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# Improving Employee Productivity Using Effective Leadership Strategies

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Abstract

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BS, University of the Cumberlands, 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Low employee productivity has the potential to impact small business outcomes

negatively. Small business leaders who can develop and use strategies to increase

employee productivity, improve employee morale, and lower employee turnover rates

can help a business succeed and grow. Grounded in the decision-making model of

leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to identify

strategies some small business leaders use to increase employee productivity. The

participants consisted of one leader from five different small businesses who had

experience implementing leadership strategies to improve employee productivity. Data

were collected using semistructured interviews, a review of documents, and reflective

journaling. Through Yin's five-step process, four themes were identified: (a) leadership

styles, (b) communication barriers, (c) problem solving, and (d) motivation. A key

recommendation is for leaders to get to know their employees personally. The

implications for positive social change include helping leaders develop effective

leadership strategies that could increase employee productivity to gain a competitive

advantage.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to several key people: my parents, James and Jacqueline Rodgers; my sister, Asia Rodgers; and my grandmother (deceased 2017), Bessie L. McCastle-Davis. I would also like to dedicate my study to all of the dreamers, students, entrepreneurs, and children around the world who try every day to conquer their life goals, who are constantly facing the challenging setbacks, and who are trying to be the best version of themselves despite different trials and tribulations. Always remember that you can do all things that you put your mind to, and never give up on what you believe you deserve.

Acknowledgments

First and most importantly, I would like to thank God. I am a firm believer of keeping God first in all that I do, and I am so grateful that He blessed me to complete another great life challenge. I would like to thank my family for believing that I could conquer any challenge that I am faced with throughout this world. I also want to thank the Walden University faculty, specifically Dr. Jaime Klein. Dr. Klein set me up for success, and although the journey was not easy, it was worth it.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Leaders lack effective leadership strategies to improve employee productivity, which can lead to a decrease in organizational outcomes. When leaders develop effective leadership strategies, they encourage their employees to take an interest in their task productivity (Ahn et al., 2018). Leaders can create effective leadership strategies that not only increase employee productivity, but also increase outcomes in businesses (Parés, 2015). Organizational leaders should use effective leadership strategies to ensure employees know they are an asset to their organization and how their productivity helps achieve the overall goals of the business.

**Background of the Problem**

Organizational leaders are responsible for developing leadership strategies that help employees increase their productivity. Leadership strategies consist of leaders creating employee tasks that can help impact organizational business processes (Parke et al., 2018). In successful organizations, employees have more freedom to increase their responsibility, which helps them to increase their productivity (Parke et al., 2018). Leaders should delegate power to their employees. When leaders delegate power to their employees, employee productivity can also be increased (Hao et al., 2018). When leaders develop effective leadership strategies, it can help them identify strategies that can improve employee productivity and impact positive organizational outcomes. Justin et al. (2017) claimed that it is important for leaders to develop strategies of success for their employees to maintain high levels of productivity. Leaders who understand the value of employee productivity can increase employee job satisfaction.

Employee productivity can be negatively impacted if leaders do not use effective leadership strategies. Cote (2017) stated that leaders must understand that leadership is what helps them influence their employees to reach common organizational outcomes. Leaders must value the importance of improving employee performance and having the necessary skills needed for effective leadership strategies (Mishra, 2017). Leaders who lack the ability to improve employee productivity can cause employees to become less engaged in business processes (Papasava, 2017).

Leaders who develop effective leadership strategies understand the value of ensuring employee productivity, maintaining sustainability, keeping a competitive advantage, and remaining profitable (Romi et al., 2018). When leaders do not use effective leadership strategies, it can also lead to an increase in employee turnover rates (Ugoani, 2016). Qureshi et al. (2019) stated that employees who become stagnant in their current positions or less engaged need effective strategies to help them reach organizational goals. When employees are committed and satisfied with their jobs, it helps them to increase their productivity and helps leaders identify the strategies needed to produce outcomes (Tu et al., 2017). The results of the current study could help leaders identify the types of strategies employees need to improve their productivity.

## Problem Statement

Some organizational leaders who lack the ability to develop strategies that increase employee productivity can cause a decline in organizational productivity (Hughes & Harris, 2017). In 2017, U.S. leaders' inability to implement strategies to increase employee productivity led to a 60% loss in business profitability (Rosario,

2017). The general business problem was that low employee productivity negatively

impacts organizational outcomes. The specific business problem was that some leaders of

small businesses lack the leadership strategies to increase employee productivity.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to identify the strategies

that some leaders of small businesses use to increase employee productivity. The

population included one business leader from five different small businesses in the

Atlanta, Georgia area who had implemented leadership strategies that improved

employee productivity. This study may lead to positive social change by providing

leaders of small businesses with leadership strategies to increase employee productivity,

which could lead to increased community employment and an increase in local tax

revenues to benefit citizens in local communities.

## Nature of the Study

There are three primary research methods used by researchers: quantitative,

qualitative, and mixed methods (Baskarada & Koronios, 2018). Quantitative scholars test

different types of theories by examining variables' relationships or differences (Gerring,

2017). I did not use the quantitative method because I did not test the relationships or

differences between variables. The quantitative method was not suitable for this study

because researchers use statistical data and the analysis of variables to explain a specific

issue or phenomenon (see Apuke, 2017). The mixed-methods approach includes both

qualitative and quantitative methods to explore and examine philosophical assumptions

and answers to research questions (Turner et al., 2017). I did not use the mixed-methods

approach because it would have required the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. I had to triangulate one set of my results to ensure validity, and this method would have taken more time. Qualitative researchers explore phenomena through the experiences and perspectives of the participants, from which they report data in a narrative form (Trainor & Graue, 2014). The qualitative method was appropriate for my study because it helped me explore the participants' experiences with developing and implementing leadership strategies that increase employee productivity.

I considered the following designs: phenomenology, narrative, ethnography, and case. Phenomenology is the study of participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon (Conklin, 2014). I did not use phenomenology because I did not study the meanings of participants' lived experience. Ethnographic researchers study the culture of participant groups with similar backgrounds or working relationships (Maes et al., 2017). I did not use ethnography because I did not focus on exploring groups of cultures. Narrative researchers obtain a collection of participants' stories of their experiences (Rooney et al., 2016). The narrative design did not align with my study's purpose because I did not seek to explore the participants' stories. Case study researchers focus on a case to explore a real-world understanding of a complex social phenomenon (Klenke, 2016). I chose a multiple case study to focus on the complex, real-life phenomenon of leadership strategies that increased employee productivity.

## Research Question

What strategies do some small business leaders use to increase employee productivity?

**Interview Questions**

1. What strategies have you used to improve employee productivity?

2. What strategy did you find worked best to improve employee productivity?

3. How did your employees respond to your different strategies to improve employee productivity?

4. What leadership strategies helped your employees understand the value of increasing their productivity?

5. How did your organization address key barriers to implementing successful strategies for improving employee productivity?

6. What else would you like to share with me concerning your organization's effective leadership strategies for improving employee productivity?

