponsor bias, where the participant's personal feelings about the

sponsor of the research influences the quality of the answers.

To establish a working relationship with the subjects in the study, help the participants

identify with the researcher, and to build rapport with the subjects, the researcher intended to

provide a brief biographical monologue, using the local vernacular and folksy dialect as

applicable to relate the researcher's background as an hourly worker from Moncks Corner, South

Carolina, having come-up through the ranks in manufacturing and public organizations.

Following this introduction, a plain-language explanation of the nature and objectives of the

project, as well as the confidentiality measures, was portrayed. The purpose herein was to set the

participants at ease with the type of information they were asked to provide and how it would be

used for advancing the topic of leadership in academia. To overcome many of the biases noted

by Shay (2019), honest responses were emphasized. Participants were asked to carefully read

each question and thoughtfully provide their perceptions and views only and not rely upon those of their peers, managers, or those expressed by other members of their organizations.

**Research Method and Design**

*Research Design*

This study of public sector leadership deals with gaining further insights for the central phenomenon of a leader's understanding of motivation within a focused environment. Therefore, a qualitative, case study design was utilized for the research approach. Case study designs seek to derive a detailed understanding of defined social events or human circumstances of the subjects participating in the research as referenced in a specific timeframe and boundary (Creswell, 2014). Case study designs collect data through interviews, observations, the review of related documents, and trends that relate the experiences of the subjects be studied (Paivi & Kovalainen, 2016).

Research procedures for case study design include collecting fact statements and the philosophical assumptions of participants, retrieving significant statements in the form of thematic occurrences, deriving meaning from these recurring themes, providing a thorough description of the experience, and the insights connected to the experience (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research explores the experiences of its subjects to provide an expository of their perspectives, opinions and feelings about the topic being studied (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Case study designs can also seek to describe the essence of defined social events or human circumstances of the subjects in the study (Creswell, 2014). Further, Paivi and Kovalainen (2016) indicated that qualitative business research methods are used to focus on both the interpretations of the views and perspectives associated with the phenomenon and to clarify issues remaining from quantitative works.

*Research Method*

Qualitative research methods espouse observations, inquiries, inductive and deductive analyses, depth of understanding, smaller-derived samplings, interpreting results, and constructing meaning about a topic (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The rationale for engaging a qualitative, case study approach in this project was to gain a comprehensive and complete understanding of the perceptions of transformational leaders for employee motivation in the public sector. Deeper meaning was sought regarding how these leaders came to understand the intrinsic motivational needs of their workers and how they might have had to adjust their approaches to the changing needs of employees in order to impact their department's productivity and customer service business metrics.

To gain a depth of understanding, the following specific methods were deployed: an online pilot survey to determine the predominate leadership style of each participant. Face-to-face or telephone interviews were conducted to understand the qualifying participants' perceptions about employee motivation, their methods used to determine the intrinsic factors for motivating workers, the leaders' feelings regarding the effectiveness of their motivational efforts, as well as how they have managed to keep pace with any perceived changes in such prescribed motivational factors. Finally, the organization's metrics for productivity and customer service was reviewed to deduct any possible observable trends or relationships as outcomes for confirming the effectiveness of the leader's motivational efforts.

The following research questions guide the study to deduce this level of understanding.

**RQ1:** To what extent does leadership style effect the perceptions of leaders of public sector workers within the large to medium-sized municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that motivate their workers toward higher productivity?

**RQ1a:** Sub-question - How do these perceptions enhance or inhibit the productivity of workers?

**RQ2:** To what extent does leadership style effect the perceptions of leaders of public sector workers within the larger municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that engage their workers that enable customer service?

**RQ2a:** Sub-question - How do these perceptions enhance or inhibit the engagement of workers to provide good customer service?

**RQ3:** What are the perceptions of public sector workers within the larger municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that motivate and engage their productivity and customer service efficacy?

It was hoped that the researcher identified best practices from these investigations for public sector leaders to follow in improving employee motivation and satisfaction. Qualitative studies also involve exploring data sets and documents related to the study (Creswell, 2013). As such, the design selection aligns with the research method in support of the investigator's review of performance data from the organizations' productivity and customer service measures.

This project sought to understand the experiences, opinions, and perspectives of public works manager role from municipalities across South Carolina possessing a predominantly transformational leadership style for participation in the study to understand their methods for motivating their workers. The researcher utilized naturalistic inquiry, meaning that real-world issues about the challenges and triumphs experienced in motivating public sector employees were explored and discussed with the leader-participants of the study.

**Population and Sampling**

To address both the primary research questions and their supplemental sub-questions, a sample of voluntary participants in municipal and other public works organizations servicing

South Carolina populations greater than 12,000 citizens were considered for this project. This criterion provided a pool of 32 potential organizations within South Carolina. Gay and Airasian (1996) defined and distinguished between a population and sample for qualitative research: wherein sampling involves selecting qualified members to participate in a research study from a larger group with similar characteristics, referred to as a population.

The population and samples used in the study considered public works leaders with direct supervisory responsibilities for front-line workers across various job titles in their organization and not limit participation on the basis of gender, age, tenure, race, or other demographic qualifiers. This selection process followed the purposive method, a form of non-probability sampling, which applies a pre-determined criterion for selecting and identifying candidates to participate in the study and uses a critical case intensity which illuminates the lived experiences of the subjects (Palinkas et al., 2016). It allows for a logical generalizability of the information obtained that can be applied or inferred to larger or similar populations (Palinkas et al., 2016).

The criteria chosen for the study, along with the purposive and critical case methods, provide a measure of credibility and reliability to the study (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). However, Palinkas et al. (2016) noted that one of the major drawbacks and limitations of the purposive method is the degree of expected variation among the responses of the participants is unknown at the beginning of the study. To maximize an information–rich result, iterative sampling should be used to ensure saturation of the sampling (Palinkas et al., 2016). While the purposive method was utilized as a primary means for data sampling, the researcher also relied on networking or snowball sampling as a secondary method for reaching and locating potential subjects for samples. The researcher used a network from the lists of member from both the American Water Works Association of South Carolina and the Municipal Association of South Carolina to begin

the study, then requested from these participants a recommended referral to other eligible

potential participants who might also interested in joining the research project.

The critical case intensity with its generalizability aspect supports the tertiary objective of

the study for discovering best practices for public sector leaders to follow in improving employee

motivation and satisfaction. Other such qualitative sampling strategies such as criterion-e,

random, homogeneous and convenience methods were disqualified because many such methods

were either restrictive in the type of participant samples allowed or provided too broad of a

selection criterion which diluted the original subject pool intended for the research.

Creswell (2013) reported that case studies should seek to develop a complete, in-depth

analysis of the aspects and meaning of a given topic in order to derive interpretations, patterns,

and relationships in the data. Sample sizes are secondary to the researcher's ability to draw

deeper meaning from those participating in the study (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The

researcher sought to discover the perceptions of transformational leaders for employee

motivation in the public sector in order to impact their department's productivity and customer

service business metrics. A deeper understanding from these initial perceptions was sought for

how the subjects came to understand the intrinsic motivational needs of their workers and how

these leaders might have had to adjust their approaches to the changing needs of employees in

order continue to recognize positive results in the company's productivity and customer

satisfaction measures.

**Data Collection Methods**

The steps for gathering data in qualitative research include setting the parameters for the

research to occur, conducting semi-structured inquiries, reviewing documents, metrics and trend

information, and establishing the procedures for the recording of the data (Creswell, 2014). This

section will report the instrumentation used as a pilot for qualifying participants, introduce the

Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) along with its validity and reliability results,

report the qualitative instruments and primary questions used in the study, review the

components of the interview guide, and describe the use of focus group and the role of the

researcher as an instrument in the study. An overview of the data collection process is provided

in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3**

*Abridged Process Flow for Data Collection*
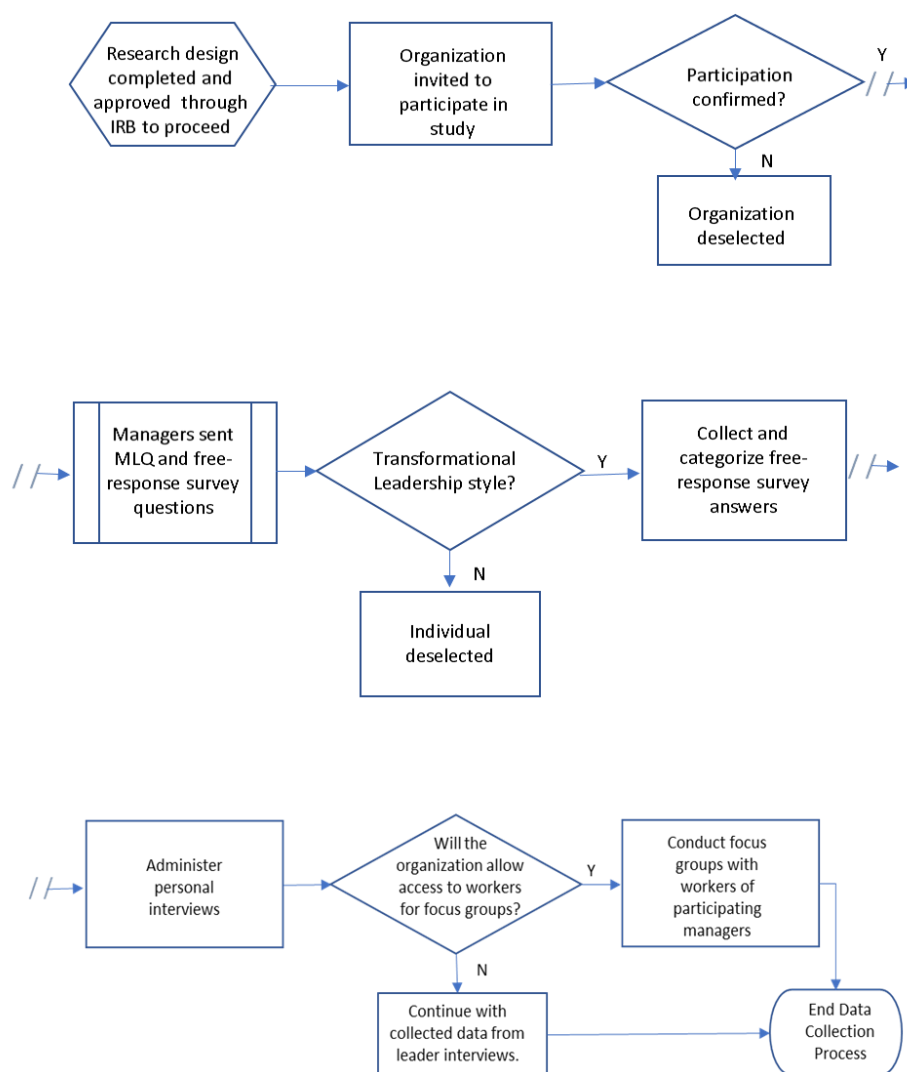
**Instrumentation Used for Qualifying Participants**

This study's interest centers on understanding perceptions of motivation with leaders exercising the transformation leadership style. The first cull applied to participants was to identify leaders who preferred this particular leadership domain over other leadership styles, such as the transactional, authentic, or autocratic types.

While this was not a mixed method study, to qualify participants for inclusion in the project, a pilot instrument was implemented to determine the predominant leadership style of the subject leader across three categories: the laisse faire leadership style, the transactional leadership style, or the transformational leadership style. The MLQ by Bass and Avolio (2009) was selected as the primary tool for determining leadership style because it is a known, proven instrument, having endured the academic rigors of scientific research with known scholars, in numerous studies for many years. For over 25 years the MLQ has been used to explore the dimensions of leadership to bring new paradigms into existence for organizational development through the further understanding three leadership styles on organizational performance and effectiveness. Bass and Avolio (2009) sought to examine and categorize the full range of leadership constructs from the avoidant to those with transformational attributes. As such, the MLQ has undergone several iterations since its inception. Version 5X of the MLQ survey was implemented in the current study.

**Validity and Reliability of the MLQ-5X**

Reliability and validity were key factors in research for ensuring the credibility of the results and the consistency of the findings. Validity refers that the study measures what it intends to measure, generally confirmed through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; Heale & Twycross, 2015). Reliability refers to a constancy. Similar results will occur through replication

of the instrument being implemented under similar conditions (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Bass

and Avolio (2004) evaluated these aspects of the MLQ -5X in 1999, having produced the

following quotients to derive a renewed validity to their product and its related six factor model:

$p<0.001$ for the chi-square statistic. The six factors are identified as charisma (CH), inspirational

(IS), individualized consideration (IC), contingent reward (CR), active management by exception

(MBEA), and passive avoidance (PA; Bass & Avolio, 2004). The Cronbach $\alpha$ score for

reliability follows in Table 1. The bold values indicate the Cronbach coefficient for the $N=1498$

sampling after deletion.

**Table 1**

*Cronbach Coefficient for Reliability of MLQ-5X [N=1498]*

| |
|---|
| *Removed to comply with copyright.* |

*Note*. Copyright 1995, 2000, 2004 by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio. Published by Mindgarden, Inc.

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study in research design is an exact, small-scale experiment which replicates the

method of a larger study in advance so that the procedures of the research can be evaluated for

their efficient deployment and effectiveness (Thabane et al., 2010). To evaluate the process for

administering the questionnaire survey affirm the clarity of instructions provided to the

participants for completing and returning the materials and verify the return procedure for the

collection of results, a pilot study for this research was conducted with a single public works

office. Further distributions of the survey materials were deferred until the procedures used in the pilot study could be verified for accuracy and completeness.

**Qualitative Instruments Used in the Study**

Husserlian qualitative research attempts to create understanding of a subject's own reality through descriptive inquiries (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). A qualitative research interview seeks to obtain and clarify the perceptions and perspectives of the phenomena of subjects' everyday activities and interactions within their world (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) indicated that qualitative interviewing occurs as a craft with a specific methodology and line of questioning to derive thematic outcomes to the relationships of the topics being studied. There several types of interview questions executed in the craft of interviewing. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) noted that these include:

- Introductory questions which target distinctive memories or circumstances that the interviewee experienced.

- Direct and indirect questions are used to introduce topics with direct statements or indirectly through inferences.

- Follow-up questions clarify and expand the depth or dimension of the response of the interviewee to gain additional insights into the perceptions and attitudes of the subject.

- Specifying questions request more operationalizing of the interviewee's responses by confirming their experiences as personal or second-hand, for example.

- Interpretive questions are reflective in nature and seek to clarify the understanding of the interviewer's perception in the communication cycle.

Stake (2010) purported that interviewing in qualitative research is used to obtain critical information regarding the essence of a phenomenon, collecting numerical data and the subject's

perceptions about the data, and to discover aspects of the research that cannot be evaluated otherwise. Human conversation becomes a reliable method for understanding the feelings, attitudes and opinions of others; listening to the dreams, aspirations and emotional responses to others provides an in-depth, well-suited basis for qualitative research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). To facilitate the unique level of understanding described by Stake (2010) and Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), the researcher exercised great care to ensure that the instruments in this study were founded on the prescribed theoretical constructs and reflected the intent of the proposed research in addressing the business problem.

**Development of the Primary Interview Questions**

Creswell (2013) described the purpose of interviews in qualitative research as acquiring in-depth knowledge from the perceptions of individuals. Stake (2010) related that structured interviews with prepared, open-ended questions that align with the objective of the research being conducted are the best for deriving thematic inferences for comparisons and interpretations. In qualitative research, interview questions need to be reflective of the theories of the phenomena being studied (Agee, 2009). However, the constructs and the planned questions used in the course of the investigation may change according to the direction in which the findings lead the researcher as the design scope narrows or widens during the implementation phase of the investigation (Agee, 2009).

This project's research questions were based upon the theoretical constructs of transformational leadership and Herzberg's theories of motivation. The principle used by this researcher to shape the interview questions was to align the interview questions with these generalized theories and the overall interrogatives from the central phenomena proposed in the

study. As such, the project's research questions served as the primary guide for the development of the interview questions. An example of this relationship is seen in the Figure 5.

To validate the interview questions for acceptance into this research project, each primary interview question was reflected against the general and specific problem statements to ensure its appropriate support to address the problem of the research. To qualify for inclusion in this research study, a proposed interview question must have asserted positively against each of two questions that were used to test this dynamic:

1. Will this line of inquiry provide information to address the nature of the problem of public sector leaders in developing an understanding of the motivational factors of their workers?

2. Will this line of inquiry provide information to ascertain the in-depth meaning behind the attitudes and perceptions of leaders for understanding and addressing the motivational factors of their workers?

**Table 2**

*Example of the Relationship of Interview Questions to Research Questions*

| Research question RQ1 | |
| --- | --- |
| RQ1: To what extent does leadership style effect the perceptions of leaders of public sector workers within the large to medium-sized municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that motivate their workers toward higher productivity? | |
| RQ1 Related Interview Questions: All participant-leaders queried | Delivery Method |
| 1. Besides pay and benefits, what are the factors that you feel motivate your workers to be more productive? | Interview |
| 2. What program or activities do you personally conduct, separate from the company, to motivate your workers' productivity? | Interview |
| 3. What type of measures for productivity does your company monitor? | Interview |
| Research question RQ1a: Only transformational leaders queried | |
| RQ1a: Sub-question - How do these perceptions enhance or inhibit the productivity of workers? | |

| RQ1a Related Interview Questions | Delivery Method |
|---|---|
| 1. Given the following general rating categories, how would you rate the current level of productivity of your overall staff?<br>Outstanding/above average/meets expectations/needs some improvement/needs much improvement | Interview |
| 2. You mentioned there were several factors, besides pay and benefits, (name them for the participant) that motivated your workers to improve their productivity. Describe in a much detail as possible, how did you come to understand that these were the correct factors? | Interview |
| 3. Given the programs and activities for motivating workers that you mentioned in the online survey (name them for the participant), how effective do you feel these overall efforts are/have been at motivating your workers? | Interview |
| 4. How were these programs targeted toward specific motivational factors and what type of expected, effective outcomes for worker productivity were discussed? | Interview |
| 5. Are there motivational programs and activities you feel have worked better or been better received by the workers than others?  Which ones? | Interview |

*Note.* The full set of interview questions and their relationships to RQs can be seen in Appendix I.

**Follow-up Questions**

Follow-up and clarifying questions were used during the course of the interviews to verify and substantiate the information being related by the participants. While the primary questions occur in a structured interview format, many follow-up and clarifying questions were introduced through spontaneous conversation with each participant and cannot be structured in advance. Some clarifying questions, based upon recurring themes in successive interviews, were developed as the research evolved. However, a general sampling of the type of clarifying questions planned during interviews included:

- In what way was your leadership skills challenged by the circumstance you are relating?

- In what way was your leadership skills advanced by the circumstance you are relating?

- What organizational or personal factors were at play when this circumstance with the worker(s) occurred?

- What evidence, metric or record exists to verify this circumstance you are relating?

- What was the reaction of your manager/peers/subordinates when this circumstance

  occurred?

- How did their reactions (manager/peers/subordinates) make you feel? How did you

  respond? What drove this response from you?

- Can you tell me more about that? And other phrasing techniques requesting additional

  information are helpful to draw out valuable details in the participant's narrative.

**Components of the Interview Guide**

The components of the interview guide to accompany the research included an

introductory statement, the main interview questions, and follow-up questions to address each

overarching research question and a closing statement. This section describes these integral

segments of the interview guide and the investigative protocols for making observations,

conducting interviews, and recording data.

The introductory statement contains crucial information for the participant at the

beginning of each personal interview and helps to sets the stage for a relaxed, comfortable, and

open environment for the interview to occur. In the introduction stage of the interview, the

interviewer sets the structure dimension for the interaction; the researcher advises the

interviewee of the purpose of the interview, the general nature of the questioning and recording

process and how the information is to be used (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The researcher may

have used several introductory, semi-structured questions in this segment to help set the stage for

trustful interactions. The main interview questions serve to stimulate the interviewee's response

to the time, manner, place and perceptions of the incident or occurrence being researched

(Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). A variety of question types such as direct, interpretive, clarifying,

and specifying questions were asked in the main segment to retrieve information that addressed

the research questions. Once the questioning was completed, the closing statement was made to advise the participant of the confidential nature of the information provided in the course of the interview and to thank the participant for their participation and honest, candid feedback.

Creswell (2019) provided protocols for the phases of the interviewing process. Observations made during the interview followed Creswell's (2014) protocols for descriptive notes and accounts of the events during the interview as well as reflective notes about the reaction of the subject to certain topics discussed in the session. Interviewing protocols include methods for asking questions and recording responses, such as verbal inquiry or written media to ask the question and/or recorded media and note taking for documenting responses (Creswell, 2014).

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups provide an efficient, non-direct style of gaining critical information from a variety of participants in academic qualitative research (Morgan, 2019). An ancillary design of this research was planned where organizations allowed access to the hourly workers and/or subordinate staff to understand their perceptions about their motivational factors and the influence their leader exerts to impact these factors. Focus groups, with six to ten attendees and the researcher acting as the moderator, were utilized as the primary means for data collection from the worker-participants. The primary purpose of interviewing the focus group members was to verify and clarify the effectiveness of the types of motivational factors deployed by their company and immediate leader. Table 3 provides examples of the focus group questions.

**Table 3**

Examples of Questions Used in Focus Groups

| Ancillary Design Questions (where worker focus groups are permitted) | |
| --- | --- |
| Research question RQ3: Only workers of transformational leaders queried<br>RQ3: What are the perceptions of public sector workers within the larger municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that motivate and engage their productivity and customer service efficacy? | |
| RQ3 Related Interview Questions | Delivery Method |
| 1. Besides pay and benefits, what are the things that motivate you to give a good, productive day at work? | Focus Group |
| 2. What type of feelings of satisfaction do you get from giving this good, productive day's work? | Focus Group |
| 3. How well does the company understand the factors that motivate your productivity? | Focus Group |
| 4. What are the activities and programs that the company does well that make you motivated to be more productive? | Focus Group |
| 12. How well does your immediate manager do at understanding the factors that motivate you to give excellent customer service levels? | Focus Group |
| 13. What are the activities and programs that your manager does well, separate from the company, that make you motivated to deliver excellent customer service? | Focus Group |

**The Researcher as an Instrument in the Study**

In qualitative designs, the researcher acted as an instrument in the study. This phenomenon is facilitated by the close human interaction between the researcher and the subjects and enabled through the analytic and interpretative responsibilities of the researcher (Creswell, 2014). The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to collect words from experiences and perceptions and interpret them into understanding (Sanjari et al., 2014). Researcher bias becomes a principal concern in qualitative inquiries, especially where the researcher has prior experience in their background, cultural or socioeconomic differences from the participants themselves, or the environments where the study is conducted (Creswell, 2014). Failure to disclose and mitigate such biases may create ethical concerns in the research process (Sanjari et al., 2014).

To mitigate these biases, the researcher conducted the interviews and focus groups with full awareness of the possibility of such potential biases, disclosed known relationships with any parties or organizations involved in the project, cited specific influences that the researcher's prior experiences in the public sector may have on the researcher's filtering and interpretations of the information, and followed the recommendations of the Institutional Review Board for bias mitigation.

**Data Analysis Methods**

*Qualitative Data Organization and Analysis Methods*

This project explored the realities of motivation as perceived by leaders and the social phenomena that influence their perceptions of motivation. This section reports the processes for data organization and the methods used for qualitative data analysis.

The data organization process involves several steps in preparation for the analysis phase: journaling and cataloguing of critical information to support the data analysis phase, rationalizing events, the ideas created from these events to support emerging themes, and the security of the data throughout the project. The researcher followed Stake's (2010) advice for organizing data using journals to chronical the appointments, important occurrences, the relationships of findings to the theoretical constructs and the researcher's ideas, speculations, and questions during the project's progress. The notes pertaining to theoretical constructs and occurrences were then organized into a separate file in a linear design to support discoveries in the coding analysis and thematic development processes. The researcher's ideas, speculations, and questions were recorded separately to support the deduction phase of the date analysis. The appointments were retained as a memory prompt for relating events to specific dates and locations.

A systematic process for data management and security was utilized for this research project. Data management in qualitative research refers to the structures and systems that are used to store, archive, retrieve, duplicate and secure documents related to the qualitative inquiry (Lin, 2009). This research denoted various data sources, mostly maintained in electronic files, including interviews and focus groups, audio recordings, surveys – in both defined-response formats and free-response formats, journals and documents from the academic literature, along with the researcher's hand-written notes. Security of all research records in this study occur in accordance with the Institutional Review Board's standards for ethical compliance.

All records were securely kept to ensure confidentiality of the files. Hand-written notes were scanned into electronic files and stored accordingly. Password protected access and encrypted archiving were used for safeguarding electronic records and securing the privacy of the human subjects in the study. Also, a confidential coding process was implemented to protect the names and references to each organization and individual. These codes, which followed the subject throughout the research and reporting process, were established and assigned prior to the invitation to participate is sent to any organization. This confidential code was the only identifying designation appearing on any paperwork associated with the research project.

The data analysis process in qualitative studies involves three primary steps: (a) rationalizing the findings, (b) ensuring objectivity in the interpreting process, and (c) understanding the thematic contexts of the relationships and social influences of the phenomena being studied (Paivi & Kovalainen, 2016). To rationalize the findings of this research, known quantitative data analysis methods were deployed to objectively interpret and understand the socially endemic contexts from the interviews, surveys, and observations of the issue studied. To ensure objectivity and mitigate researcher bias in the recoding of the information, a third-party,

professional transcriptionist was employed to transcribe the recorded interview and focus group

sessions. Coding is the primary method for analyzing the information. Coding refers to the

qualitative synthesis and progressive classification of related topics from which generalized

themes can be deduced (Stake, 2010). To properly fathom the thematic contexts of these

interactions, the transcripts were downloaded into NVivo software or similar product for coding

and identification of prevalent themes and relationships. Creswell (2014) advised that although

computer software coding programs are efficient, the research must still manually review each

line of text to derive the deeper meanings and contexts accompanying the information's delivery.

The researcher followed Creswell's (2014) steps for coding:

1. Thoroughly review all documentation from the data collection phase.

2. Create a list of all topics related by the participants during the initial review.

3. Categorize the topics into commonly occurring using unique, descriptive words.

4. Determine relationships between the topics to create major themes.

5. Assign abbreviated codes to the themes and alphabetize them.

Three types of code categories may be expected: those that are intuitive or common sense, those

not anticipated by the researcher, and those that are unusual or of interest to the researcher

(Creswell, 2014).

The core intent of the coding procedure implemented by the researcher was to organize

the data into a logical, useable format for further analysis in addressing the problem statement

against the theoretical constructs of the study. A second intent for using discrete qualitative

coding was to relate the themes of this research to prior studies in a critical comparison to the

results of established works. Lastly, the coding procedure was selected so that the process can be

duplicated by other researchers.

**Qualitative Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are essential elements in qualitative research. Validity addresses the appropriateness of the processes used in the research and governs the suitability of linkages between the research design, the data collection and analysis phases, the compilation of results, and the reporting of the findings ensuring all are contextually matched in response to the problem being studied (Leung, 2015). This project adopted both content validity and face validity. Face validity refers to the extent to which the theoretical foundation noted in the conceptual framework is supported in the research, that is: the research is measuring the construct it intends to measure (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004). Content validity provides a comprehensive evidence from the numerous sample data collected that support the application of the theoretical construct (Brod et al., 2009).

In this qualitative study, saturation, triangulation, member checking and reflective descriptions were the recognized methods for achieving process validity (Creswell, 2014). The researcher also made clear all potential biases with participants (Stake, 2010) and employed an external auditor to review the identified themes for congruency and clarity (Creswell, 2014).

Reflective descriptions began the process as notes and interview session recordings occur. The researcher used rich, descriptive language when making notes about the participants' responses, the circumstances as they relate them and the conditions upon which their experiences occurred (Creswell, 2014). These reflective descriptions were useful in identifying themes that could be used in the triangulation process. The triangulation process involves reviewing all the defined themes and their evidence against each other to confirm the existence, depth, and sufficiency of the relationships between the noted perspectives of the participants (Creswell, 2014). Saturation refers to having acquired a sufficient number of samples in the research where

no other recoverable insights are evident (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) noted that qualitative studies, such as this project, typically involve sample sizes of three to ten participants. This project was designed to seek participation from a qualifying pool of 23 public sector organizations within South Carolina to satisfy the saturation requirement.

Another validity technique, member checking, where study participants were asked to review the researcher's description and findings for accuracy, was deployed to confirm findings and seek new discoveries and interpretations which might have been missed in the initial recording (Stake, 2010). To assure content and face validity, a qualified, external auditor was employed to review the themes and the evidence related to each theme. The auditor's purpose was to test the logic used in the identification of themes for a consistent, systematic application of the data in each theme's development against the foundational theory of the research. The qualifications considered for the auditor was either former graduates of a Doctoral of Business Administration program or an auditing professional certified through the Institute of Internal Auditing, North America.

Reliability refers to consistency in the research (Heale & Twycross, 2015; Leung, 2015). As a first safeguard for reliability and consistency, a semi-structured interview guide with preprogrammed, basic questions directed the conversation with participants. Interview questions were directly related to an overarching research question for assuring replication in the research process should other practitioners decide to duplicate the study. Allmark (2003) noted one of the pitfalls in posturing reliability in qualitative research is confirmation bias in the interpretation and reporting. Confirmation bias denotes assuming new evidence as impulsive confirmation of the researcher's perspectives in reporting the findings and conclusions (Allmark, 2003). Falsifiability is a safeguard against confirmation bias in qualitative research (Leung, 2015).

Falsifiability ensures that conclusions and findings are stated such that they can be refuted

(Psychab, 2015). The researcher follows the advice of Leung (2015) to ensure falsifiability. As

such, Leung (2015) cites the tenets of Silverman (2009) for refutational analysis to contest

opposing views, multiple data comparisons and comprehensive data analysis to verify the

accuracy of the content and context of the information collected.

**Summary of Section 2 and Transition to Section 3**

This section summarizes Section 2 and the gives an overview of the next section. This

research project was based upon the theoretical constructs of transformational leadership and

Herzberg's theories of motivation. Section 2 described the research design and method for the

project and the ethical considerations for conducting the research. Section 2 clarified the type of

qualitative interview questions used in the investigation and their relationship to the primary

research questions. Procedures for data collection and data analysis were explained, as well as

the techniques for assuring reliability and validity of the study's results and findings. The

deployment of a known instrument for determining leadership styles and the use of a pilot study

to provide assurances in the investigative process was reported. The reader's understanding of

the research design and method prepares the way for an explanation of the application of the

project's findings in professional practice as covered in section three. Section 3 will report the

research findings and conclusions, recommendations for practitioners in implementing the

findings, and suggested future studies.

**Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change**

This section will address the findings deduced from the current research project and the applicability of these findings with respect to the professional practice of business. The section will examine the implications of the results and their relevance toward improving the practice of leadership and establish recommendations for their implementation. More importantly, the section will elucidate the implications for these results in relation to the Christian worldview for Biblically-based business practices within the discipline of leadership. A brief overview of the study, a restatement of the primary research questions, along with a summary statement of the findings follow.

**Overview of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate through an in-depth study of leaders' perspectives of motivation in the public sector and the extent to which these leaders understand and utilize motivational factors in assisting their workers to become more productive within the administrative services and public works departments of large to medium-sized municipalities in South Carolina. The intent is to extend the academic athenaeum by expanding current understandings of the reasons for poorly motivated public sector workers. Wyche-Seawood (2019) and Walker (2015) indicated the leader's lack of understanding of the motivating factors of their workforce contributed to an environment of reduced worker satisfaction and ineffective operational productivity. For the purposes of this study, the criteria, large to medium-sized was defined as city populations greater than 12,000 residents in 2018, as noted in the latest 2010 U.S. Census Bureau statistics. This criterion provided a potential pool of 32 targeted municipalities to include in the research.

**Presentation of the Findings**

*General*

A primary premise from the conceptual framework for this research project stated that

leaders desire to have increased performance among their employees in their customer service

and productivity. Also, transformational leaders who understand their workers' intrinsic

motivational factors inspire workers to perform better. This research set out to determine the

extent to which both the perceptions of leaders about motivation and their subsequent actions to

motivate their workforces have on business outcomes.

Understanding and appropriately responding to intrinsic factors is essential for employee

motivation in producing effective results for improved business performance. This project

analyzed the perceptions of leaders for the methods they used to understand the intrinsic

motivational factors and the techniques that they deployed in reaching the minds of their

employees through these factors to stimulate them to improve productivity and customer service

metrics.

The research process involved eight public sector organizations within the state of South

Carolina that met the specified criteria. The researcher, acting a primary instrument in the study,

administered the MLQ-5X inventories to 30 participants to determine their leadership style

preference. Three participants did not complete the survey within a reasonable time (72 hours

following receipt), despite having returned a consent form. There was no reply from the

researcher's follow-up emails and text messages, so they were withdrawn from the study by the

researcher.

Twenty-seven MLQ-5X inventories were completed and a subset of 22 leaders indicating

a preference for the transformational leadership style was selected on the basis of their responses

to the survey. These respondents must have been at or above the 3.09 normative threshold for the combined attributes score for the transformational leadership style as indicated in the MLQ-5X source data in Figure 7 below (Mindgarden, 2020). Five participants did not qualify on this basis. Telephone interviews were conducted with the 22 qualifying participants. The average telephone interview lasted approximately 43 minutes.