**Conceptual Framework**

Vroom and Yetton (1973) developed the decision-making model of leadership theory to analyze the different problems associated with developing effective leadership strategies to increase employee productivity. Vroom and Yetton also revealed that there is not one leadership style that can be considered the best way to increase employee productivity. The only way a leader can determine whether their leadership style is appropriate is by reviewing how effective the chosen leadership style is in any given circumstance (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Leaders who use effective leadership styles can increase employee productivity.

In the decision-making model of leadership theory, Vroom and Yetton (1973) posited that leaders who include their employees in the decision-making process will

experience increased employee productivity. Leaders of small businesses could use the collaboration between leaders and their employees to develop strategies to increase employee productivity. According to Wolfskehl (2013), leaders who increase employee productivity will encourage employees to become passionate about reaching organizational outcomes. I used Vroom and Yetton's theory to identify different leadership strategies that participants used to increase employee productivity.

## Operational Definitions

To ensure that readers could understand the purpose of this study, I included terms that were not considered industry jargon. Throughout this study, there were no indications of unknown terminology that would be used to explain the purpose of this study. However, there were two key terms that were used throughout the study, which need to be defined:

*Leadership*: The ability of a person to map out how processes or outcomes are to be conquered to reach common organizational goals (Silva, 2016).

*Productivity*: The rate at which people of the same industry, organization, or business exceeds the number of inputs to produce more outputs (Prakash et al., 2017).

## Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The following section includes a discussion of assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study. Researchers who define these items may be able to help readers understand the scope of their research. Each component includes a description of the types of setbacks that I had while collecting data, choosing my sample size, and addressing the areas of my study that were out of my control.

**Assumptions**

Assumptions are components of a study that are out of the researcher's control but are valuable to the research (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). I assumed that five small business leaders in the Atlanta, Georgia area would have leadership strategies that improve employee productivity. I assumed that the information gathered from my participants' responses would be true and not associated with any biases. I assumed that my interview questions would provide enough information to gather sufficient data. Additionally, I assumed that using a case study design would focus on a real-life phenomenon (leadership strategies) based on my participants' perspectives.

**Limitations**

Limitations consist of elements in the study that the researcher cannot control (Netcoh, 2017). One limitation of the current study was the small sample size of one business leader from five small businesses. Because I chose one leader from three different businesses in the Atlanta, Georgia area, the findings in this study may not be generalizable across all leaders and businesses in this area. Finding participants who met the selection requirements was a limitation. My study was based on the individual perspectives of my participants. These participants were capable of providing their perspectives of strategies that increase employee productivity, and findings can not be applied to all leaders in the Atlanta, Georgia area.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations refer to the scope of the study the researcher can control, and they are considered as the starting and ending points of research (Yin, 2014). A delimitation of

the current study was the geographic location, which was the Atlanta, Georgia area. This study was also delimited to three small business leaders, instead of including business leaders of larger organizations. Finally, this study was delimited by the type of participants, which included only leaders and not employees.

## Significance of the Study

I investigated the leadership strategies that small business leaders could use to increase employee productivity. Kim and Holzer (2016) claimed that a decrease in employee productivity can lead to a failure in achieving organizational outcomes. In this study, I explored multiple sources of data related to participants' experiences in developing and implementing leadership strategies that increased employee productivity for improving organizations' performance.

### Contribution to Business Practice

The findings from this study may be of value to businesses through (a) providing information that could help leaders develop strategies to increase employees' productivity and (b) explaining how leaders execute strategies that helped them increase employee productivity. From these findings, other small business leaders could gain a better understanding of how employee productivity can be increased using effective leadership strategies. According to Sadun et al. (2017), when leaders provide effective leadership strategies, employee productivity increases. Business leaders may use the recommendations from this study to increase employee productivity and improve organizations' performance.

**Implications for Social Change**

Small business leaders could use the results of this study to improve employee productivity through effective leadership strategies. When business leaders increase employee productivity, they can increase job opportunities that will help keep businesses productive in the local community and increase the organization's ability to invest in the communities in which the business serves (Ataullah et al., 2014). Small business leaders can also use effective leadership strategies to implement social change by (a) helping leaders develop effective leadership strategies that could change how local businesses increase employee productivity to gain a competitive advantage and (b) changing how local community members use resources to increase profitability (Parés, 2015). Business leaders may effect social change by providing local, small businesses with information that not will not only increase employee productivity, but also increase their ability to increase their organizations' capabilities for benefiting local communities.

## A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to identify the strategies that some leaders of small businesses use to increase employee productivity. The population included one business leader from each of five different small businesses in the Atlanta, Georgia area who had implemented leadership strategies that improved employee productivity. This study could lead to positive social change by providing leaders of small businesses with leadership strategies to increase employee productivity, which may lead to increased community employment and an increase in local tax revenues to benefit citizens in local communities.

I used a number of different types of databases to align with this study: Google Scholar, ProQuest, Emerald Insight, Business Source Complete, and Books focused on the conceptual framework, competing theories, and associated themes. There were several keywords that I used to discover corresponding literature in alignment to this study: *leadership*, *employee productivity*, *transformational leadership*, *democratic*, *autocratic leadership*, *empowerment*, *employee engagement*, *bureaucratic*, and *collaborative*. My references totaled 253, of which 132 were published within 5 years of my anticipated study completion and graduation date. Over 90% of my sources were peer reviewed.

In the literature review, I discuss 22 concepts associated with improving employee productivity using effective leadership strategies. These main concepts are (a) the decision-making model of leadership theory, (b) Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, (c) Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, (d) leadership styles and employee productivity, (e) transformational leadership, (f) democratic leadership, (g) autocratic leadership, (h) transactional leadership, (i) empowerment leadership, (j) bureaucratic leadership, (k) charismatic leadership, (l) servant leadership, (m) collaborative leadership, (n) visionary leadership, (o) coaching and employee productivity, (p) communication barriers, (q) interpersonal communication, (r) employee engagement, (s) problem solving, (t) innovation and employee productivity, (u) motivation, and (v) employee retention.

**Conceptual Framework**

Vroom and Yetton (1973) developed the decision-making model of leadership theory to explore how leadership and decision making can reflect a leader's ability to

improve employee productivity. Siengthai and Pila-Ngarm (2016) claimed that leaders should develop new leadership strategies that align with improving employee productivity. Vroom and Yetton also suggested that a leader's ability to develop effective leadership strategies may be driven by their decision to discover new ways to improve employee productivity. Leaders should also evaluate their ability to make decisions that would improve employee productivity (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Leaders who develop effective strategies to improve employee outcomes can improve organizational outcomes and make better business decisions.

Leaders who strive to improve employee productivity can motivate employees to achieve organizational goals. Vroom and Yetton (1973) suggested that organizations have many goals that they need or want to reach; therefore, the more leaders can motivate their employees, the better they can achieve organizational goals. When leaders motivate their employees, they become confident in achieving goals. Gunasekara (2018) claimed that most leaders who want their employees to maximize their productivity establish new ways to execute motivation. Vroom and Yetton also suggested that leaders who want to improve employee productivity should define how to motivate their employees. Leaders who influence employees to develop effective decision-making strategies can improve their employees' motivation (Vroom &Yetton, 1973). Leaders who improve employee motivation are more likely to meet the organization's goals.