The conversations with the participants followed the prescribed interview question list and included independent follow-up queries as appropriate to delve further into the details of their responses. This information was transcribed into written text by a third-party transcriptionist and downloaded into NVivo software for further processing.

**Table 4**

*Summary of MLQ-5X Survey Normative Results*

| |
|---|
| *Removed to comply with copyright.* |

*Note.* Copyright 1995, 2000, 2004 by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio. Published by Mindgarden, Inc.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

The research process relied upon the four primary behaviors exhibited by transformational leaders [idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation] as a basis for the study for employee motivation in promoting advances in business performance through productivity and customer service results, as noted in Figure 4.

As noted in Section 2, the data analysis process in qualitative studies involves three primary steps: rationalizing the findings, ensuring objectivity in the interpreting process and understanding the thematic contexts of the relationships and social influences of the phenomena being studied (Paivi & Kovalainen, 2016). In accordance with Section 2, to rationalize the

findings after having the interviews transcribed by a third-party transcriptionist for objectivity, analysis of the data included an initial review of the interview content for general impressions on how the responses related to the four transformational behaviors and intrinsic motivation. These impressions were recorded into a written journal which included the researcher's thoughts about the detailed viewpoints of the respondents, along with other notes regarding the relationships discovered and the overall progress of the research.

**Figure 4**

*Model Depicting the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership, Motivation and Business Performance*
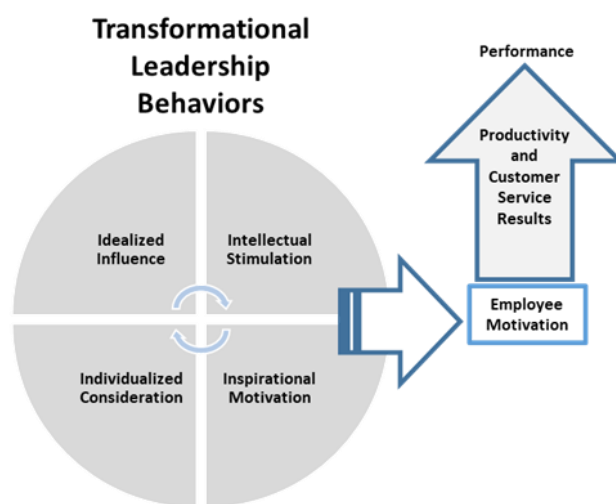


The four behaviors of transformational leadership were used as guideposts for qualitative themes in the data organization and analysis. To support the deeper understanding of the thematic contexts and social influences of the role of public sector leaders in motivating their workers, the general impressions from the initial review led the researcher to the rationale for adopting the indicators from the MLQ survey (i.e., building trust, integrity, encouraging others, coaching, innovation, rewarding achievement, and motivating for extra effort and productivity)

as primary coding sequences within the themes to address and support the primary research questions.

**Figure 5**

*Interview Coding References*
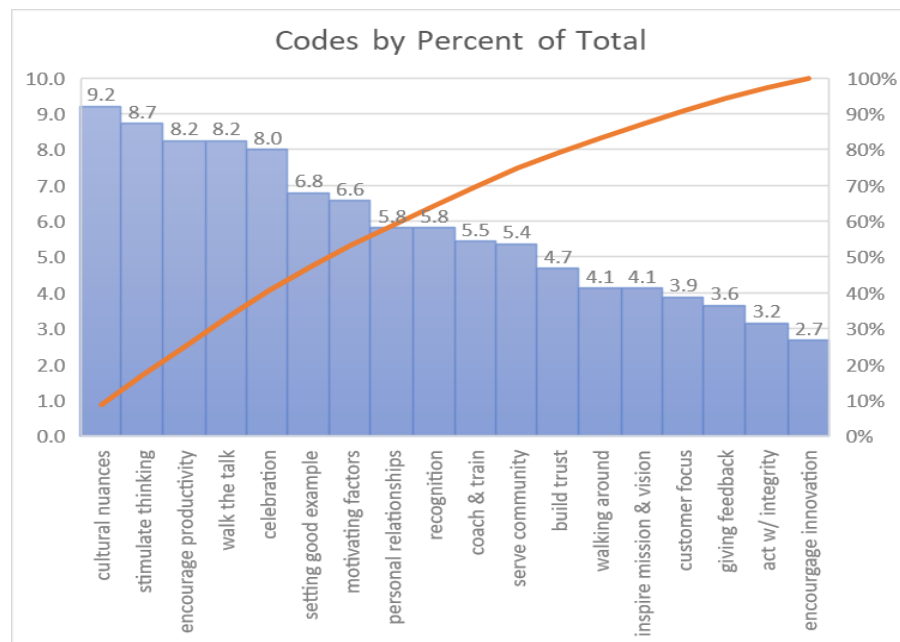


Quotes and comments submitted by the respondents were categorized against these codes to derive results from this thematic analysis. Since the MLQ-5X was used to determine the level of preference for transformational leadership, the categories of this instrument were adopted as the primary, though not exclusive, codes used to demonstrate how the interview responses and their interrelationships connected to the overriding aspects of transformational leadership. The findings within the themes were compared to the conceptual framework and referenced to the literature review to draw appropriate conclusions. To this end, the researcher addressed the following research questions.

**RQ1:** To what extent does leadership style effect the perceptions of leaders of public sector workers within the large to medium-sized municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that motivate their workers toward higher productivity?

**RQ1a**: Sub-question - How do these perceptions enhance or inhibit the productivity of workers?

**RQ2:** To what extent does leadership style effect the perceptions of leaders of public sector workers within the larger municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that engage their workers that enable customer service?

**RQ2a:** Sub-question - How do these perceptions enhance or inhibit the engagement of workers to provide good customer service?

The researcher was unable to address Research Question 3 due to limitations related to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions stipulated by the participating organizations disallowing access to their hourly workforce during the timeframe under which this research was conducted. The findings and conclusions in this paper do not address this specific research question.

**RQ3:** What are the perceptions of public sector workers within the larger municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that motivate and engage their productivity and customer service efficacy?

**Findings of the Research**

*General Observations About the Participant Sample*

In general, the participants in the research sample pool represented an average of 13.7 years in public sector leadership roles, with about half of the participants (42%) having also worked previously in private sector leadership roles prior to joining their current organization. Most (60%) had been promoted from with their organizations to their current leadership role, but only about 9% had been promoted in the last 2 years. All other participants had held their current leadership position longer than 2 years. The demographic make-up included 37% females and 23% in minority classifications. All participants, except one, had at least a 2-year college degree.

**Factors That Motivate Public Sector Workers' Productivity**

In addressing the Research Question 1, regarding how the leadership styles and perceptions of motivation of public sector leaders effect the factors that engage their workers to promote employee productivity, over 68% of the leaders polled, indicated that they felt that the productivity of their departments was linked to the intrinsic motivation of their workers. The remaining 32% stated that improved productivity was linked to factors other than motivation such as skills competency training, employee morale and job satisfaction, as well as tenure and experience level.

*Theme #1 for Productivity: Valuing People*

A reoccurring theme emerged as a primary component in the data regarding the perceptions of motivation of the leader for productivity, valuing people, and developing close personal relationships with their workers. Riedle (2015) and Smith (2017) indicated that transformational leaders develop close relationships with their employees and seek to understand the intrinsic motivators of their workers to drive their workers' performance to higher levels. The factors emphasized by the interviewees most often within this theme were: building and maintaining trust, celebrate personal and professional achievement, attentiveness to cultural nuances and coaching and training.

**Building and Maintaining Trust.** A general impression recorded by the researcher indicated that within these categories, the leaders placed a high emphasis on getting to know the individuals that worked for them. King (2014) noted that trust and mutual respect were fundamental to the leader-follower context, that understanding the basic needs of a follower can be used to influence the follower while building trust. Accordingly, the leaders desired to know the basic elements of the worker's family life, hobbies and interest, and other personal

information, without appearing invasive to the individual's privacy, is essential to properly

engage and motivate the person.

**Figure 6**

*Thematic Analysis: Valuing People*



A respondent stated,

Being open and honest is very important to build personal relationships. You cannot

ignore the trust factor that comes into play when dealing with people. I try to spend a lot

of time building trust by locally communicating, providing feedback, having an open

door policy, and making those that work with you comfortable, that is, being

approachable and accessible as well as visible. (Respondent, male, 18 years as a public

sector leader)

Such methods to build trust were deployed by nearly all leaders, except one (95%). These

leaders used various techniques to understand the personal needs of the worker. Often the

overriding technique was to inquire about the worker's personal life, hobbies or other non-work

related interests. In turn, the leader would share some personal details about themselves to build

trust with the worker. "You know, it is important that I share something about myself to show

how I can relate to my people and they can learn to trust me" (Respondent, female, 21 years as public sector leader). However, only about one-third (32%) of the leaders in the study related that they take deliberate measures to tailor their approaches to motivating their workers on an individual basis. "My technique involves you try to treat everyone the same because we are all in the same company, working for the same purpose toward the same goals" (Respondent, male, 13 years as a public sector leader). Rather, the balance of the leaders do consider the needs of specific work groups in developing and implementing their motivational methods.

**Celebrate Personal and Professional Achievement.** Herzberg (2017) reported that achievement recognition and growth were indicated as motivators for workers in becoming more productive. The findings of this study continue to support Herzberg's (2017) assertion. Interview participants noted the relative importance of this factor 31 times over the course of the interviews. Respondents reported that they personally sponsor recognition events for employee birthdays, personal events, such as receiving a degree or certificate, meeting some personal goal, along with celebrating family events such as buying a house or new car or the birth of a child. Oftentimes these celebrations may involve a mention of the circumstance by the leader in a morning meeting, the giving of a greeting card, or the leader may bring in a special treat to note the occasion (e.g., cookies, cake, or donuts, for the person or the entire team). The perceptions noted by the leaders for such action are that it demonstrated a level of caring for the employee, promoted desired employee behaviors and created job satisfaction. "These types of little personal touches go a long way to motivate people. I try to make it a little bit of fun to motivate people" (Respondent, female, 17 years as a public sector leader).

These types of recognitions were found to have stimulated an intrinsic motivator from Herzberg's factors and were statistically significant to job satisfaction and employee engagement (Le, 2014), leading to higher productivity. One participant provided:

> I have the guys over to my house several times a year for a cookout, swim in the pool and to celebrate work accomplishments or just holidays or special events. I invite spouses and children to [also] come by and enjoy themselves. I find this helps me to get them to be better performers at work. (Respondent, male, 20 years as a public sector leader)

**Attentiveness to Cultural Nuances.** Workplaces are becoming increasingly representative of the diversity within the local community (Sharma, 2019). Bass (1985) purported that transformational leaders must demonstrate empathy for the values, culture and behaviors of the people employed under their charge. References regarding the importance of knowing and understanding the cultural nuances of employees was mentioned 38 times by the respondents, having been related as particularly critical in a leader's ability to motivate their workers.

> It's very important to pay attention to the cultural nuances of people. I think that is how you're able to relate to your people. You can look at everybody the same, but you have to consider their upbringing, how they raised, education level, and every aspect of their culture and whether at in life to know how to approach that person. (Respondent, male, 7 years as a public sector leader)

A general sub-theme emerged throughout the commentary for respect and dignity for all people. Concomitantly, this element must also be espoused within the corporate culture, as well, for it to be successfully translated into improved performance. Manik (2016) related that achievement

motivation and an organizational culture for more productive employees and increased organizational performance were mediated by the transformational leadership style.

      **Coaching and Training.** Brooks-Immel (2014) proposed that employee training in public sector organizational cultures where dignity and respect were highly regarded, tended to foster a sense of pride for the work performed as a contributing factor in motivating public workers over monetary compensation, which led to improved retention and employee productivity. Coaching and employee development initiatives were emphasized in 24 expressions during the interviews in the category for valuing people. An overarching perception of leaders in this study was that people development and showing an interest in motivated their interests in achieving the company's goals. Brooks (2015) also related that worker motivation resulted in performance improvements, engagement and production increases when the workers trusted their organizational leadership and felt the leaders had an interest in them, and their career goals. El-Zayaty (2018) indicated that transformational leaders influenced enhanced job performance, career advancement and employee productivity over other leadership styles. Some of the respondents of the interviews offered unique views of coaching, training and career development. "Everyone needs to be pushed outside the box to consider how they could do their job better. I think it is important to constantly evolve your employees thinking skills and their hard skill sets" (Respondent, male, 7 years as a public sector leader).

      Figure 7 relates the number of responses across the various factors within this theme. These inputs support the transformational leadership aspect of individualized consideration.

**Figure 7**

*Histogram Chart for Valuing People*

THEMATIC ANALYSIS
VALUING PEOPLE
Factors Related to Individualized Consideration
for Motivating Employees

| | Building Trust | Culture | Celebrate | Coach/Train | Integrity | Walk Around |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coded References | 52 | 38 | 31 | 24 | 21 | 11 |

Coded References
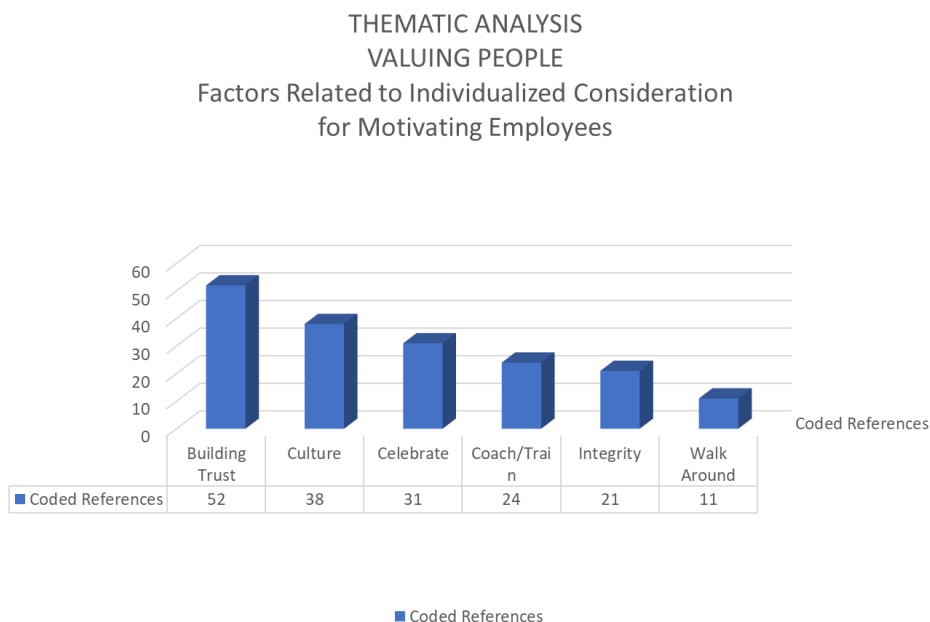
**Summary of Theme #1 for Productivity /Analysis of Emerging Patterns and Relationships.** Noting the emerging patterns and relationships between elements of discovery in qualitative data assists the researcher in developing rational conclusions about the topic being studied (Creswell, 2013). One of the patterns observed early in the present research was the commonality of communication as an integral tool in developing trust. The respondents noted again and again that transparency in verbal communication and helping people to understand the motives of your leadership actions, greatly assisted the leader in building trustworthiness as a leader. Also related was the perception that transparency led to developing feelings of respect from the workers, which facilitated not only productivity, but other areas of leadership in relation to modeling behavior, setting direction, coaching and inspirational motivation around the company mission and vision. The field research has indicated that the respondents of the current study recognize valuing people as a primary principle for motivating their workers for improved

productivity. The implications for these patterns and relationships for enhancing or inhibiting the motivation of hourly workers are discussed in the Implications portion of Section 3.

### *Theme #2 for Productivity: Walking the Talk*

Idealized influence involves the role modeling of leaders, along with a congruence between the leaders' actions and their direction in managing expected behaviors for their constituents (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Modeling behavior for workers, along with the development of positive relationships with employees which included fostering consensus among team members, is an essential element in promoting productive work environments (Herhausen et al., 2017). There were four factors related to idealized influence in this study: building trust, acting with integrity, accountability and leader visibility. There were two of these four factors for modeling behavior that arose as primary from the viewpoints of leaders in this research pool. These leaders that felt overwhelmingly that building and maintaining trust and staying abreast of the needs and concerns of the workforce by leader visibility influenced the motivation of their workers. Referring to Figure 8, building and maintaining trust was recorded in 52 comments, while leader visibility topics were mentioned 24 times. These predominant aspects of trust and leader visibility could be considered as a principle factors in motivating employees across three managerial activities: setting standards, managing change and worker career development. Coaching and accountability received 17 and 9 mentions, respectively, as noted in Figure 8.

Walking the talk was described by the participants in this study as an extremely critical component in gaining trust, setting and upholding organizational standards and managing with integrity. Setting a good example for the team is essential for organizational success. These two factors seemed to interrelate to the exclusion of other factors.

**Figure 8**

*Thematic Analysis for Productivity: Walking the Talk*



Leaders translated this aspect as performing the work of their workforce or engaging in non-management tasks when conditions are not favorable for meeting goals. Their perception was that this type of activity was held in high regard by their workers and build credibility for the leader among the workers.

> Pitching in where you can when you're on a tight schedule helps to build your credibility
> for your leadership. You must build credibility for your leadership among your people.
> An example would be several instances where I have volunteered to participate in any
> task to support the team, and to do my part to support the team. (Respondent, male, 18
> years as a public sector leader)

**Figure 9**

*Histogram Chart of Walking the Talk*

THEMATIC ANALYSIS
WALKING THE TALK
Factors Related to Idealized Influence
For Motivating Workers

| | Building Trust | Walk Around | Coach/Train | Accountability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coded References | 52 | 24 | 17 | 9 |

Coded References
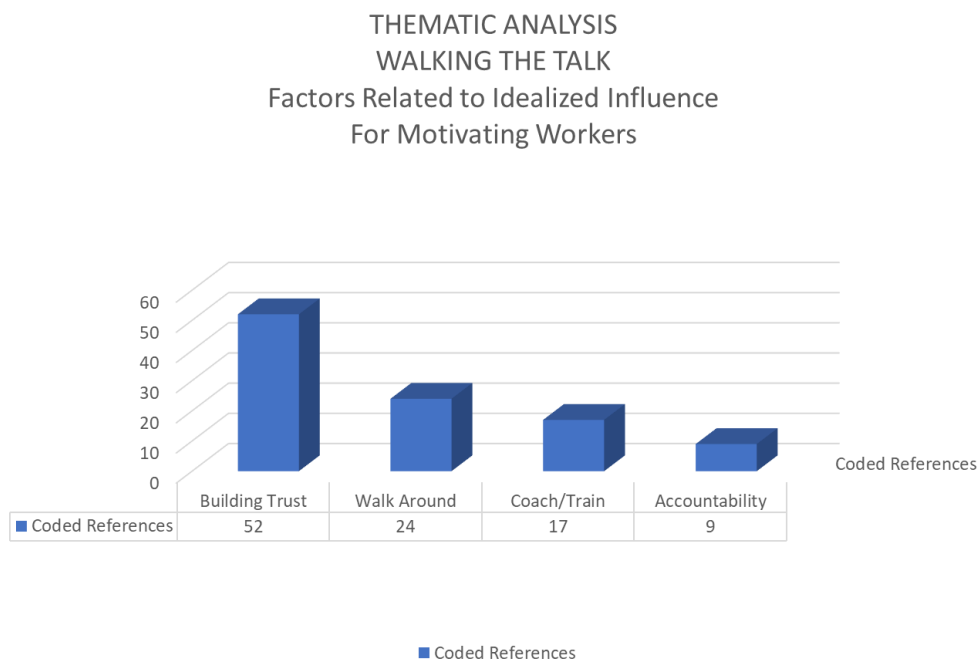
In the sub-category for setting standards, the respondents emphasized leader visibility as a principle means for shaping workers' opinions about the need to adhere to company standards as well as departmental goals. "I also do a lot of positive reinforcement when I see favorable activities. The positive reinforcement includes verbal reinforcement and complements" (Respondent, male, 34 years as a public sector leader). Leader visibility also supported accountability because a highly visible leader is viewed by their workers as being well aware of the actions of people and the activities of the department (Ugochukwu et al., 2018). This aspect, along with leader visibility serving as a mechanism for trust building through visibility and transparency, was also heard from the people interviewed in the current study. "I think that my visibility and open-door policy is a contributor. I walk around every day at the end of the day to see how everyone is doing to see if they had any problems during the day" (Respondent, male, 16 years as a public sector leader). This type of activity was viewed as essential to this manager

in keeping abreast of employee concerns, maintaining a direct, personal link to the operations of the department and for gathering vital, subjective information from others in the workplace or through their own observations (Ugochukwu et al., 2018).

> I go by every morning and speak to everyone I think it's important to have the eye-to-eye visibility on a daily basis. That allows you to share your input and receive information from them about how their work is going and how they're feeling about circumstances in the workplace. This also helps to build and maintain trust with the people who look to me for leadership. (Respondent, male, 9 years as a public sector leader)

"Being visible and approachable to your employees also helps set expectations for people" (Respondent, male, 16 years as a public sector leader).

Thomas (2015) noted that as it applied to intrinsic factors, motivation was associated to job features such as reward and recognition, working conditions, career achievement and perceived upward mobility. "Staying in-touch with what's going with the job crews by randomly showing up at their work sites, you learn who your skilled workers are and who your leaders are" (Respondent, male, 22 years as a public sector leader). Likewise, other leaders of this project reflected similarly: "It is important to match people in this way [skills to expectations] to keep them from becoming overwhelmed or demoralized when they are unable to fulfill your expectations because of the lack of their own competencies, knowledge and skills" (Respondent, male, 4 years as a public sector leader). "When I'm on the job sites with the crews, I try to recognize talent and I believe in telling people when I see good work that I am pleased with what they are doing" (Respondent, male, 23 years as a public sector leader).

Abudi (2017) related that change is best managed when workers receive information about the change in an inspiring, positive manner, with the leader explaining the value for

making the change. Managing productivity during periods of change was also mentioned by the respondents. "Whenever we come out with any new policies, it is important for a leader to demonstrate compliance to the new policy through their own actions before they can expect their workers to want to demonstrate compliance" (Respondent, male, 14 years as a public sector leader). "One of the best ways to promote the change is to get out of the office and talk to people about how you support the new change and ask if they have any questions about it" (Respondent, female, 8 years as a public sector leader).

**Summary of Theme #2 for Productivity /Analysis of Emerging Patterns and Relationships.** A notable pattern in the data was revealed that leaders who possess a value for visibility, accessibility and approachability and who deploy proficient skills to become trustworthy leaders as they invest a great deal of their time in building and maintain trusting relationships with their workers, consider themselves proficient at managing productivity. The construct of manifesting trustworthiness was also noted for valuing people. The reliance upon the interrelation of trust and visibility to support their competencies for setting standards, managing change and preparing their workers for career development.

These leaders also carry a perception that their current productivity performance levels are in the ranges for meeting expectations to outstanding. The performance trend within the departments of most of these leaders has met with significant improvement over the last 2-3 years. And while a small percentage of leaders noted no change in their productivity, all leaders felt the current performance level of productivity was directly related to their ability to understand the factors that motivate their employees and to respond to these factors with deliberate actions and programs to enhance their productivity measures. These discoveries for how public transformational leaders support the transformational leadership aspect of Idealized

Influence. The implications for these patterns and relationships for enhancing or inhibiting the motivation of hourly workers are discussed in the Implications portion of Section 3.

### *Theme #3 for Productivity: Promoting Diverse Thinking and Ideas*

The perceptions of the interview participants provided the following contributing factors as the most important elements for promoting diverse thinking and ideas to motivate their workers' productivity: encourage innovation, coaching and training, and giving feedback. It is the responsibility of leaders to challenge entrenched thinking and the mimicry of rote, repetitive labor and to reshape the mental dynamic that workers apply to their tasks in fulfillment of the Company's mission (Northouse, 2019). Engaging diverse thinking and ideas means rekindling the imagination of the worker toward a repurposing of the reason the task exists. McRee (2018) reported that interventions by management to alter how a worker felt about the purpose or worth of the task or how they perceived various cognitive aspects of the work, increased levels of motivation and job satisfaction. In turn, leaders participating in such interventions learned significant factors to stimulate the thinking and engagement of their subordinates (McRee, 2018).

**Coaching and Training.** Coaching and employee development was rated as the most frequent response, with 48 comments in the record, within the factors for promoting diverse thinking among the workforce. "Another thing I do is training development and special classes. I would stretch there thinking been by asking them to come up with a topic, develop it and then presented to the rest of the team for our monthly training sessions. I believe in engaging my employees to both learn and share that knowledge with others in the department" (Respondent, male, 8 years as a public sector leader). However, as an interesting viewpoint, in each instance covered in this inquiry, leaders preferred to provide the training and coaching themselves. The public sector leaders involved in this study held the perception that the coaching is best when it

comes from the leader themselves. The rationale was given from the respondents that the leader

viewed coaching and development as an opportunity for personal involvement by the leader in

order to build relationships and share their own knowledge with their team members. Bergquist

and Mura (2011) stated that coaches who have first-hand experience in overcoming challenges

similar to those of the coached person are better equipped to resource their mentees. "They know

I expect them to think about what they're doing rather than just a rote performance of their tasks

day in, day out. I share information about how I solve problems" (Respondent, male, 26 years as

a public sector worker).

Annesi and Mareno (2015) offered that coaching, when connected to the organization's

vision for the future, improved overall motivation which led to better mentee satisfaction and

improved performance outcomes. "To inspire the company mission and vision, I keep people

focused by engaging them through involvement in thinking about how that engagement will

benefit achieving the company mission" (Respondent, male, 8 years as a public sector leader).

**Giving Feedback.** Coaching and giving feedback are an iterative processes wherein the

coach, or the leader, and the mentee convene in a sequence of meetings and ongoing discussions

for continuous learning and growth of the individual. Pragmatic coaching sessions afford the

coach opportunities for giving regular feedback to the mentee for their development.

Gyulakopyan (2019) brought out that leaders who possessed a mastery in giving feedback with

empathy and compassion recognized enhanced responses from their workers for improved

results. Giving feedback appeared as an important motivational factor for motivating

productivity in 24 recorded remarks. Personal feedback gives the leader the opportunity to relay

information about corporate direction and job competencies. "Talking to people about the goals

and the strategies is how I motivate my staff. I use examples from day-to-to-day experiences to

remind them of the competency requirements for their job" (Respondent, female, 13 years as a public sector leader). Nearly 67% of the respondents mentioned that giving direct, verbal, one-on-one feedback was a primary mean to maintain communications for keeping workers focused and motivated to remain productive. Most of the participants do not maintain a written record of their ongoing feedback sessions, citing these are less formal than the normal assessment and feedback processes found in a company performance appraisal or similar. About half of the respondents stressed that they document only when there is a problem with performance, but rarely when the feedback is centered on a recognition event.

**Encouraging Innovation.** With 27 comments in the coded record, encouraging innovation became a noteworthy ideal among the views of the research subjects for promoting diverse thinking and ideas among the workforce to motivate productivity. "Part of being a leader is to understand that many times people may not want to do the task at hand, but I think if you can lead them with trust and respect, you can achieve your mission and vision" (Respondent, male, 5 years as a public sector leader).

**Figure 10**

*Thematic Analysis for Productivity: Promoting Diverse Thinking & Ideas*
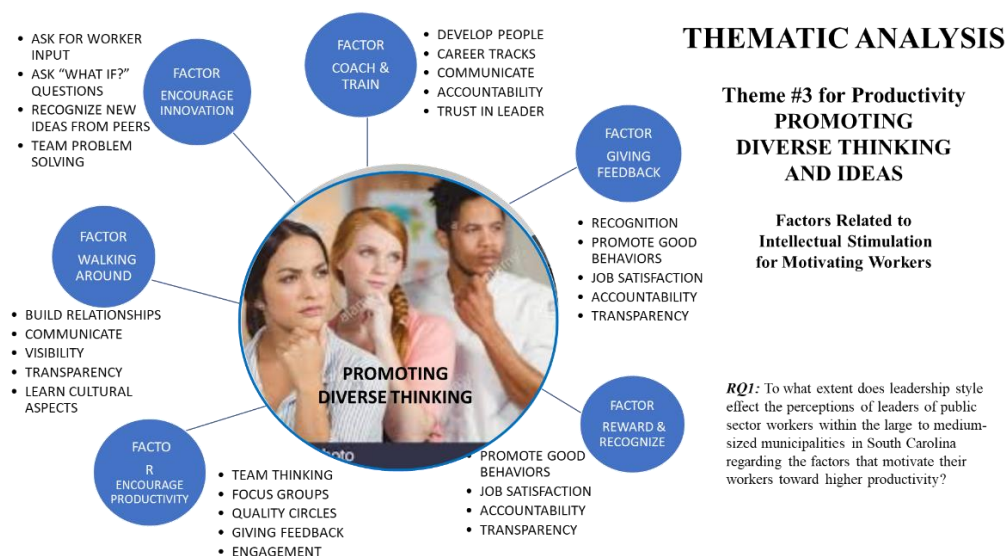
Activities and methods deployed to spark innovative thinking included team meetings to stimulate discussion and problem solving on issues, exploring various means of communicating, electronically, verbally or written through more formal suggestion programs with the workforce to ask for inputs. "To engage the thinking abilities of people to higher levels to make them more productive I have meetings with people to discuss their ideas and approaches to problems" (Respondent, female, 9 years as a public sector leader).

> We use a lot of QCs [quality circles] to get people thinking about the work they are doing and how it can be improved. The first step is to get people to trust that: 1. you are genuinely interested in their inputs, and 2. you will let them try to do something with their ideas to put them in place. (Respondent, male, 2 years as a public sector leader)

**Figure 11**

*Histogram Chart of Promoting Diverse Thinking & Ideas*



THEMATIC ANALYSIS
PROMOTING DIVERSE THINKING AND IDEAS
Factors Related to Intellectual Stimulation
for Motivating Workers

| | Coach/Train | Innovation | Give Feedback | Productivity | Reward | Walk Around |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coded References | 48 | 27 | 24 | 16 | 10 | 7 |
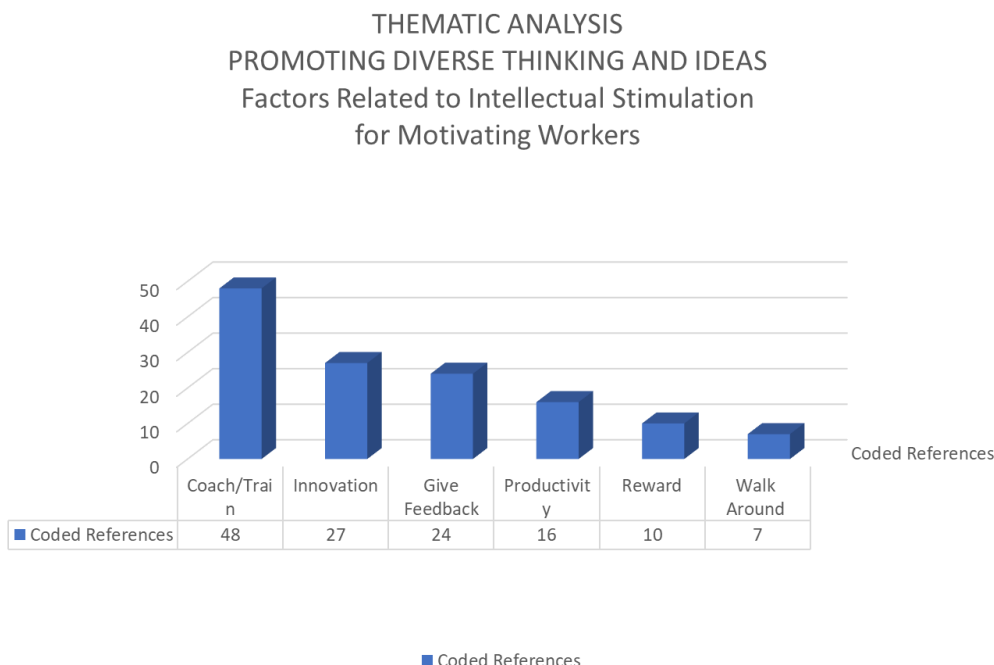
**Summary of Theme #3 for Productivity / Analysis of Emerging Patterns and Relationships.** Organizational leaders must establish a foundation for a culture of learning to drive continuous improvement along with the growth of the individual and the entire organization. Organizational learning is achieved through an evaluation of needs, benchmarking and the exploration of new ideas, and the courage to implement new processes without the fear of failure (Baldrige, 2019). About 87% of the managers stated that they consider their organization to be a learning organization with a culture of continuous improvement. Many patterns and relationships were revealed between the observations and perceptions of the respondent pool in promoting diverse thinking and ideas. The three most-mentioned factors appeared to revolve together around to create patterns of accessibility to the leader for open and honest communication to occur for relating new and different levels of thought on organizational priorities and problems. Another commonality between the respondents involved the relationship between coaching and training and the personal involvement of the leader in assessing training needs and applying training interventions to remedy the skills gap, whether through direct coaching or outsourcing of the intervention to others inside or outside of the organization as appropriate.