Some researchers have used the decision-making model of leadership to examine employee productivity. Choy et al. (2016) used the decision-making model of leadership to explain how leaders should consult their employees not only to make decisions, but

also to improve employee productivity. Leaders who include their employees in decision-making processes can improve productivity by using employee feedback to develop effective leadership strategies. Choy et al. also used the decision-making model of leadership theory to explain how successful employee–employer relationships can motivate employees. Casas-Arce et al. (2018) used Vroom and Yetton's theory to show how leaders can influence employees to make positive changes in their productivity. Leaders should trust their employees to make business decisions that improve their productivity.

Researchers use the decision-making model of leadership theory to examine how leaders should solve problems, such as a lack of effective leadership strategies or the lack of decision-making strategies needed to improve employee productivity. Yin-Tsuo (2015) used Vroom and Yetton's theory to examine how leaders should include employees in developing business processes before making decisions to solve problems. Yin-Tsuo also used Vroom and Yetton's theory to explore the different types of strategies that leaders could use to improve employee productivity. Yin-Tsuo used Vroom and Yetton's theory and found that leaders who include employees in business decision-making process can improve employee productivity. Ahmad et al. (2017) used Vroom and Yetton's theory and found that when leaders include employees in finding ways to solve problems, they increase employee productivity. Leaders who develop effective leadership strategies to improve employee productivity can also produce better organizational outcomes.

I chose the decision-making model of leadership as the conceptual framework for this study. Leaders can use the decision-making model to understand the value of

developing strategies that not only increase employee productivity, but also increase

organizational outcomes. I chose this theory to explore how leaders can use the decision-

making model of leadership theory to value their employees and discover new strategies

to increase employee productivity.

**Competing Theory: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Leaders who want to improve employee productivity should consider what

employees need to be motivated. Maslow (1958) developed the hierarchy of needs theory

to show how human needs should be met before they can become motivated. Maslow

also suggested that there are five levels of the hierarchy: (a) physiological needs

consisting of a person's mean to survival; (b) safety needs that include financial, health,

and well-being; (c) love/belonging needs that include employees need for friendship,

relationships, and family; (d) esteem needs to feel confident and respected; and (e) self-

actualization or the desire of an employee to achieve goals. Yousaf et al. (2018) stated

that Maslow's theory was used to identify what a person needs to feel motivated. When

leaders develop strategies to improve employee productivity, employees' needs are met,

and they become motivated to increase organizational outcomes. Employees who are

comfortable and confident in their lives would have improved productivity.

Leaders should ensure job security to improve employee productivity. Maslow

(1958) stated that adults who are secure, healthy, and fortunate consider their security

needs as satisfied. When leaders create safe work environments, their employees feel

secure in their jobs. Maslow claimed that when humans are placed in unfamiliar,

unorganized, or unmanageable environments, they will feel unsafe. Harkins (2019) used

Maslow's theory to explain how leaders can meet the needs of their employees and motivate them. When leaders provide organized work environments, they can satisfy their employees' need to feel safe. Maslow suggested that when a human being no longer feels a need to become safe, they feel less endangered. Leaders who avoid overworking their employees or requesting unrealistic expectations can satisfy their employees' need to feel safe and unendangered.

Leaders should recognize that employees need to feel a sense of belonging and develop relationships. Maslow (1958) claimed that once psychological and safety needs have been satisfied, human beings need to belong to something or someone. Leaders who value their employees' opinions or engage employees in business decision making can satisfy employees' need to belong. Maslow also suggested that human beings need to develop relationships with people in general. When employees communicate with their leaders and work on tasks with their coworkers, these actions can lead to relationship development. Maslow claimed that human beings need to belong to a group or groups of people or they will feel rejected. Acevedo (2018) posited that leaders need to motivate their employees through self-actualization. Leaders who strive to improve employee productivity should develop groups to complete important tasks. Leaders can include employees by empowering them to complete team projects. If leaders do not include employees in efforts to complete organizational projects, they will feel rejected.

Leaders should recognize that employees need to have self-esteem and feel confident and respected. Maslow (1958) stated that human beings need to feel a sense of achievement, confidence, and empowerment to increase their self-esteem. When

employees increase their self-esteem, they feel confident and empowered to complete

their job tasks. Maslow also claimed that human beings need to feel a sense of

achievement. Employees who achieve organizational goals have a high self-esteem and

feel independent. When leaders empower employees to make decisions, they feel

confident and independent. Shamsudin et al. (2018) posited that employees who feel safe

and confident can increase their performance. Maslow posited that human beings who

have high self-esteem can transition into feeling self-confident. Leaders can also improve

employee productivity by increasing employee self-esteem and self-confidence.

Leaders should understand that employees need to feel self-actualized and capable

of achieving goals. Maslow (1958) suggested that human beings need self-actualization

to perform actions that they have set out to achieve. If a leader empowers their employees

to complete tasks, then employees expect to produce, perform, and achieve those tasks.

Maslow claimed that humans want to become more successful and fulfill their highest

potential. Rastogi et al. (2018) stated that employees who have self-actualization are

motivated and more satisfied to fulfill their job tasks. When leaders want to achieve

organizational goals, they must realize that employees need to have self-actualization.

Researchers who want to explain how employees' needs are connected to

successful employee motivation used Maslow's (1958) hierarchy of needs theory. Rakic

and Zivkovic (2017) used Maslow's theory to explain how employees' lower and higher

needs must be satisfied before they can become motivated. Leaders can increase

employee motivation by identifying their employee needs. Rakic and Zivkovic also used

Maslow's theory to explain how employees need to grow, increase their knowledge, learn

new skills, and be challenged to become motivated. Klopotan et al. (2018) used Maslow's theory to reveal that better business performance and positive work environments lead to improved employee motivation. It is important for leaders to find new ways to identify and satisfy employee needs.

Researchers also used Maslow's (1958) hierarchy of needs theory to explore age, motivation, and leadership styles. Navalkar (2016) used Maslow's theory to explain how employees are motivated by achieving their needs and not rewards or unconscious desires. Leaders should understand that employees are motivated not only by material rewards or recognition; they are also motivated when their needs are met. Navalkar also revealed that leaders and organizations should keep employees motivated by using effective leadership styles. When leaders can identify the type of leadership styles that keep their employees motivated, they can improve employee performance and outcomes. Guclu and Guney (2018) used Maslow's theory to show that employees with low motivation will not improve their performance. Navalkar further explained that employees' age and experience can impact how they are motivated. Leaders need to understand that employees of different ages and levels of experience are motivated by different leadership styles.

I did not choose Maslow's (1958) hierarchy of needs theory because I was not focusing on the needs of employees or how leaders can satisfy employee needs. Instead, I was focusing on how leaders can use effective leadership strategies to improve employee productivity. Maslow developed the hierarchy of needs theory to show how human needs should be met before people can become motivated. Maslow's theory was not in the

scope of my study, and it did not show how leaders can use strategies to improve employee productivity.