A relationship between giving meaningful feedback to workers for continuous improvement and employee development which supported the theme of promoting diverse thinking and ideas was observed as leaders perceived that their productivity performance: safety, for example, was linked to the amount of coaching and feedback provided to reinforce good work habits. Overall, the data appears to indicate that the most successful leaders rely on a combination of the three primary factors together in promoting diverse thinking, rather than as independent initiatives. The implications for these patterns and relationships for enhancing or

inhibiting the motivation of hourly workers are discussed in the Implications portion of Section 3. The inputs received supported the transformational leadership aspect of Intellectual Stimulation.

### *Theme #4 for Productivity: Inspiring the Mission and Vision of the Company*

Sabella et al. (2014) reported that work outcomes of properly motivated workers who are cognizant of the mission and vision of the company were positively related to improved productivity performance for the organization. Keeping people apprised of the strategic intent of the company, as well as how their immediate work impacts the accomplishment of the mission and the achievement of the vision was heard as a primary means for the leaders in this present research.

> I keep it [the company mission and vision] in front of them but I do not necessarily go out and ask them every day: 'what is our company's mission and vision?' But I try to get them to think about how what they are doing drives the accomplishment of the mission and the achievement of the vision. The key is how their work impacts the larger picture for the company. (Respondent, male, 15 years as a public sector leader)

The major factors impacting productivity heard under this category were: serving the local community, attentiveness to cultural nuances and setting a good example.

**Serving the Local Community.** Transformational leaders in the public sector were found to be significantly effective in increasing motivation among public service employees where the leader exhibited a focus on serving the local community as a part of their overall leadership style (Andersen et al., 2018). Likewise, Jensen and Bro (2018) confirmed that transformational styles supported overall employee satisfaction where workers felt intrinsically driven to accomplish their tasks in the interests of public service. Of the 22 people interviewed,

68% indicated that they found that the ability to serve and improve the living conditions in their

local communities was a major factor impacting their motivation to be more productive.

**Figure 12**

*Thematic Analysis for Productivity: Inspiring the Mission and Vision*
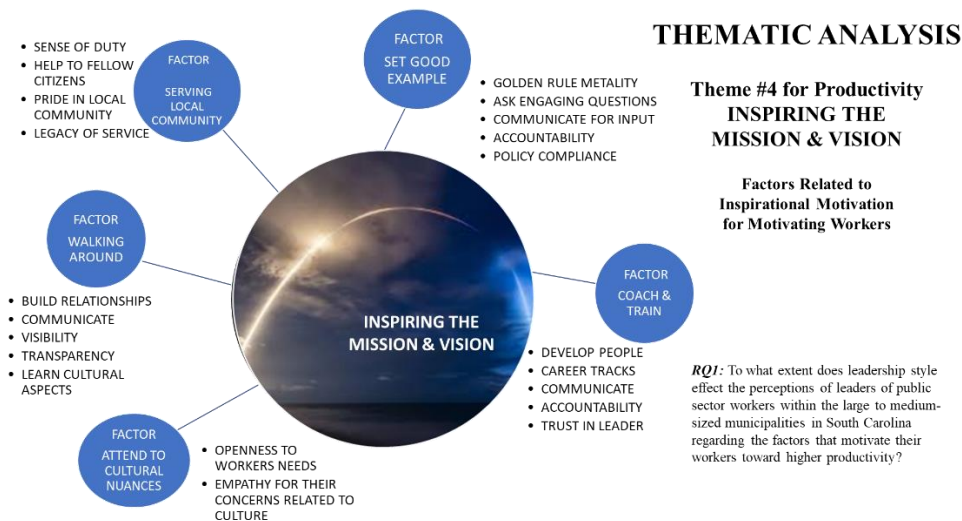


*Note.* It should be noted that among the 8 organizations involved in the study, 7 had a formally written

mission statement and vision statement for the company. One organization did not have a formal, written

company mission or vision statement. In this instance, the leader related that he had created a mission and

vision statement for his department which he referred to when addressing his workers.

The respondents in the current study related that highlighting the connection of the daily

work their workers performed to the needs of the community was highly effective in motivating

their efforts to be more productive. "I use the circumstances of the work to drive the connection

to the mission and vision and how what they do impacts the internal customers and the

community as a whole" (Respondent, male, 8 years as a public sector leader). The methods

utilized in convey this message were deployed through both formal activities, such as regular

team or department meetings and in casual impromptu conversations with workers.

**Figure 13**

*Histogram Chart of Inspiring the Mission and Vision*



THEMATIC ANALYSIS
INSPIRING THE MISSION AND VISION
Factors Related to
Inspirational Motivation for Motivating Workers

| | Community | Culture | Set Example | Coach/Train | Walk Around |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coded References | 26 | 14 | 14 | 8 | 8 |

Coded References
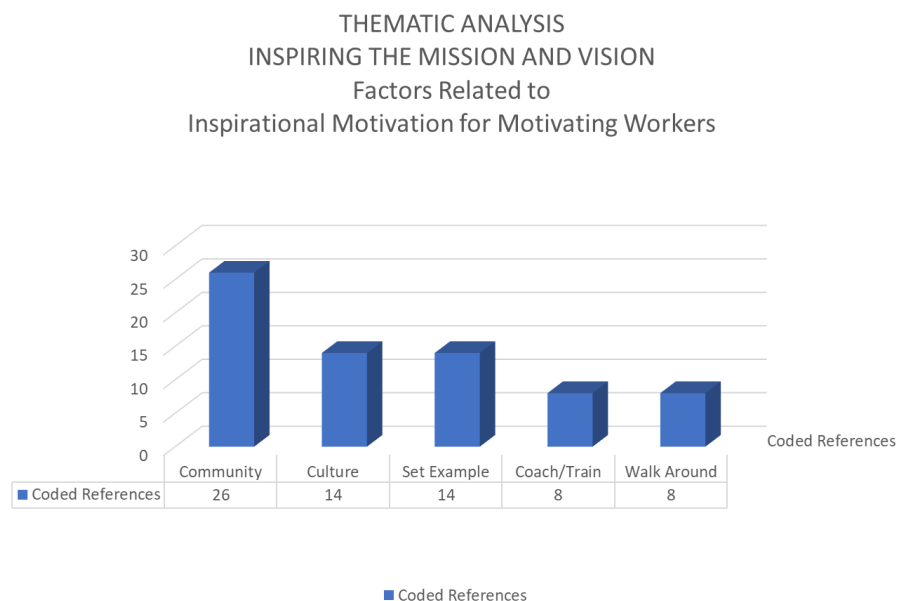
Such interactions tended to focus on building value for the task rather than solely providing a directive for its accomplishment. "It goes beyond just telling someone what to do but rather understanding why you think it is important as a leader and also they need understand the value it brings in serving the customer and supporting the community" (Respondent, male, 8 years as a public sector leader). Other techniques involved non-verbal ques and signals in addressing service to the community as a primary factor of motivation. "To inspire the company vision some of the techniques I use are walking the talk and being the example in exhibiting the values of the organization, this includes valuing feedback from your workers and your customers" (Respondent, male, 11 years as a public sector leader).

**Attentiveness to Cultural Nuances.** Culture has a powerful influence on the bounded rationality that people use to govern their lives and make decisions about the world around them (Morales Burgos et al., 2020). Transformational leaders must execute great skill in perceiving the nuances of these cultural influences to reach their followers in considering future possibilities

toward a new vision for the company and themselves (Northouse, 2019). Leaders who developed deep relationships with their employees were found to provide more motivating environments where the employees felt a stronger organizational commitment leading to less job stress and higher retention (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2017). A primary purpose of these deeper relationships involves the learning of cultural nuances to tailor motivational techniques which meet specific individual needs of the worker. The leader must be able understand the culture causation behind the motive and then stimulate the value set of worker for the motivation to be effective (van Riper et al., 2020). Public sector leaders in this study related similar information in about 25% of the interviews.

> To inspire the company vision some of the techniques I use are talking about the company values and being the example in exhibiting the values of the organization. This includes getting and valuing feedback from your workers on how they feel about the company's values. (Respondent, male, 16 years as a public sector worker)

Or an example of another expression in this regard: "Oh, the mission is everything! And we want it to be everything to our associates, so we have to find a way to make it meaningful to each one of them" (Respondent, male, 18 years as a public sector worker).

Active listening and the use of empathy were critical components for the manner in which leaders in the study reflected the acumen for connecting to their workers cultural nuances. "It is important to validate that they [hourly employees] are important members of the team. Listening and recognition is another great tool. That and the performance appraisal itself are critical" (Respondent, male, 18 years as a public sector worker).

The comments received in this sub-category seemed to reflect the importance of making connections to each worker from a value-based level in order to inspire connections to the

mission and vision of the organization. The role of the public sector leader is to detect and exploit, to the benefit of the organization, the nuances of a worker's conventions and customs to create a seething compassion for the company's objectives. The mission and vision of the organization should be portrayed the leader such that it touches the heart and spirit of the worker, allowing this seething compassion to permeate the exhaustion of each effort and the rigor of each result.

**Setting a Good Example.** Getting employees to believe in the mission and vision of the organization starts with the leader genuinely believing in the same first. Leaders must be personally engaged in motivating the workforce and creating an environment for the achievement of mission (Baldrige, 2019). Modeling behavior and setting a good example for workers to follow was also foremost in the experiences of the leaders polled in this research in order for their workers to have perceived them as genuine, fair, trustworthy, and commanding respect. Some of the commentary revealed in the interview processes for setting a good example were: "When they see me helping with the daily work and assisting with them, it sets a good example that I am not above them and respect what they do and what they go through. I think they appreciate that" (Respondent, female, 4 years as a public sector leader). "We have something here called 'living the vision.' I think modeling that and setting expectations for my workers is the biggest contributor to their motivation" (Respondent, female, 14 years as a public sector leader). These inputs, Setting a Good Example, Attentiveness to Cultural Nuances and Serving the Local Community, support the transformational leadership aspect of Inspirational Motivation.

**Summary of Theme #4 for Productivity / Analysis of Emerging Patterns and Relationships.** The organization's mission and vision define the overall function and a desired

future state of an entity, respectively (Baldrige, 2019). Engaging the workforce toward these ends is a principled activity of leadership. Every action taken by the leader should reflect positively the need for aligning organizational strategies with the core competencies and values of the company, and more importantly, how the role of each member fits into the achievement of the mission and vision (Baldrige, 2019). Caldwell (2019) predicted that the transformational leadership style was positively associated with those managers who understood the importance of creating a meaningful workplaces using their knowledge of the intrinsic motivators that inspire their workforce. Public sector leaders within this research are seen to have utilized a number of methods for intrinsically motivating their constituents toward the vision and mission through a combination of interventions: leader visibility, attending to the cultural nuances of their workers, setting a good example, coaching and training, and extolling their service to the local community.

**Factors That Motivate Public Sector Workers' Customer Service Ability**

In addressing the Research Question 2, regarding how the leadership styles and perceptions of motivation of public sector leaders effect the factors that engage their workers to enable customer service, nearly 82% of the individuals interviewed, indicated that they felt that improved customer service was strongly influenced by the leader's ability to appropriately motivate their staff. The remaining 14% indicated that the leader's ability to motivate improved customer service was moderated to a lesser degree of influence due to other factors, such as training and job knowledge, a lack of awareness for customer focus or a lack of empathy with customer concerns, and personal distractions of the worker. Moon et al. (2019) reflected that the motivation for customer oriented thinking was espoused in job creativity as a link to intrinsic motivation which, in turn, positively influence job performance among public service workers.

*Theme #1 for Customer Service: Valuing People*

A reoccurring theme emerged as a primary component in the data regarding the perceptions of motivation of the leader for customer service, valuing people, and developing close personal relationships with their workers. Transformational leadership was an important element in customer service management to drive employee engagement and superior performance in meeting or exceeding the customer expectations (Cavazotte et al., 2018; Lum, 2018; Wolter, 2017). The factors which supported valuing people for improved customer service included: reward/recognition and celebrating, setting a good example and coaching/training.

**Reward, Recognize and Celebrate.** When added together, the sub-categories reward/recognize and celebrate comprise 56% of the total code references heard in the data. Comments reflecting the need to stimulate the intrinsic factors of reward, recognition or celebration seemed to dominate the conversation throughout the customer service dialogue during each interview. Driving the intrinsic motivators of this category appeared to be of great emphasis to the leaders with which this researcher spoke

**Figure 14**

*Thematic Analysis for Valuing People for Customer Service*

Personal feedback was noted by 82% of the leaders queried as a motivating factor for employees.

To reward people, positive feedback is one of the most important elements in motivating people. Recognizing people when they do something that is a great job. Simple phrases like 'I like the way you handle that; you did a great job' will go much further than financial rewards in building leadership and motivating and inspiring people. (Respondent, male, 8 years as a public sector leader)

Being deliberate and systematic about employee recognition was a common theme as well.

Our metrics look at the number recognition that we do each month and we currently lead all of the operating departments by the number of recognitions for our department. We try to catch people doing things right. While it is easy to catch people doing things wrong, you should celebrate, when they are doing things right. (Respondent, male, 8 years as a public sector leader).

Many mentioned the variety of programs and activities they provided to engage and motivate their staff members to retain a customer focus and to provide excellent customer service. Recognizing employee birthdays, job anniversaries, accomplishing special trainings and certifications, as well as celebrating special, personal occasions such as childbirths, sports awards or the purchase of a new home, were techniques leaders utilized as stimuli for internal motivators.

These types of little personal touch is a long way to motivate people. Try to make it a little bit of fun to motivate people. We use our recognition meetings to discuss priorities and strategies to execute the mission. We also celebrate any type of education working

continuous learning and professional development achievements. (Respondent, female,

12 years as a public sector leader)

**Setting a Good Example.** Leaders must invest time and effort in helping workers

maintain a both a focus on the needs to the customer, and an empathy for addressing those needs.

A close relationship with a leader enables workers to recognize their responsibility for meeting

customer expectations. Altunoğlu et al. (2019) purported that trust mediated the variable of

worker citizenship behavior, emulating those of their charismatic, transformational-styled leader.

Similar findings appeared within the interviews of the current study. Regarding customer

service, I model treating them [employees] the way I want them to treat our customers.

That means… responding to concerns, given hundred percent in providing customers

feedback, and being attentive to the needs of your customers. (Respondent, female, 26

years as a public sector leader)

**Coaching and Training.** Coaching and training were evidenced within the commentary

to encourage intrinsic motivation within the theme of Valuing People, although to a far lesser

degree than the combined influence of recognition and celebrations.

**Figure 15**

*Histogram Chart of Valuing People*



THEMATIC ANALYSIS
VALUING PEOPLE
Factors related to
Individualized Consideration for Motivating Workers

| | Reward | Celebrate | Coach/Train | Set Example | Culture |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coded References | 22 | 20 | 18 | 11 | 4 |
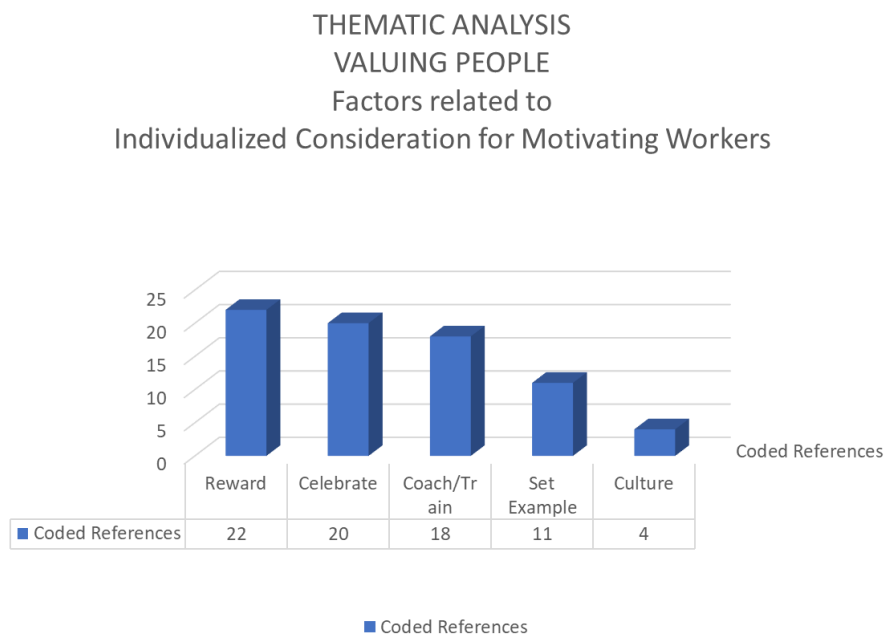
Some of the emphasis points noted revolved around coaching and training as a motivator for valuing people were sharing personal experiences, feedback from customers, mentoring and the extolling the value of their role in customer service. Supporting comments include:

For customer service measures, I track the amount of customer service training that I cover with my workers. This is usually a monthly training class. We also employ third party to survey our customers to evaluate our work. Then, we evaluate the results of the survey to see if there is any improvements we can make and how we deliver those services. (Respondent, male, 7 years as a public sector leader)

I use mentoring between employees. It is a great way for showing the value that your employees add through their work and recognizing their knowledge and experience. It is probably one of the most important things I've done to motivate people and it has worked well. (Respondent, female, 14 years as a public sector leader)

Try to make sure I explain very carefully how their role impacts the organization. I use example from daily life like changing the oil for taking out the trash to demonstrate the principles of plan do check act. Try to explain how to take the strategy is make them a part of the life of the work they do every day. (Respondent, male, 17 years as a public sector leader)

**Summary of Theme #1 for Customer Service / Analyzing Emerging Patterns and Relationships.** The factors which supported valuing people for improved customer service included: reward/recognition and celebrating, setting a good example, and coaching and training. An emerging pattern within this theme has been coaching for improved performance. The data seemed to indicate that each valuing activity involved in motivating employees was centered on developing higher competencies of the worker. Setting an example is merely non-verbal form of coaching. Recognition, while an active process for the leaders and the recipient worker, within several responses elicited, was delivered not only for the sake of appreciation, but also as a stimulus for coaching improved competencies within both low and high performer groups.

Recognition is a good opportunity for training lower performers… The low performer is really motivated by a recognition award because they like hearing about it when they do something right, even though they are lower on the performance scale. A recognition award automatically trains to some level of higher engagement. (Respondent, male, 24 years as a public sector leader)

Similarly, "Recognition, coupled with other things like the career development initiative, let's you share with people that you care about the career development and professional development" (Respondent, male, 10 years as a public sector leader).

Transformational leaders who appealed to their employees' specific intrinsic motivational factors for valuing people, were able to contribute substantially to improved business outcomes through enhanced worker performance and value-creation for the customer (Al-Arafati et al., 2019; Ashima, 2017; Park, 2019). Leaders who motivate the intrinsic factor for valuing people were shown to have positive impacts in customer service (Okinyi, 2015). The comments and opinions received from leaders in the present research project support the overall theme for valuing people as a motivation toward improved customer service.

### *Theme #2 for Customer Service: Walking the Talk*

Modeling behavior and walking the talk were cited as primary influencers of a leader's impact upon the motivation of their workers in a study by Ward (2017). Sparking employee motivation toward improved performance include: modeling behavior across factors deemed significant in impacting an employee's ability to provide service quality, to include: product knowledge, responsiveness to problems with innovative solutions and the speed and quality of transactions involving the customer (Paul et al., 2016). Focusing on the needs of the customer and attentiveness to their demands for quality, service, and delivery comprise the customer satisfaction equation.

Figures 16 and 17 portray the factors for motivating employees for improved customer service: acting with integrity and building trust, accountability, coaching and training, and leader visibility, along with number of references from the interviews, respectively. The factors most by emphasized by the respondents: trust, in conjunction with integrity, and accountability will be the focus of this section.

**Figure 16**

*Thematic Analysis: Walking the Talk*



**Integrity and Trust**. Trust continues to appear in the literature as a major component in the relationship between leaders and subordinates. Håvold and Håvold (2019) explored the connection between power, trust and motivation, having found that leaders who judicious executed referent and reward power were much more able to gain the trust of their constituents, resulting in enhanced employee satisfaction and performance increases. Likewise, in this study, relative to walking the talk for leaders in motivating workers for customer service, acting with integrity and building trust comprised 54% of the discussion heard from respondents during the interviews on the motivating workers in customer service topic.

**Figure 17**

*Histogram Chart for Walking the Talk*

THEMATIC ANALYSIS
WALKING THE TALK
Factors Related to Idealized Influence for Motivating Workers



| ■ References | Integrity | Trust | Accountability | Walking Around | Coach/Train |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| References | 18 | 16 | 15 | 7 | 7 |

■ References
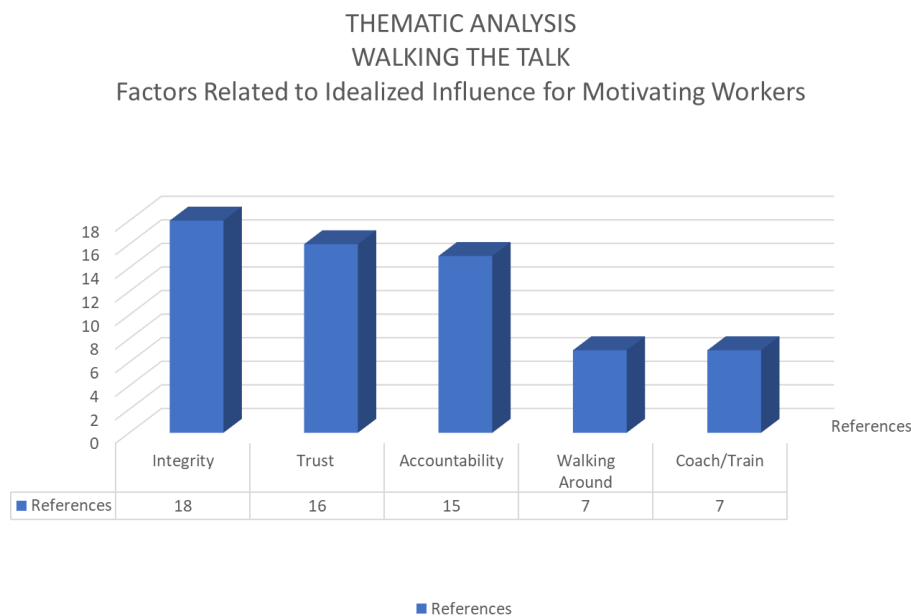
Walking the talk involves presenting oneself as a proper example of the values extolled by the company (Wicks et al., 2010).

> In order to appear genuine, you have to be genuine, you need understand what you value and what you think is important. And you have to live it on a daily basis, because your people will know it when you don't. (Respondent, male, 24 years as a public sector leader)

Developing trust and carrying a mantle of integrity as a leader became a recurring interrelationship within the discussions.

Walking the talk also meant doing tasks beyond a normal the managerial function, rather, the respondents inferred that the leader must be able to work alongside the workers when necessary. "They also need know that I would be willing to do any task as them to do" (Respondent, female, 12 years as a public sector leader). "I try to set the example and I do not

ask them to do something I am not willing to do myself" (Respondent, female, 4 years as a

public sector leader).

Setting oneself apart as an example was related as an accompaniment to walking the talk

methods.

When people look to me, they need to see the company values. I am not going to be a guy

who shows up late my going to the guy who leaves early. I am going to abide by ethical

principles expect from others what I expect of myself. When they see me doing the right

thing than they know I expect them to do the right thing. (Respondent, male, 10 years as a

public sector leader)

"To get the best from my folks in customer service, I lead by example…Do the best job I

can. I try to be friendly to everyone. I also go above and beyond to do duties beyond my regular

job" (Respondent, male, 8 years as a public sector leader).

**Accountability.** Accountability is another factor that appeared to compel leaders'

behaviors in motivating their workers. This factor was also linked to trust and integrity by the

participants as an intrinsic motivator for their workers, although not as strongly, as compared to

the previously paired factors.

There appears to have been to points of view regarding accountability among public

sector leaders: one was self-accountability and the other was having the perception as a fair

adjudicator of accountability by the workforce. These concepts were both evinced in the

comment:

It is very important to fairly leverage accountability in the organization to motivate

people appropriately. I have worked in organizations for a leader where accountability

was either not followed through; or was overlooked for various reasons and it was very

demotivating for me and other people on the job. (Respondent, male, 5 years as a public

sector leader)

In ready support of the judicial adjudicator, the following example remarks were

submitted: "Consistency is the key for accountability, just like it is for integrity and trust. People

have to learn your style and know that you're not going to 'wig-out' when something goes

wrong" (Respondent, male, 8 years as a public sector leader).

Fairly leveraging accountability is an important aspect of motivation. The things I do to

hold people accountable and make sure I am perceived as fair involve doing someone as I

do for all. I have to make sure that I do the things consistently and not show favoritism to

anyone person. (Respondent, male, 15 years as a public sector leader)

Engaging employees in a team environment drives accountability for the leader.

Employee team engagement resulting from transformational leadership methods improved

customer service outcomes (Condos, 2016). Paliet (2016) purported that public sector healthcare

organizations recognized improved patient satisfaction outcomes based upon their leader's

ability to create a culture of openness, trust, collaboration and participative decision-making for

those element effecting their work. These notions for engagement and participative decision

making are substantial precedents for fair accountability that motivates public sector workers.

So, it comes down to accountability. Once my workers understood what the customer's

needs were and we talked about how we would go about addressing these needs properly.

We also discussed with them the type of behaviors that would be required in the type of

results that would be necessary to achieve the levels of service our customers demanded.

(Respondent, female, 12 years as a public sector leader)

**Summary of Theme #2 for Customer Service / Analysis of Emerging Patterns and Relationships.** The factors which supported walking the talk for improved customer service included: accountability, acting with integrity and building and maintaining trust. A repeating pattern which was provided in the discussions indicated that these three factors held a hand-in-hand relationship in establishing a foundation for motivation of workers to occur. Such comments were particularly prevalent from leaders in customer service roles with direct interface with the public, such as administrative offices, payment centers or call centers. A central theme that many of these respondents noted was that leaders must consider acting with integrity as a component of building trust and that accountability, recognizing both constructs for self and others, as an antecedent of both acting with integrity and building trust. This self-awareness appeared as an essential contributor to the effectiveness of the leader in motivating their workers toward improved customer service.

### *Theme #3 for Customer Service: Promoting Diverse Thinking and Ideas*

To optimize operations in the public sector, Burawat (2019) recommended that organizations focus on the triad of customer connection, the engaged involvement of employees in decisions and the implementation of transformational leadership methods. Such aspects of management appear to have a positive effect on work behaviors through creativity and more innovative customer focused business outcomes. Creating work environments for the free flow of ideas in addressing problems stimulates the intellect of workers and facilitates heightened improvements in customer service and responsiveness (Burawat, 2019).

The transformational leadership style, with its focus on developing the individual worker through intellectual stimulation and emotional enrichment, has been demonstrated to have a significant, positive, statistical relationship for improving customer satisfaction (Adaku et al.,

2018; Breevaart et al., 2014; Burch, 2018; Riedle, 2015; Smith, 2017). The factors within this project which supported engaging diverse thinking and ideas for improved customer service included: encouraging innovation, encouraging productivity, reward and recognition, and coaching and training.

**Figure 18**

*Thematic Analysis for Promoting Diverse Thinking and Ideas*
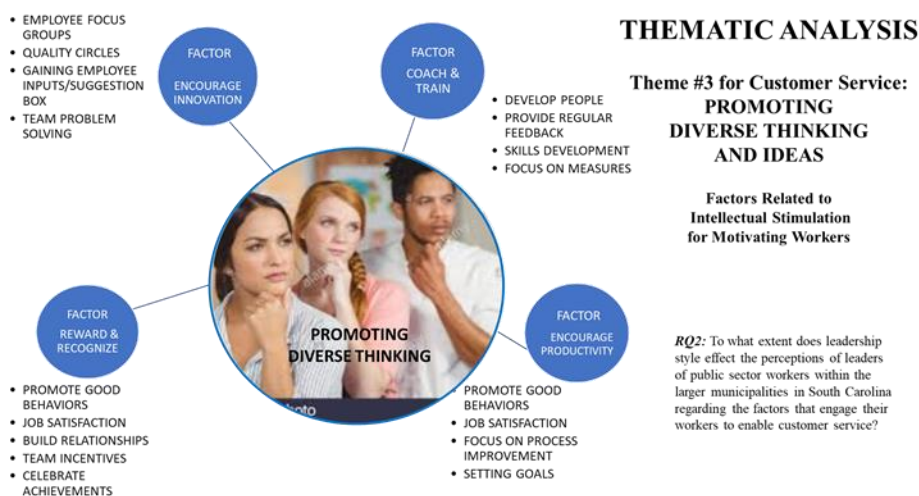


This research focused on the perceptions of leaders for encouraging innovation and productivity as they were the dominant factors rising from the interviews, having comprised nearly 89% of the coded references.

**Encouraging Innovation and Productivity.** The researcher received the greatest number of response to these the factors for encouraging innovation and encouraging productivity. As an observation, the researcher noted in the project journal that their appeared to be a symbiotic relationship or confusion between motivating for productivity and motivating for innovation in the minds of many of the respondents during this portion of the interviews. The comments in this section of the discussion were very closely meshed together in the minds of many of the interviewees, such that they would intertwine their responses within the commentary

to specific question for each one, beginning to address a specific question on their perceptions for motivating productivity, then ending talking about how they motivate for innovation, vacillating easily between the two topics without any reference to which they were referring.

Employee engagement thrives in work environments where thinking and ideas aimed at the continuous improvement of products and processes are valued by the leadership. Employee motivations toward continuous improvement initiatives were strengthened where executives set forth on improving work conditions allowing workers to function with more input and suggestions for project improvements and more discretionary decision making (Stadnicka & Sakano, 2017).

Similarly, the leader respondents of this study made references to this phenomena as well. One example of this type of statement is:

When there is an issue for satisfying the customer, I want to give everyone a chance to think it through and come up with a solution. I encourage them to discuss their ideas with others, with a common approach for solving the problem. When you do this, my experience has been that it will give [the workers] a sense of satisfaction and motivation because they had a chance to participate in the solution. (Respondent, male, 8 years as a public sector leader)

I communicate the need productivity and customer service regularly almost daily by verbal means. We discuss our productivity and customer service metrics. We look at problems that might be impacting the operations and our ability to get things done effectively. (Respondent, male, 6 years as a public sector leader)

To encourage ideas for innovation and productivity, 55% of the respondents stated the use of either project teams, focus groups or quality circles to deploy team problem solving

techniques such as brainstorming ideas, Deming's Plan, Do, Check, Act Improvement Cycle or

other such quality tools for deriving shared thoughts about how to approach and resolve

problems; thereby, allowing the workers to be empowered to generate probable solutions.

**Figure 19**

*Histogram Chart for Promoting Diverse Thinking and Ideas*

THEMATIC ANALYSIS
PROMOTING DIVERSE THINKING AND IDEAS
Factors Related to Intellectual Stimulation
for Motivating Employees

| | Productivity | Innovation | Coach/Train | Reward |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coded References | 126 | 76 | 14 | 12 |

Coded References
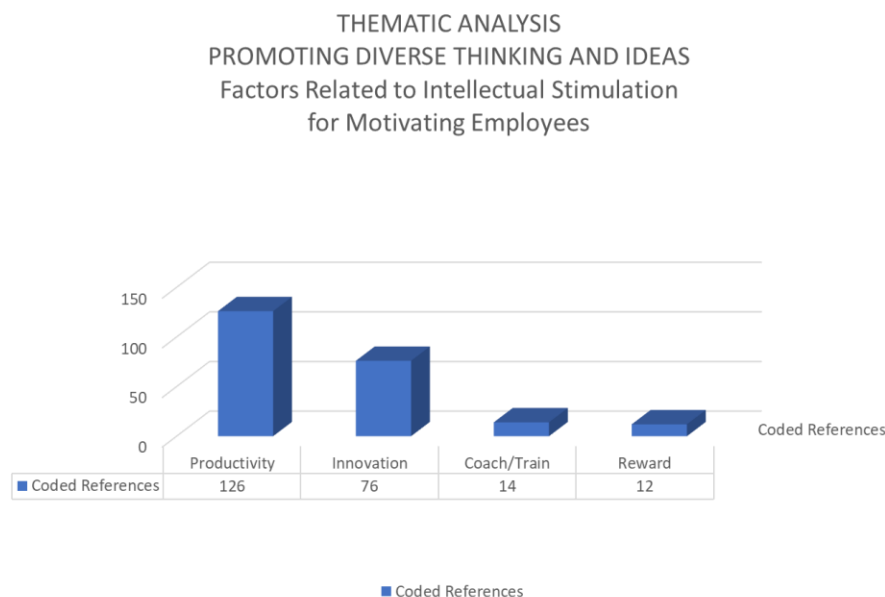
"Empowerment is another factor. Allowing people to do it without my interference into

their work. Decision-making is another factor. I allowed a lot of latitude for people to make

decisions to the level they are comfortable" (Respondent, male, 9 years as a public sector leader).