**Competing Theory: Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory**

Leaders who want to improve employee productivity should consider how to eliminate employee job dissatisfaction and lack of motivation. Herzberg (1965) developed the motivation-hygiene theory to help leaders identify two factors of motivation and satisfaction that could lead to improved employee productivity. The first factor is the motivation factor; leaders can use this factor to motivate employees through job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1965). The second factor is the hygiene factor; leaders can use this factor to help them identify their employees' lack of motivation and satisfaction, and they can use the hygiene factor to improve workplace conditions, which can improve employee productivity. Leaders can use hygiene factors to avoid job dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1965). Herzberg also claimed that if a leader wants their employees to become more productive, they should improve motivation and hygiene factors. When leaders motivate and satisfy their employees, they can improve employee productivity.

Leaders should provide an adequate amount of feedback to their employees to improve employee productivity. Herzberg (1965) suggested that leaders should give their employees feedback on how they can increase their individual productivity and progress to reach organizational outcomes. Hur (2018) used Herzberg's theory to explain how leaders should focus on the way employees feel by received awards and recognition to improve motivation. When leaders inform their employees of their value in the organization, they can also improve employee productivity. Herzberg stated that

employee productivity will improve only when employees are given the opportunity to increase their success in performing their job tasks and when they can identify their value when reaching organizational goals. Leaders should define different ways to avoid employee job dissatisfaction to improve employee productivity.

Researchers who wanted to examine the relationship between job satisfaction and employee productivity used Herzberg's (1965) motivation-hygiene theory. Hsieh (2016) used Herzberg's theory to identify how job satisfaction and employee productivity consisted of simultaneity, which affected improvement of employee productivity. Leaders can increase job satisfaction and improve employee productivity by reaching organizational outcomes (Siengthai & Pila-Ngarm, 2016). Hsieh also used Herzberg's theory by suggesting that leaders can motivate their employees by improving employee productivity. Leaders who take an interest in how they can satisfy and motivate employees can improve productivity.

Researchers revealed that leaders who satisfy and motivate their employees can improve organizational outcomes. Hsieh (2016) used Herzberg's (1965) theory and found that employees who are satisfied, motivated, and valued on their jobs will work harder to produce organizational outcomes. Bailey et al. (2016) used Herzberg's theory to explain that when leaders identify how to satisfy, motivate, and value their employees, they can improve organizational outcomes. Hsieh also suggested that employees who value their organizations will work harder and help their leaders define strategies to improve employee productivity. When employees are in a positive workplace, they not only improve their productivity, but they are also able to fulfill their tasks and job-related

responsibilities to reach organizational outcomes (Syaifuddin, 2016). Leaders who

improve employee motivation should understand the value of increasing employee

productivity.

Researchers who want to learn how to successfully use satisfaction and

motivation to engage employees use the motivation-hygiene theory. I did not choose

Herzberg's (1965) motivation-hygiene theory because I focused on how to increase

employees' job satisfaction and motivation to improve employee productivity. The

Herzberg motivation-hygiene theory is also based on leaders providing feedback to their

employees to increase job satisfaction and motivation. Matthews et al. (2018) used the

motivation-hygiene theory to explore how employee job dissatisfaction can lead to low

motivation with the absence of leadership feedback and acknowledgement. However, this

study was not an exploration of how leaders' feedback to their employees increases job

satisfaction and motivation, which affects employee productivity. Instead, the focus of

my study was on exploring strategies that leaders can use to improve employee

productivity.

**Leadership Styles and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to increase employee productivity should use effective

leadership styles. Volpp and Banzato (2016) claimed that there is a positive relationship

between organization productivity and the type of leadership styles their leaders possess.

Leaders should decide what type of leadership style is best suited to help their employees

improve their productivity. Sarfraz (2017) suggested that leaders who adopt the strategic

leadership style can make business decisions quickly and can identify the root causes for

unexpected business crisis. When leaders chose an effective leadership style, they can influence positive changes for their employees.

**Transformational Leadership and Employee Productivity**

  Leaders who want to influence change in employee productivity should use the transformational leadership style. Burns (2003) developed the transformational leadership style to reveal how transformational leaders engage their followers and increase their morale. Bansu and Twum-Danso (2019) claimed that transformational leadership consists of leader's ability to use effective communication with their employees and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. When leaders use the transformational leadership style, they influence change in employee performance and encourage employees to become leaders. Burns also suggested that leaders should not focus solely on their interests, but they should focus the interests of their followers. Leaders who include their employees in all aspects of organizational processes can improve employee productivity.

  Leaders who use the transformational leadership style can improve employee skills, work culture, and productivity. Sang et al. (2016) posited that leaders who use the transformational leadership style can improve their employees' skillsets, changing the culture of the employee, and inspiring employees to improve their productivity. Transformational leaders can develop positive organizational outcomes and improve employee productivity. Syaifuddin (2016) claimed that leaders use transformational leadership to influence the change of employee performance within their organization. Breevaart and Bakker (2018) posited that transformational leaders can impact the overall performance of their employees, causing them to have higher motivation and job

satisfaction. When leaders use the transformational leadership style, their goal is to improve employee productivity.

**Democratic Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to include their employees in making effective business decisions should use the democratic leadership style. Bavelas and Lewin (1942) developed the democratic leadership style to show how leaders should include their followers in business decision-making processes. When leaders enable their employees to make business decisions, employees have improved job satisfaction and productivity. Baveles and Lewin also suggested that there is a positive effect on follower behavior when followers are supported and asked to take on roles of responsibility. Leaders who enable their employees to make business decisions and share roles of responsibility can influence higher employee performance.

Leaders who use the democratic leadership style can influence employees to make better business decisions and improve their productivity. Nagendra and Farooqui (2016) claimed that leaders who use the democratic leadership style are more concerned with including employees in business decisions. Leaders who include their employees in business decisions can share roles of responsibilities and knowledge and become team players. Al Rahbi et al. (2017) posited that democratic leaders support their employees' choices and decisions and delegate roles and responsibilities to their employees. Leaders who include employees in business decision making and share roles of responsibility can increase employee productivity. Derecskei (2016) also suggested that democratic leaders

enable their employees to share information. When leaders share knowledge, their employees make better business decisions and increase their productivity.

**Autocratic Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who do not trust their employees to make good business decision are known as autocratic leaders. Chishty-Mujahid (2016) described autocratic leadership as leaders who make all business decisions and take all roles of responsibility without consideration of their subordinates. Leaders who do not trust their employees to make decisions or take leadership roles may experience a decline in employee productivity. Harms et al. (2018) suggested that autocratic leaders are highly dismissive of employee feedback and opinions. Chrishty-Mujahid also posited that leaders who adopt the practice of autocratic leadership believe they should oversee making business decisions and employees are to execute their decisions. When employees are not empowered to make business decisions, they lose their drive to increase performance.