You need to be able to step away from the limelight and allow your team to figure out

things on their own, but yet feel comfortable to come ask you questions when there is a

concern, rather than you dictate the answer to them every time. (Respondent, male 13

years as a public sector leader)

Many of the replies from the participants on this topic focused on improvement projects

for productivity through various innovations in technology applications, rethinking and

reengineering processes, as well are revising work methods and implementing best practices for

improved operations. Such techniques required technical coaching and training. However, the coaching approach supporting customer focus involving the employee becoming more customer-centric with their awareness of customer needs. This technique was noted in the call center environments, with 20% of the participating companies currently or previously having used this approach. Benchmarking and extensive research with the customer base was a contributing factor within this approach. Effective public self-awareness is associated with attentiveness, affective commitment and customer-centric behaviors in providing exceptional customer service to clients and patrons (Hwang & Lee, 2019).

**Summary of Theme #3 for Promoting Diverse Thinking and Ideas / Analysis of Patterns and Relationships.** Intellectual stimulation occurred as a primary factor for motivating employees within the public sector organizations of this study. It appeared that the leaders relied upon the day-to-day work results as stimuli for conversations about improving operational processes for improved customer service for the communities they serve. Perceptions that promoting innovative thinking for customer results was a pattern noted by transformational leaders within the data of this study, confirming previous assertions from the literature. Gashema (2019) verified that there existed a statistically positive linkage between the variables of creative worker performance and the transformational style. The challenging thinking environment and intellectual stimulation afforded to employees by transformational leadership was found to influence employee competence and thereby improve performance (Wahid et al., 2017).

An observation noted by the researcher was the almost inseparable manner in which many of the leaders framed their comments regarding productivity and innovation when describing creative thinking for customer service. When queried about this phenomena, one participant replied that "It's just the nature of the beast. You have to make sure your operations

are in good order to serve the customer. We can't have people without the essentials [services] that we provide" (Respondent, male, 26 years as a public sector leader).

Throughout the interviews, employee engagement and team structures appeared as an important dynamic in public sector motivation for innovation and promoting diverse thinking. Transformational leadership was an important element to drive employee engagement in customer service management in meeting or exceeding the customer expectations (Cavazotte et al., 2018).

> I form problem-solving teams when the work warrants it. I will pull together a group of seniors and discuss how to solve problems and work out what actions need to be taken to resolve issues. We try to get people to bring up different ideas, I encourage them to give their comments and feedback and help me identify blind spots of things I may not have considered. (Respondent, male, 14 years as a public sector leader)

Such instances were a common comment among the leaders interviewed, demonstrating the perception of a relationship between teamwork, diversity of thought for innovation and success in meeting customer demands.

### Theme #4 for Customer Service: Inspiring the Mission and Vision

Customer satisfaction through perceptions of service, quality, and interaction, is considered a critical element in sustained business success (Park, 2019). As such, leaders are responsible for setting the organization's strategic direction for ensuring its sustainability to meet it objectives (Baldrige, 2019). Creating a climate emphasizing quality in the business-to-customer exchange promotes the achievement of the company's mission and vision (Ashima, 2017). For the current study, the factors that public sector leaders felt motivated workers toward their organization's mission and vision for improved customer service included: serving the local

community, leader visibility, attentiveness to cultural nuances and setting a good example, as seen in Figure 20. The three most commonly referenced factors are discussed in this paper.

**Figure 20**

*Thematic Analysis: Inspiring the Mission and Vision*
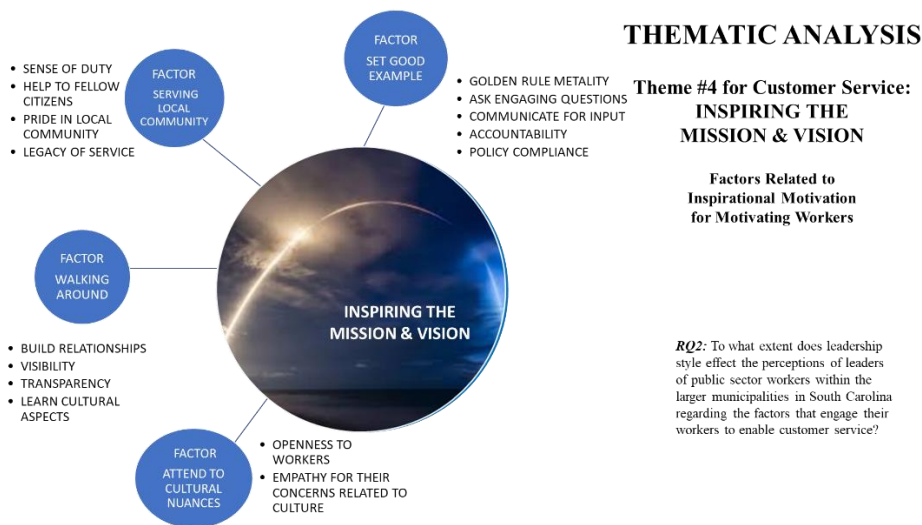


*Note*. It should be noted that among the 8 organizations involved in the study, 7 had a formally written mission statement and vision statement for the company. One organization did not have a formal, written company mission or vision statement. In this instance, the leader related that he had created a mission and vision statement for his department to which he referred when addressing his workers.

**Leader Visibility**. Leader visibility was the most commonly referenced factor for inspiring the mission and vision for improved customer service, followed by serving the local community with an equal number of references to attentiveness to cultures, followed by setting a good example for followers to emulate as noted in Figure 21.

The activities leaders took to remain visible included formally scheduling a walk-around as a part of their routine work regimen, either weekly or daily in some cases, initiating engagement conversations to learn about worker perceptions of their task they perform, and its

progress, to inquire about the workers' customer groups and to develop personal relationships with their employees.

**Figure 21**

*Histogram Chart for Inspiring the Mission and Vision*

THEMATIC ANALYSIS
INSPIRING THE MISSION AND VISION
Factors Related to Inspirational Motivation
for Motivating Workers

| | Walk Around | Community | Culture | Set Example |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coded References | 19 | 17 | 17 | 9 |

■ Coded References
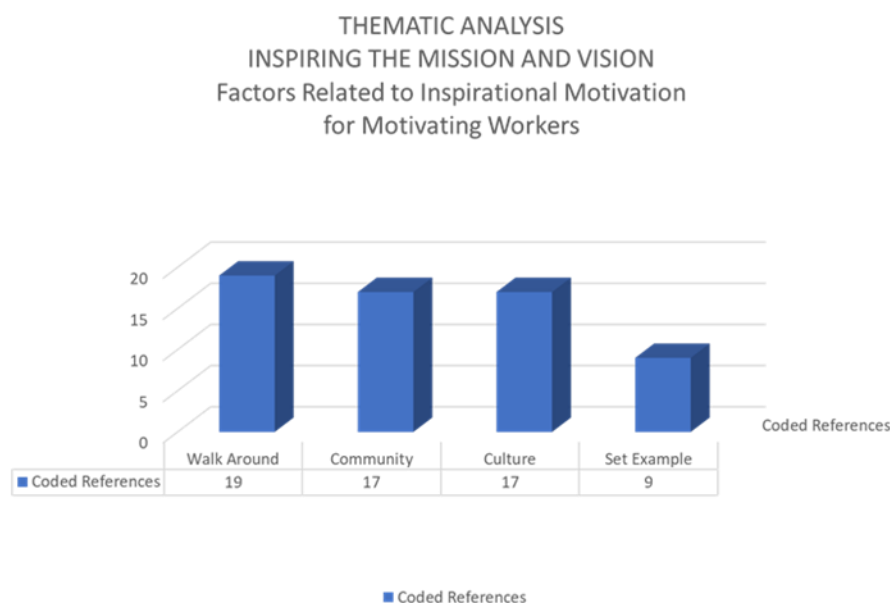
"I think it [walking around] is important to do that so that you can work with people to reduce distractions so that they can focus on getting the job done" (Respondent, female, 12 years as a public sector leader). "I discuss with them the type of behaviors that would be required and the type of results that would be necessary to achieve the levels of service our customers demanded" (Respondent, male, 12 years as a public sector leader). "Generally, when I'm walking around I just pick-up on conversations about my guys' kids, their off-work lives, hunting, fishing or cars, things like that" (Respondent, male, 18 years as a public sector leader).

**Serving the Local Community.** Christle (2019) indicated that employee motivation is important in the public sector as the intrinsic motivators for public servants are different than those of private sector workers and are grounded upon a willingness to help their local communities and, in general, society as a whole. Leaders in this study recognized this perception

also with 27% of the references referring to this aspect for improving customer service through endearment of the mission and vision.

> I have learned that engagement and empowerment of my people for them to how their work has contributed to the mission of our department and the company and serving our home community. It is important to keep the team aware of the feedback received from customers and how we are doing with trending our service to get better. (Respondent, female, 12 years as a public sector leader)

"So, I see that my role is to help them to understand how their work affects the bottom line and how it contributes to our strategies that help make the company more effective to serve the [city] area" (Respondent, female, 6 years as a public sector leader).

**Attentiveness to Cultural Nuances.** Understanding the cultural nuances of employees comprised 9.2% of the coded references throughout the overall project and 27% of the comments in this section. Crede et al. (2019) reported that a critical component in the success of transformational leaders in guiding and motivating employee performance was espoused in the leader's ability to understand the cultural values and practices of their employee groups. The challenge for leaders in applying these motivation theories is to properly assess the work environment, the demographic aspects involving culture, race, gender, and generational issues, as well as the psychological needs of the incumbents and deploy the appropriate stimuli to motivate the achievement of higher order performance in customer service (Mello, 2015). Leaders in the present research, demonstrated a similar affinity. The following comment evinced this dynamic.

> I have conversations with them to try to find an intrinsic point to stimulate them to see the value in the work; maybe it's a personal reason, or something that's a part of their upbringing. To help them to determine what it was they had the desire to do and how the

work at hand may contribute to them achieving that desire. (Respondent, female, 12 years

as a public sector leader)

**Summary of Theme #4 for Inspiring the Mission and Vision / Analysis of Patterns**

**and Relationships.** Leaders in this study indicated their perceptions of the major factors

impacting the motivation of public sector employees for inspiring the mission and vision of the

company were attentiveness to cultural nuances, serving the local community, leader visibility

and setting a good example. An emerging pattern in the category was the number of references

across the sub-categories were (a) the number of communications leader deploy to their work

staffs regarding the measure of the departments for inspiring the mission and vision, (b) the

methods for such communications, and (c) the importance of these communication and keeping

employees abreast of their customer service results. This pattern of repeated references indicated

that far more internal communication occurs regarding the impact of workers services on the

public than previously realized by the researcher.

A relationship between serving the local community and understanding the cultural

nuances of the employees appear to arise in the data. Some of the comments from leaders

indicated they would often rely upon the insights provided by their workers on the various

cultures within the local community to understand the traditions, customs and habits of their

customer base within certain regions of their service area. The leaders used this information to

facilitate community relations, communications with regional customers, and service-based

public services.

**The Impact of Leaders' Perceptions of Motivation on Productivity and Customer Service of Public Sector Workers**

To address the research sub-questions RQ1a and RQ2a, leaders were asked to assess and categorize the current level of their overall productivity performance as outstanding/above average/meets expectations/needs some improvement/needs much improvement. Nearly 90% of the respondents indicated that their perception of their current productivity performance was either outstanding or above average. Only two participants stated that their productivity was currently meeting expectations, while no respondents stated a self-rating less than meeting expectations. Next, the participants were asked their impressions about the trend they had seen in their productivity performance, if any. Again, the same 90% of the subjects stated emphatically there had been improvements noted in productivity performance over the last two-to-three years, with about 32% stating significantly improved, another 27% reported a 'much improved' measure, and the remainder noting 'some improvement. The two participants rating their productivity performance as meeting expectations said their results had been 'about the same' for the last two-to-three years. In all cases, the subjects responded with an overwhelmingly positive reply when they were asked whether they thought their motivational techniques contributed the improved rating regardless of their impression of the current productivity measure, by either being responsible in some way to improving to the current level or having been having been responsible for preventing it from worsening.

Responses to research question RQ2a for customer service results were addressed in a similar manner with 83% responding that their customer service results were above average to outstanding 10% responding that they were meeting expectations for customer service and the remaining portion stating that they were not sure about how to assess their customer service

metrics. In all cases, the subjects responded with a positive reply regarding the impact of their motivational techniques having contributed the improved performance rating by either being responsible in some way to improving to the current level or having been responsible for preventing it from worsening.

**Implications of the Study and Applications to Professional Practice**

*Implications of the Study*

Tusha (2019) indicated that employee motivation served as a fundamental component in an organization's ability to meet its objectives. Successful organizations are typically those that understand the intrinsic needs of their workers and respond favorably in addressing those needs (Serhan et al., 2018). The implications for the findings of this study may improve the business practices of an organization in effectively meeting its objectives.

Workers formulate opinions about the organizations in which they work through a complex network of experiences and interactions that frame the intrinsic factors driving their motivation (Serhan et al., 2018). The central idea of this study is to assist public sector leaders in understanding the importance of correctly perceiving the motivational factors of their workers. These enhanced perceptions may impact the leader's ability to encourage improved worker outcomes. While numerous quantitative studies have been conducted, little research has been undertaken to understand the perceptions of leaders in the public sector of South Carolina in this regard. This study sought to fill this current gap.

The implications for businesses from this study begins with a transformational leader accurately detecting the determinants that motivate their employees and in turn, taking appropriate actions that stimulate these variables to derive higher levels of productivity and customer service. Nearly all the participants in this study perceived a cause and effect

relationship between their actions and the motivation of their employees. Each leader related a cognizant awareness that their actions have consequences. The leaders in this study were concerned about the impact of their actions on the workers' productivity and service levels to their customer groups, and each utilized, unknowingly perhaps, at least one of the four aspects of transformational leadership to derive interventions to engage their employees at deeper level.

Wyche-Seawood's (2019) research indicated that public sector motivation is not reliant solely upon citizenship behaviors, but rather the employees' reasons for engaging those behaviors. When leaders of the current project were able to correctly identify and act upon the specific intrinsic factors of each worker to invigorate their motives, the leader perceived improved business results over time. For example, every leader participating in this research saw stable or improved levels in their overall, measured 2-3 year trends for both customer service and productivity, and each attributed the steady trend or improvement to their efforts and actions to motivate their employees. The perceptions of these leaders and the resulting business outcomes conduce applications for continuous improvement and best practices within the discipline of leadership from this phenomenon.

### *Applications to Professional Practice / Best Practices for Public Sector Leaders*

Prior studies have provided many lessons learned for motivating employees for improved business performance, with those of Maslow, Herzberg, McClelland, and Vroom serving as the foundation to the study of human motivation in the workplace. Later research has contributed continued refinements to the theory of human behavior and the applications of the intrinsic motivation construct.

The applications to the professional practice of leadership learned from the incumbent transformational leaders of this project involve four best practices which were deduced from the

leaders' reflections of recurrent responses. These actions may impact the work environment, producing positive results in productivity and customer service. Each of these best practices align with one of the four aspects of transformational leadership.

**Attentiveness to Cultural Nuances.** Diversity in the contemporary workplace is more prevalent than any other era before (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Generational differences, ethnic diversity, sexual preferences, religious and background differences permeate every aspect of modern business (Mello, 2015). Transformational leaders in this project who provided individualized consideration to the cultural nuances of their workers may be better able to tailor motivational techniques which meet specific individual needs of the worker. The leader must be able understand the culture causation behind the motive and then stimulate the value set of worker for the motivation to be effective (van Riper et al., 2020). Listening with empathy, along with having openness, respect and dignity for differing needs of workers.

**Highly Visible Leadership.** The public sector transformational leaders in this study felt that inspirational motivation was best deployed through being a highly visible leader. Walking around the workplace or visiting work crews at the job site, albeit scheduled or impromptu, afforded the leader access to their workers for one-on-one business communications for gathering ideas and improvement suggestions from worker, projecting or modeling appropriate workplace behaviors and provided unique opportunities for worker engagement in building trust and establishing close personal relationships. Approachability and personal credibility of the leader were closely related attributes for recognized success as a high visibility leader.

**Encourage Innovation.** Intellectual stimulation by public sector transformational leaders was related as a best practice through cultivating an openness for the free exchange of ideas aimed at improving the work processes. Leaders within the study facilitated innovation by

initiating curiosity discussions and asking open-ended questions with workers such as 'wouldn't it be great if….?' or 'what is another way to do this task…?.' Steinerowska-Streb and Głód (2020) purported that team integration, employee development were factors in creative process design, innovativeness for improved systems and ideas risk mitigation. Problem solving teams, focus groups, and quality circles were other techniques for driving an environment of diverse thinking and new ideas.

**Leverage Accountability.** Transformational leaders within this study stressed that idealized influence, related as modeling behavior in the discussions, was significantly impacted by acting with integrity and building and maintaining trusting relationships with the workforce. One overriding factor that came about as a point of emphasis among the participants was consistency and fair treatment of workers. Fairly administering accountability when results were not as expected and fairly recognizing employees when results were as planned or better than expected were notable best practices contributing to the motivation of employees through leader credibility for the transformational style of leadership.