Leaders who do not include employees in making business decisions are considered autocratic leaders. Fiaz et al. (2017) suggested that leaders who use the autocratic leadership style are focused on organizational performance and not the employee productivity. Malik et al. (2016) claimed that autocratic leaders do not trust their employees to make good business decisions. Leaders should choose the right leadership style that not only benefits them as a leader, but also includes employees in making business decisions. El Khouly and AbdelDayem (2017) suggested that autocratic leaders have a narrow focus on the strategies they want their employees to execute. If

leaders have a narrow focus on strategy, it can cause a negative impact on their organization and employee productivity.

**Transactional Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to improve employee productivity should consider sharing leadership roles and responsibilities, as outlined in the transactional leadership style. Burns (1973) discovered leaders use the transactional leadership style to help them understand how to exchange roles and responsibilities with their followers. When leaders want to increase employee performance, they should entrust their employees to take charge of their tasks. Burns also defined transactional leadership as the process of giving and taking between leaders and their followers. Leaders who give their employees the power to take leadership roles, and can take suggestions from their employees, are considered as being transactional.

Leaders who use transactional leadership strategies can increase employee motivation, creativity, and performance. Ma and Jiang (2018) used the transactional leadership style to show how transaction leaders motivate their employees. Leaders who provide their employees with direct guidelines on how to complete tasks and enable employees to be dependent in their work efforts have increased employee motivation. When leaders give their employees incentives and provide benefits to their employees, employees have increased motivation, creativity, and productivity (Klopotan et al., 2018). Leaders should enable their employees to become more creative in completing their job tasks, which can lead to improved employee motivation.

**Empowerment Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who empower their employees to take charge of their work use the empowerment leadership style. Wong and Giessner (2018) referenced the empowerment leadership style to show how leaders lessen their roles and responsibilities by empowering employees to take more leadership roles. Yu et al. (2018) claimed that leaders who empower their employees enable them to make effective business decisions. Wong and Giessener (2018) also claimed that leaders who use the employee empowerment leadership style allow their employees to take control of their task, entrust employees to improve their performance, and relieve employees of job constraints. When employees are empowered, they can make better business decisions and easily adapt to organizational change (Ravisha & Pakkerappa, 2017). Leaders empower their employees to make business decisions and improve their individual performance can meet organizational outcomes.

Leaders who empower their employees to take leadership roles can improve employee productivity. Kanani and Shafiei (2016) revealed that empowerment leadership is a challenging leadership style for leaders. Some leaders find it difficult to share their leadership roles. Metcalf et al. (2018) posited that employee empowerment is a powerful tool that leaders should use to increase employee productivity. When leaders empower their employees to make business decisions or provide adequate feedback on business processes, they can see increased employee performance.

**Bureaucratic Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to develop a clear line of fixed responsibilities, accountability, and authority use the bureaucratic leadership style. Visvanathan et al. (2018) used the bureaucratic leadership style to show how leaders have a higher power and authority over their employees to ensure job-related tasks are completed on time. Al-Sada et al. (2017) claimed that leaders use bureaucratic leadership to define employee roles and responsibilities that can lead to increased employee productivity. Leaders who want to increase employee productivity should understand the value of providing job task clarity to their employees. Sonnenberg et al. (2018) suggested leaders use bureaucratic leadership to establish the roles they play in relation to their employees. Al-Sada et al. also suggested that organizations that use the bureaucratic leadership style tend to be more cautious, powered, and highly concerned about the well-being of their employees and organizational outcomes. When leaders practice using bureaucratic leadership, they become more structured and organized.

Leaders who want their employees to take a more bureaucratic approach to completing job task on time can increase employee productivity. Nielsen and Moynihan (2017) posited that leaders who adapt the bureaucratic leadership style are responsible for the outcomes of their organizations and employees. Leaders who influence their employees to become bureaucratic leaders enable them to take charge of tasks efficiently and effectively. When leaders allow employees to take charge of their tasks this action can lead to better employee productivity and new organizational direction (Ruark, 2017).

When leaders and their employees use bureaucratic leadership, they can see their organizations' mission and vision.

**Charismatic Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to improve employee productivity through communication, persuasion, and inspiration use the charismatic leadership style. Tuan and Thao (2018) described charismatic leadership as a leader's ability to encourage and inspire employees to grow beyond their normal levels of productivity. When leaders effectively communicate with their employees and engage them in all aspects of business processes, they can improve employee productivity. Parry et. al (2019) stated leaders use charismatic leadership to empower their employees to reach organizational goals. Tuan and Thao also suggested that leaders give their employees praise to increase their levels of productivity. Leaders who appraise their employees increase employee motivation and their ability to produce better outcomes. Sy et al. (2018) posited that charismatic leaders need high levels of emotion from their employees to encourage action and devotion. Leaders who can encourage and persuade their employees to increase their productivity can constitute positive organizational outcomes.

Leaders who want to influence employees to become charismatic leaders can improve employee productivity and reach their goals. Sacavém et al. (2017) suggested that leaders who are honest, encouraging, and trusting are capable of encouraging followers to successfully complete their goals. Grabo et al. (2017) claimed that charismatic leadership consists of a leader's ability to identify the qualities of an individual follower and encourage him or her to use those qualities to prevail in the work

environment. When employees can trust their leaders, they become more productive. Leaders who adopt the charismatic leadership style can communicate their organization's vision (Sacavém et al., 2017). When employees understand their organization's vision, they are motivated to improve their productivity.

**Servant Leadership and Employee Motivation**

Leaders who understand the feelings and emotions experienced by their employees use the servant leadership style. Heyler and Martin (2018) suggested that servant leadership consists of a leader's ability to not only provide their followers with areas of individual improvement, but to take feedback from their followers. Liu (2019) posited leaders use servant leadership to place other's needs above their own. When leaders can receive negative and positive feedback from their employees, they can improve their leadership skills and employee productivity. Heyler and Martin also posited that servant leadership is used to show how leaders are servers first and can prepare their followers to be servers. When leaders enable their employees to develop their own creativity or complete task in their own unique way, they become servant leaders. Kiersch and Peters (2017) claimed that servant leadership is centered around growth and empowerment. Leaders who inspire their employees to grow in their productivity and empower them to become servant leaders can create a better organizational culture.

Leaders who put their employees first use characteristics of servant leaders. Terosky and Reitano (2016) suggested that servant leaders ensure that other people's needs are a higher priority than their own needs. When leaders can place the needs of their employees ahead of their own needs, they can improve employee productivity.

Donia et al. (2016) suggested that when leaders adopt servant behaviors that are different from their own interest, their employees gain better attitudes and behaviors. Leaders who are humble for the well-being of their employees can have higher employee productivity.

**Collaborative Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to improve employer-employee relationships and achieve effective and efficient results from their organizational processes can use a collaborative leadership style. Hsieh and Liou (2018) claimed that collaborative leadership is used by leaders who want to decrease workplace conflict, increase employee productivity, show their commitment to newly formed goals, and accomplish organizational goals. When leaders work together with their employees to reach a common goal, they can increase employee productivity. Miltenberger and Sloan (2017) posited that collaborative leadership consists of leaders gaining trust, using their ability to reciprocate leadership roles and responsibilities, and including employees in business decision-making. When leaders use collaborative leadership to include employees in business decision making, they improve their employee's productivity and gain their trust.

Leaders who want to improve employee productivity should adopt collaborative leadership practices. Grego-Planer and Sudolska (2018) suggested that collaborative leadership practices consist of including employees in business processes, accepting employee feedback, and being flexible instead of irrational and commanding. When leaders can effectively and efficiently communicate with their employees, they can improve employee productivity. Markle-Reid et al. (2017) claimed that the collaborative leadership style consists of leaders' ability to share their leadership roles with open

boundaries and encouragement. Leaders who want to increase employee productivity should consider how to share their roles of responsibilities with their employees.

**Visionary Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to improve organizational culture and employee productivity use the visionary leadership style. Chiarini and Vagnoni (2017) claimed that visionary leadership consists of a leader's ability to develop and maintain a fixed vision for the health of his or her employees and organization. Leaders who are concerned about the overall health of their employees and organizations can improve employee productivity. Jing and Avery (2016) suggested that visionary leaders create an organizational vision, communicate the vision using models and metaphors, are consistent, and are committed to achieving their organizational vision. When leaders can develop an organizational vision, they gain the trust of their employees and improve their productivity.

Leaders who want to quickly adapt to organizational change use visionary leadership. Kunnanatt (2016) suggested that visionary leaders adapt to organizational change faster, making better business decisions and inspiring their employees to improve their productivity. When leaders can adapt to constant organizational changes, they help their employees understand how their productivity can reflect and impact these changes. Fenwick (2018) claimed that visionary leaders believe in well-trained employees, share visions between employers and employees, and improve employee productivity. When leaders use visionary leadership to improve employee productivity, they build trust and autonomy from their employees.

**Coaching Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to improve their employee's performance or increase organizational process use the coaching leadership style. Anthony (2017) claimed that coaching leadership is centered on improving employee productivity and the overall effectiveness of an organization. When leaders use the coaching leadership style, they find news way to improve their employee's performance. Anthony also claimed that when leaders adopt the coaching leadership style, they improve their own leadership skills, make better business decisions, and help their organization achieve better business outcomes. Reyes Liske and Holladay (2016) suggested that the coaching leadership style builds leaders, employees, and organization's competencies. When leaders adopt the coaching leadership style, they improve employee productivity and increase their organization's effectiveness.

Leaders who want to positively impact their employee's productivity and trust use the coaching leadership style. Behery and Al-Nasser (2016) posited that leaders use coaching leadership as a strategy to gain the trust of their employees and improve their productivity. When leaders gain their employee's trust, the employees are empowered to improve their performance and discover new ways to conquer more business opportunities. Copeland (2016) claimed that coaching leadership is based on a leader's ability to produce positive outcomes. Behery and Al-Nasser also suggested that the coaching leadership style helps leaders build positive relationships with their employees. When employees trust their leaders and can build positive relationships with them, they can better improve their rates of productivity.

**Communication Barriers and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to improve employee productivity should use effective communication skills. Jalalkamali et al. (2016) suggested that when leaders use effective communication skills to improve employee performance, they are also capable of producing better organizational outcomes. When leaders can effectively communicate with their employees, they increase their ability to establish positive employer and employee relationships. Advani and Gulzar (2016) posited that leaders who use effective communication skills can not only improve employee productivity, but also the overall performance of the organization. When leaders and their organizations can effectively communicate with their employees, it can help them make better business decisions and improve job satisfaction.

Leaders who communicate effectively with their employees can see improved employee innovative behavior and employee productivity. Garg and Dhar (2017) suggested that when leaders effectively communicate how employees should complete challenging job tasks, it increases their ability to become more innovative and perform at a higher rate. When leaders empower their employees to adapt more innovative behaviors it can lead to better working environments and increase business outcomes. Lukes and Stephan (2017) posited that leaders who effectively communicate with their employees can help them to identify if their employees can develop or adapt to new business ideas, which can improve their productivity. When leaders enable their employees to be innovative, they can improve employee performance and employer-employee communication.

**Interpersonal Communication and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to improve communication with employees and employee performance by exchanging information, feelings, and face-to-face interaction use interpersonal communication. Sniderman et al. (2016) suggested that if leaders do not have interpersonal communication skills it could lead to negative workplace outcomes and decrease employee productivity. When leaders adopt effective interpersonal communication skills, it can result to healthier employer-employee relationships. Agba (2018) posited that when leaders use effective interpersonal skills it enables their employees to feel valued and gain a sense of belonging to their organization. When employees feel that they are important to their organization it can cause them to improve the quality of their productivity.

Leaders who want to improve their employees' productivity value the importance of employee's interpersonal communication skills. Boyle et al. (2017) claimed that it is important for employees to obtain the necessary interpersonal skills to prove their ability to respect others, listen actively, develop trust and relationships, and maintain self-control. When leaders encourage their employees to adopt interpersonal communication skills it can help them to improve employee performance and behavior. Erjavec et al. (2018) suggested that when leaders motivate their employee to effectively communicate it impacts their attitudes and behaviors. The bottom line is leaders should understand the value of encouraging their employee's use of effective interpersonal communication skills to improve their productivity and organizational outcomes.

**Employee Engagement and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to involve their employees in business processes and making business decisions use employee engagement. Ayub and Islam (2018) revealed that employee engagement consists of employees' commitment to help their organizations be successful and reach its goals. When leaders engage their employees by empowering them to make business decisions, it increases employee productivity. Rao (2017) claimed that leaders who use employee engagement as a tool to increase employee productivity, can also build better working relationships with their employees. Leaders who consider their employees' perspectives on employee engagement can not only improve employee productivity, but also improved employee attitudes and behavior.

Leaders who initiate employee engagement can increase employee motivation and satisfaction. Weerasooriya and De Alwis (2017) claimed that employee engagement caused employees to become more motivated in completing job related tasks and reaching organizational goals. When leaders can successfully engage their employees, it can also enable them to gain employee satisfaction and help them motivate their employees to improve their levels of productivity. Wen et al. (2018) suggested that employee engagement and productivity can have a major impact on employee satisfaction. Employees who are engaged in their organizations have a higher level of productivity, which causes them to value their organizations goals and outcomes.

**Problem Solving and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who can find solutions for difficult or complex situations use leadership strategies focused on decisive problem solving. Kerns (2016) revealed that leaders use

decisive problem solving to establish clear and concise business strategies, identify

effective employee performance parameters, and combine intelligent resources to

maximize shareholder wealth. When leaders use decisive problem solving it enables them

to identify positive solutions to help them increase employee productivity. Jarvis and

Williams (2017) revealed that problem solving skills help organizational leaders discover

resolutions to complex problems. Therefore, when leaders can solve problems associated

to increasing employee productivity, they not only impact organizational success, but can

also influence their employees to become problem solvers.

Leaders should use problem solving to promote employee productivity through

creativity. Giampaoli et al. (2017) claimed that creative problem solving consists of

leaders and their employees identifying new ways to develop business solutions. When

leaders enable their employees to use creative problem-solving it can improve their

productivity. Audenaert and Decramer (2018) revealed that leaders should influence their

employees to improve their critical thinking skills, which can help them become more

creative and successfully complete job tasks. Therefore, when employees can solve

problems, it can help leaders trust their employee's ability to make business decisions and

improve employee productivity.