### Recommendations for Action

There are three recommended actions resulting from the research questions from this study for public sector organizations in South Carolina. In addressing RQ1 and RQ2, Koustas (2019) related both Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theories among public service workers to determine the motivating factors between the public and private sectors, having found there were significant correlations for the different perceptions of workers in the two sectors regarding motivators such compensation and promotions sustaining the private sector and effective commitment and community affiliation motivating public workers. Celik (2014) reported that motivation among public workers was more espoused in empathy and

sacrifice in service to their home community, rather than to overall job satisfaction.

Transformational leaders enabled organizational change (Abbasi, 2017), promoted innovation

(Al-edenat, 2018), and encouraged affective commitment and citizenship behaviors among their

followers (Jackson, 2017).

One of the first recommended actions for public sector organizations desiring change,

innovation, and affective commitment among their workers is to begin leadership development

initiatives designed to promote transformational behaviors across all levels of leadership within

their organization. These leadership development strategies may have more potential to succeed

if the desired behavioral outcomes are aligned to the leader's performance appraisal (Lavigne,

2018).

In addressing RQ1a and RQ2a, Koustas (2019) indicated the need for significant

improvement in the efforts of leaders to improve conditions that stimulated these motivational

factors in the public arena. To this end, recommended action is that public sector organizations

conduct extensive employee satisfaction surveys to understand the motivational factors of their

workforce both in its entirety and in segments by demographic classifications. Action plans can

then be developed from this data aimed at improving employee motivation for business results,

such as productivity and customer service.

The third recommended action is that public sector organizations in South Carolina

should consider implementing the four best practices of transformational leader for engaging and

motivating their workers to both produce and continuously improve positive results in

productivity and customer service. This recommended action will impact leaders' ability to

better understand the factors that impact the motivation of the workers (RQ1 and RQ2), as well

as assisting in developing actions to enhance business metrics through properly motivated and engaged employees (RQ1a and RQ2a).

These recommended actions might best be disseminated to leaders in both the public and private sectors through publication in trade and academic journals targeting public administrative functions within South Carolina and nationwide.

### *Recommendations for Further Study*

From this study, further study across several topics and categories are exposed. First, the continued research of the hourly workers of transformational leaders within South Carolina is recommended, including analysis for understanding their perceptions of the factors that motivate their behaviors for improved productivity and customer service outcomes as compared to the perceptions of their leaders for the same (RQ3). A study focusing on a demographic analysis and further segmentation of the data to reflect different populations of transformational leaders: age, tenure, ethnic groupings, male/female, among others is recommended.

A separate study to determine what factors such as the size of the public organization or its organizational design and structure: bureaucratic, functional, matrixed or modern designs: virtual, network or team structures, may have on the perceptions of transformational leaders regarding the motivation of their workers. Understanding the regional differences of public sector leaders' views on motivation would be an interesting discovery, both within the United States and globally, wherein an undercurrent of regional preferences between the leader/worker relationship may be influencing motivation as well. These types of future research studies will add value to the academic and practical disciplines of leadership and employee motivation.

**Reflections**

*Reflection on Biblical Principles*

The words from 1 Peter provide a foundation for this research project as it relates that

leaders are to be shepherds of the people that are assigned to their care and to do so with a

willing heart for serving them by modeling appropriate behaviors and treating them well (1 Peter

5:2-3 ESV). Jesus, as the Great Shepherd, modeled the leader's role in motivating his disciples,

his first-century followers and his present-day believers when He speaks to the humility of the

meek, the greatness of the downtrodden and the strength of the peacemakers and those that are

persecuted (Matthew 5: 1-11 ESV). Jesus understood the deeper motivations of people and used

these motivations to bring them to salvation. An example of this is the Samaritan woman at the

well and his piercing insights of her adulterous relationships which led to her acceptance of him

as the Messiah (John 4:4-26, ESV).

Transformational leaders must execute both persistence and great skill in perceiving the

needs of their followers and bringing them to realize future possibilities for themselves and the

organization (Northouse, 2019). Keller and Alsdorf (2012) stated that Christianity and its higher

calling to a greater good, modeled the selflessness required of any leader regardless of their

vocation. Likewise, Christian leaders cannot neglect their mission to serve Christ and relate the

story of His love and salvation for humankind.

*Personal Reflections of the Researcher*

The following section reflects a sampling of the notes, ideas and questions written by the

researcher in the project journal. These thoughts, however random, were used to spark curiosity,

inquiry and rationale for the process, findings and learnings during the research process. A

notable reflection during the course of the interviews was related to a curiosity for understanding

the backgrounds, experiences, and rich meanings behind the reasons for the development of the respondents' opinions about people, motivation and their role as leaders. This inquiry was added to the follow-up questions for 17 of the 22 respondents. It occurred that nearly 70% of the interviewees indicated that their perceptions on motivation and the role of leaders was based upon the existence of a strong leadership figure from their professional background. The remaining five respondents, all female, stated that a family member, usually a parent-figure was the primary influence for their views on leadership. Another reflection was that their appeared to be a symbiotic relationship [or confusion] between motivating for productivity and motivating for innovation in the minds of many of the respondents during this portion of the interviews. A process-oriented question was determining the best way to organize data and present the findings. The research noted several references and processes for data organization and the compilation of findings during this period. Conferring with friends and relatives with doctoral degrees helped greatly in this regard.

The primary observation of the researcher centered on the hope that the research would include inputs from the focus groups of the participating leaders to verify and clarify with the workforce the data received from the perceptions of the leader. The researcher felt this additional dynamic of the project would have added the greatest value to the academic and practical fields for advancement of the leadership discipline. The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic created a major roadblock to the completion of this final stage of the study. The primary reason cited for declining participation related to the COVID-19 pandemic was the organization's need to minimize distraction in the workplace during this critical time.

The research process was an exciting and challenging venture for the researcher. The discovery process and findings impacted the researcher in a scholar, provoking intellect with a

real-world application of applied theory. The researcher noted a number of personal biases and mitigation strategies, including informing all participants of all potential biases prior to the onset of the participant's involvement (Stake, 2010). The researcher employed two PhD external auditors in addition to the Chair for the project to review the identified themes for congruency and clarity (Creswell, 2014). An interesting note was that as a public sector leader, the researcher held professional relationships with any of the participants. Those closest to the researcher appear more guarded in their responses than those with whom the researcher was less familiar. One close friend involved in the interviews mentioned that reason for her nervousness was that she wanted to provide the right answers and not disappoint the researcher. This is clearly an example of friendliness bias or indirectly, social acceptance bias (Shay, 2019), as referred in Section 2.

**Summary and Study Conclusions**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to extend the academic athenaeum by expanding current understandings of the reasons for poorly motivated public sector workers. This larger problem is investigated through an in-depth study of leaders' perspectives of motivation in the public sector and the extent to which these leaders understand and utilize motivational factors in assisting their workers to become more productive within the administrative services and public works departments of large to medium-sized municipalities in South Carolina. The research involved 22 participants, identified as preferring the transformational leadership style, who completed the survey and the semi-structured interview portions of the research process.

The four behaviors of transformational leadership were used as guideposts for data organization and analysis. To support the deeper understanding of the thematic contexts and social influences of the role of public sector leaders in motivating their workers the methods used

by leaders to inspire their workers were organized into 11 primary motivational categories as expressed by the transformational leaders participating in the study.

### *Summary of Key Findings*

In this research project, a key assumption was that leaders of public sector organizations desire excellent performance in productivity and customer service from their workers. Herzberg's theory regarding the efficacy of leaders to understand the intrinsic motivational factors influencing worker performance, along with the four aspects of transformational leadership served as the theoretical framework for this study. Franklin (2016) explored the impact of leadership styles using Herzberg's two-factor theory and a variety of leadership theories to assess the relationships of these constructs. The findings indicated that laissez-faire leaders motivated those workers who desire more autonomy in work-related decisions and choices, while Herzberg's hygiene factors stimulated the workers of transactional leaders (Franklin, 2016)

Moore (2007) brought forth a significant study on the effect of leadership on organizational effectiveness, having demonstrated a positive relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and the financial, revenue-based results of firm performance. However, Ward (2017) provided there remains a lack of understanding of the deeper relationships between leadership skills and motivation.

A summary of the key findings indicate that public sector leaders use many techniques to identify the factors for motivating their workers toward improved productivity and customer service, such as highly visible leadership, inquiries, and close personal relationships. The findings appeared to support the expected outcomes at the onset of the study that transformational public sector leaders who understand their workers intrinsic motivation factors

inspire their workers to perform better. These 11 primary factors included: building trust, integrity, encouraging others, coaching, rewarding achievement and motivating for innovation, and productivity, walking around, serving the local community, attentiveness to cultural nuances, and others.

According to the perceptions of those involved in the study, increased performance within the public sector organizations may be based, to some degree, upon the efficacy of the leader to enact various motivational stimuli to inspire their workers across the four aspects of transformational leadership. The research also seemed to demonstrate that employee motivation is moderated by the level of understanding of the motivational factors, and appropriately responding to the workers' intrinsic motivational factors.

### How the Research Closes the Gap in the Literature

The results of this research begins to address the gap in the current body of literature concerning transformational leadership in the public sector, with a regional focus within eight public organizations located in the state of South Carolina. Public service motivation is connected to a parochial affinity for service to the local citizens (Van Witteloostuijn et al., 2017). This qualitative case study of public sector leaders provided a further understanding of the perceptions for the connections between leader's ability to influence and motivate employees and the leader's view on departmental performance for productivity and customer service. Prior studies did not elaborate on these perspectives for regional leaders.

The role of the leader to cultivate and maintain a motivated workforce is an essential element in the success of an organization (Tusha, 2019). Employee motivation is a topic that has intrigued scholars and practitioners alike for many decades and many theories of motivation for improved productivity and better customer service exist in the body of knowledge and applied

practice. It is only through the ability of organizational leaders to provide a critical link of personal inspiration between the workers and the work for creating a customer-oriented culture in an attentive, responsive climate that may they assure the accomplishment of the mission and the achievement of the organizational vision (Herhausen et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2018).

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**Appendix A: Table of Interview Questions**

| | |
|---|---|
| General Problem Statement: The general problem to be addressed is the lack of leaders' understanding for motivating and engaging their workers' productivity, resulting in poor customer service. | |
| Specific Problem Statement: The specific problem to be addressed is the lack of leaders' understanding in public sector service organizations in South Carolina, such as city administrative and public works offices, for motivating and engaging their workers' productivity, resulting in poor customer service. | |
| Research question RQ1 | |
| RQ1: To what extent does leadership style effect the perceptions of leaders of public sector workers within the large to medium-sized municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that motivate their workers toward higher productivity? | |

| RQ1 Related Interview Questions: Only transformational leaders queried | Delivery Method |
|---|---|
| 1. Besides pay and benefits, what are the factors that you feel motivate your workers to be more productive? | Interview |
| 2. What program or activities do you personally conduct, separate from the company, to motivate your workers' productivity? | Interview |
| 3. What type of measures for productivity does your company monitor? | Interview |

| | |
|---|---|
| Research question RQ1a: Only transformational leaders queried | |
| RQ1a: Sub-question - How do these perceptions enhance or inhibit the productivity of workers? | |

| RQ1a Related Interview Questions | Delivery Method |
|---|---|
| 1. Given the following general rating categories, how would you rate the current level of productivity of your overall staff? <br> Outstanding/above average/meets expectations/needs some improvement/needs much improvement | Interview |
| 2. You mentioned there were several factors, besides pay and benefits, (name them for the participant) that motivated your workers to improve their productivity. How did you come to understand that these were the correct factors? | Interview |
| 3. Given the programs and activities for motivating workers that you mentioned in the online survey (name them for the participant), how effective do you feel these overall efforts are/have been at motivating your workers? | Interview |
| 4. How were these programs targeted toward specific motivational factors and what type of expected, effective outcomes for worker productivity were discussed? | Interview |
| 5. Are there motivational programs and activities you feel have worked better or been better received by the workers than others? Which ones? | Interview |
| 6. Why do you feel those particular motivational activities were more successful or better received by the workers? | Interview |

| | |
|---|---|
| 7. As you have continued working with your staff, what other additional factors have you discovered that seem to motivate your workers? | Interview |
| Research question RQ2: Only transformational leaders queried | |
| RQ2: To what extent does leadership style effect the perceptions of leaders of public sector workers within the larger municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that engage their workers that enable customer service? | |
| RQ2 Related Interview Questions | Delivery Method |
| 1. Besides pay and benefits, what are the factors that you feel motivate your workers to provide excellent customer service? | Interview |
| 2. What program or activities do you personally conduct, separate from the company, to motivate your workers' customer service levels? | Interview |
| 3. What type of measures for customer service does your company monitor? | Interview |
| Research question RQ2a: Only transformational leaders queried | |
| RQ2a: Sub-question - How do these perceptions enhance or inhibit the engagement of workers to provide good customer service? | |
| RQ2a Related Interview Questions | Delivery Method |
| 1. Given the following general rating categories, how would you rate the current level of customer service of your overall staff? Outstanding/above average/meets expectations/needs some improvement/needs much improvement | Interview |
| 2. You mentioned there were several factors, besides pay and benefits, (name them for the participant) that motivated your workers to improve their customer service. How did you come to understand that these were the correct factors? | Interview |
| 3. Given the programs and activities for motivating workers that you mentioned in the online survey for customer service (name them for the participant), how effective do you feel these overall efforts are/have been at motivating your workers? | Interview |
| 4. How were these programs targeted toward specific motivational factors and what type of expected, effective customer satisfaction outcomes were discussed? | Interview |
| 5. Are there motivational programs and activities you feel have worked better or been better received by the workers than others? Which ones? | Interview |
| 6. Why do you feel those particular motivational activities were more successful or better received by the workers? | Interview |
| 7. As you have continued working with your staff, what other additional factors have you discovered that seem to motivate your workers? | Interview |
| Ancillary Design Questions (where worker focus groups are permitted) | |
| Research question RQ3: Only workers of transformational leaders queried | |

| RQ3: What are the perceptions of public sector workers within the larger municipalities in South Carolina regarding the factors that motivate and engage their productivity and customer service efficacy? | |
|---|---|
| RQ3 Related Interview Questions | Delivery Method |
| 1. Besides pay and benefits, what are the things that motivate you to give a good, productive day at work? | Focus Group |
| 2. What type of feelings of satisfaction do you get from giving this good, productive day's work? | Focus Group |
| 3. How well does the company understand the factors that motivate your productivity? | Focus Group |
| 4. What are the activities and programs that the company does well that make you motivated to be more productive? | Focus Group |
| 5. How well does your immediate manager understand the factors that motivate your productivity? | Focus Group |
| 6. What are the activities and programs that your manager does well, separate from the company, that make you motivated to be more productive? | Focus Group |
| 8. Besides pay and benefits, what are the things that motivate you to give excellent customer service at work? | Focus Group |
| 9. What type of feelings of satisfaction do you get from giving this level of customer service? | Focus Group |
| 10. How well does the company do at understanding these factors that motivate your customer service level? | Focus Group |
| 11. What are the activities and programs that the company does well that make you motivated to give excellent customer service? | Focus Group |
| 12. How well does your immediate manager do at understanding the factors that motivate you to give excellent customer service levels? | Focus Group |
| 13. What are the activities and programs that your manager does well, separate from the company, that make you motivated to be more productive? | Focus Group |
| 14. Besides pay and benefits, if your manager could do something different to increase your productivity and customer service levels, what would it be? [e.g., is there anything the manager should be doing to motivate his/her workers but is not?] | Focus Group |

**Appendix B: Table of Participant Survey Results**

| MLQ-5X Participant Identifier | Five I's of Transformational Leadership | Include in Interview Portion (≥3.09) Y / N |
|---|---|---|
| A1 | 3.8 | Y |
| A2 | 3.5 | Y |
| A3 | 3.1 | Y |
| B1 | 3.4 | Y |
| B2 | 3.5 | **Y** |
| B3 | 2.8 | N |
| B4 | 3.1 | Y |
| 3.0B5 | 3.1 | Y |
| C1 | 2.9 | N |
| C2 | 3.2 | Y |
| C3 | 3.6 | Y |
| C4 | 3.2 | Y |
| D1 | 3.1 | Y |
| E1 | 3.8 | Y |
| E2 | 2.8 | N |
| F1 | 3.3 | Y |
| F2 | 2.6 | N |
| F3 | 3.1 | Y |
| F4 | 3.7 | Y |
| G1 | 3.4 | Y |
| G2 | 2.9 | N |
| G3 | 3.1 | Y |
| H1 | 3.4 | Y |
| H2 | 3.5 | Y |
| H3 | 3.1 | Y |
| H4 | 3.8 | Y |
| H5 | 3.5 | Y |