**Innovation and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who enable their employees to be creative, develop new processes, or

execute new ideas to impact their productivity use innovation. Khalili (2018) revealed

that creativity and innovation are important skills that leaders should encourage and

require their employees to possess. When employees are creative and innovative it allows

them to not only increase their performance, but also increase organizational outcomes. Khalili (2016) claimed that employee creativity and innovation stems from a leader's ability to provide successful leadership practices, engage and empower employees, and impact employee productivity. Therefore, leaders should encourage their employees to be more creative and innovative in efforts to improve their productivity.

Leaders can cause a decline in employee productivity when they do not promote employee innovation. Delmas and Pekovic (2018) discovered how leaders who lack the ability to influence their employees to be creative and innovative can cause a decline in employee motivation. Leaders should identify the importance enabling their employees to be innovative. Audenaert et al. (2017) discovered that leaders and organizations should require their employees to be innovative and creative, because it leads to job satisfaction. When leaders enable their employees to be innovators, it allows them to gain new perspectives on how to effectively complete job-related tasks. Therefore, leaders should empower their employees to develop new processes and execute new innovations to improve employee productivity.

**Motivation and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to improve their employee's performance through inspiration and engagement use motivation. Tsvangiraib and Chinyamurindi (2019) described motivation as a persons' will to improve their performance and meet organizational goals. When employees are motivated, they can improve their individual performance by completing task to produce positive outcomes. Pererva et al. (2018) claimed employee motivation as important to an organization's ability to survive. Leaders who know how to

motivate their employees can not only improve employee engagement, but also employee productivity.

Leaders who do not use motivation can cause employee productivity to decrease. Khan and Wajidi (2019) posited employee motivation as the most important element of a business' success. Employees are motivated when they are encouraged, empowered, and trusted to improve their performance. Novianty and Evita (2018) claimed employees are motivated when they are satisfied, have low burnout, and given incentive to improve their productivity. When leaders can effectively motivate their employees, it can help them identify leadership strategies that will impact improved employee performance.

**Employee Retention and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to increase employee productivity understand the value of employee retention. Dhanpat et al. (2018) discovered that leaders find it challenging to keep employees if they are not satisfied, motivated, or committed to their organization. When employees feel that they are not valued by their leaders and organization, there is a decrease in their productivity. Umamaheswari and Krishnan (2016) posited that the loss of employees drives down employee productivity, which impacts their leader's ability to uphold the mission, vision, and goals of their organization. Consequently, leaders should consistently discover new innovations to not only keep their employees, but also increase employee productivity.

Leaders who engage their employees can increase employee retention and increase employee productivity. Kundu and Lata (2017) claimed that employees are most likely to remain committed to their organizations when leaders engage them in business

processes. When leaders engage their employees in business processes, making decisions, or developing new innovations, they can increase employee performance. Salla and Patel (2017) also revealed that leaders need to provide a positive work environment to not only improve employee productivity, but also increase their ability to retain employee retention. Therefore, employee retention can impact the overall success of an organization and impact a leaders' ability to produce outcomes.

Leadership's role on employee retention impacting employee productivity. Leaders who include their employees in business processes can improve employee productivity and increase employee retention. Covella et al. (2017) claimed that leaders must do all they can to include their employees by engaging them in everyday business processes, which causes employees to increase their performance levels. When leaders can define employee retention strategies, they can improve employee productivity. Anitha and Begum (2016) posited that leaders should develop employee retention strategies that will encourage employees to stay with their organization. Therefore, it is important for leaders to consistently improve the quality of their workforce, and discover new ways to increase employee retention, which can impact employee productivity.

**Transformational Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to influence change in employee productivity should use the transformational leadership style. Burns (2003) developed the transformational leadership style to reveal how transformational leaders engage their followers and increase their morale. Bansu and Twum-Danso (2019) claimed that transformational leadership consists of leader's ability to use effective communication with their employees and identifying

their strengths and weaknesses. When leaders use the transformational leadership style, they influence change in employee performance and encourage employees to become leaders. Burns also suggested that leaders should not focus solely on their interests, but they should focus the interests of their followers. Leaders who include their employees in all aspects of organizational processes can improve employee productivity.

Leaders who use the transformational leadership style can improve employee skills, work culture, and productivity. Sang et al. (2016) posited that leaders who use the transformational leadership style can improve their employees' skillsets, changing the culture of the employee, and inspiring employees to improve their productivity. Transformational leaders can develop positive organizational outcomes and improve employee productivity. Syaifuddin (2016) claimed that leaders use transformational leadership to influence the change of employee performance within their organization. Breevaart and Bakker (2018) posited that transformational leaders can impact the overall performance of their employees, causing them to have higher motivation and job satisfaction. When leaders use the transformational leadership style, their goal is to improve employee productivity.

**Democratic Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to include their employees in making effective business decisions should use the democratic leadership style. Bavelas and Lewin (1942) developed the democratic leadership style to show how leaders should include their followers in business decision-making processes. When leaders enable their employees to make business decisions, employees have improved job satisfaction and productivity.

Baveles and Lewin also suggested that there is a positive effect on follower behavior when followers are supported and asked to take on roles of responsibility. Leaders who enable their employees to make business decisions and share roles of responsibility can influence higher employee performance.

Leaders who use the democratic leadership style can influence employees to make better business decisions and improve their productivity. Nagendra and Farooqui (2016) claimed that leaders who use the democratic leadership style are more concerned with including employees in business decisions. Leaders who include their employees in business decisions can share roles of responsibilities and knowledge and become team players. Al Rahbi et al. (2017) posited that democratic leaders support their employees' choices and decisions and delegate roles and responsibilities to their employees. Leaders who include employees in business decision making and share roles of responsibility can increase employee productivity. Derecskei (2016) also suggested that democratic leaders enable their employees to share information. When leaders share knowledge, their employees make better business decisions and increase their productivity.

**Autocratic Leadership and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who do not trust their employees to make good business decision are known as autocratic leaders. Chishty-Mujahid (2016) described autocratic leadership as leaders who make all business decisions and take all roles of responsibility without consideration of their subordinates. Leaders who do not trust their employees to make decisions or take leadership roles may experience a decline in employee productivity. Harms et al. (2018) suggested that autocratic leaders are highly dismissive of employee

feedback and opinions. Chrishty-Mujahid also posited that leaders who adopt the practice of autocratic leadership believe they should oversee making business decisions and employees are to execute their decisions. When employees are not empowered to make business decisions, they lose their drive to increase performance.

Leaders who do not include employees in making business decisions are considered autocratic leaders. Fiaz et al. (2017) suggested that leaders who use the autocratic leadership style are focused on organizational performance and not the employee productivity. Malik et al. (2016) claimed that autocratic leaders do not trust their employees to make good business decisions. Leaders should choose the right leadership style that not only benefits them as a leader, but also includes employees in making business decisions. El Khouly and AbdelDayem (2017) suggested that autocratic leaders have a narrow focus on the strategies they want their employees to execute. If leaders have a narrow focus on strategy, it can cause a negative impact on their organization and employee productivity.

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Leaders who initiate employee engagement can increase employee motivation and satisfaction. Weerasooriya and De Alwis (2017) claimed that employee engagement

caused employees to become more motivated in completing job related tasks and reaching organizational goals. When leaders can successfully engage their employees, it can also enable them to gain employee satisfaction and motivates their employees to improve their levels of productivity. Wen et al. (2018) suggested that employee engagement and productivity can have a major impact on employee satisfaction. Employees who are engaged in their organizations have a higher level of productivity, which causes them to value their organizations goals and outcomes.

**Problem Solving and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who can find solutions for difficult or complex situations use leadership strategies focused on decisive problem solving. Kerns (2016) revealed that leaders use decisive problem solving to establish clear and concise business strategies, identify effective employee performance parameters, and combine intelligent resources to maximize shareholder wealth. When leaders use decisive problem solving it enables them to identify positive solutions to help them increase employee productivity. Jarvis and Williams (2017) revealed that problem solving skills help organizational leaders discover resolutions to complex problems. Therefore, when leaders can solve problems associated to increasing employee productivity, they not only impact organizational success, but can also influence their employees to become problem solvers.

Leaders should use problem solving to promote employee productivity through creativity. Giampaoli et al. (2017) claimed that creative problem solving consists of leaders and their employees identifying new ways to develop business solutions. When leaders enable their employees to use creative problem-solving it can improve their

productivity. Audenaert and Decramer (2018) revealed that leaders should influence their

employees to improve their critical thinking skills, which can help them become more

creative and successfully complete job tasks. Therefore, when employees can solve

problems, it can help leaders trust their employee's ability to make business decisions and

improve employee productivity.

**Innovation and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who enable their employees to be creative, develop new processes, or

execute new ideas to impact their productivity use innovation. Khalili (2018) revealed

that creativity and innovation are important skills that leaders should encourage and

require their employees to possess. When employees are creative and innovative it allows

them to not only increase their performance, but also increase organizational outcomes.

Khalili (2016) claimed that employee creativity and innovation stems from a leader's

ability to provide successful leadership practices, engage and empower employees, and

impact employee productivity. Therefore, leaders should encourage their employees to be

more creative and innovative in efforts to improve their productivity.

Leaders can cause a decline in employee productivity when they do not promote

employee innovation. Delmas and Pekovic (2018) discovered how leaders who lack the

ability to influence their employees to be creative and innovative can cause a decline in

employee motivation. Leaders should identify the importance enabling their employees to

be innovative. Audenaert et al. (2017) discovered that leaders and organizations should

require their employees to be innovative and creative, because it leads to job satisfaction.

When leaders enable their employees to be innovators, it allows them to gain new

perspectives on how to effectively complete job-related tasks. Therefore, leaders should empower their employees to develop new processes and execute new innovations to improve employee productivity.

**Employee Retention and Employee Productivity**

Leaders who want to increase employee productivity understand the value of employee retention. Dhanpat et al. (2018) discovered that leaders find it challenging to keep employees if they are not satisfied, motivated, or committed to their organization. When employees feel that they are not valued by their leaders and organization, there is a decrease in their productivity. Umamaheswari and Krishnan (2016) posited that the loss of employees drives down employee productivity, which impacts their leader's ability to uphold the mission, vision, and goals of their organization. Consequently, leaders should consistently discover new innovations to not only keep their employees, but also increase employee productivity.

Leaders who engage their employees can increase employee retention and increase employee productivity. Kundu and Lata (2017) claimed that employees are most likely to remain committed to their organizations when leaders engage them in business processes. When leaders engage their employees in business processes, making decisions, or developing new innovations, they can increase employee performance. Salla and Patel (2017) also revealed that leaders need to provide a positive work environment to not only improve employee productivity, but also increase their ability to retain employee retention. Therefore, employee retention can impact the overall success of an organization and impact a leaders' ability to produce outcomes.

Leadership's role on employee retention impacting employee productivity. Leaders who include their employees in business processes can improve employee productivity and increase employee retention. Covella et al. (2017) claimed that leaders must do all they can to include their employees by engaging them in everyday business processes, which causes employees to increase their performance levels. When leaders can define employee retention strategies, they can improve employee productivity. Anitha and Begum (2016) posited that leaders should develop employee retention strategies that will encourage employees to stay with their organization. Therefore, it is important for leaders to consistently improve the quality of their workforce, and discover new ways to increase employee retention, which can impact employee productivity.

## Transition

The purpose of section one was to identify the different types of leadership strategies that leaders can use to improve employee productivity. Section one explained why I chose to use a qualitative research method instead of the quantitative research method or mixed methods. Section one provides details of the different themes that align with the conceptual framework, which includes competing theories that answer the research question. I further expanded on this research to discover strategies small business leaders use to improve employee productivity.

Section two detail will detail my role as the researcher, identify who my participants are and why I selected them, and extend the nature of study in my research method and research design. Section two will also identify the scope of my study by defining the population and describing and justifying my sampling method. Section two

will conclude with an explanation of my data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity sections. Section three concludes my study by including a brief explanation of my purpose of study, and what my overall findings. Then, I will provide a detailed discussion on the applicability of the findings with respect to the professional practice of business. Section three will further provide implications for social change, and recommendations for the results of this study and indicate how the results might be disseminated. There will be a reflection on my experience within the DBA Doctoral Study process, the possibility of personal biases or preconceived ideas and values, the possible effects of those biases on the participants or the situation, and changes in my thinking after completing the study.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2 of this study, I explain the purpose of this study by providing insight on the type of participants selected, the population, and how this study may lead to positive social change. This section includes a detailed discussion of my role as the researcher and how I avoided biases while protecting the privacy of participants. I provide details on my selected participants, followed by the research method and research design to provide more information and additional resources. Finally, I discuss the population and sampling decisions I made, my ethical research requirements, the data collection methods I used, and how I ensured reliability and validity.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to identify the strategies that some leaders of small businesses use to increase employee productivity. The population included one business leader from each of five different small businesses in the Atlanta, Georgia area who had implemented leadership strategies that improved employee productivity. This study may lead to positive social change by providing leaders of small businesses with leadership strategies to increase employee productivity, which could lead to increased community employment and an increase in local tax revenues to benefit citizens in local communities.

**Role of the Researcher**

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the data collection instrument (Palinkas et al., 2015). In the current qualitative study, I was the data collector. I conducted my study in the geographic location near my residence in Atlanta, Georgia. I did not personally

know any of my small business leader participants, and I did not meet them face-to-face prior to conducting my interviews. The role of the researcher in a multiple case study is to focus on a complex, real-life phenomenon (Zhou et al., 2019). Therefore, I chose five small business leaders who had prior experience developing strategies to increase their employees' performance.

Researchers who develop adequate open-ended interview questions can increase the level of data generated (Vasileiou et al., 2018). In my study, I conducted semistructured interviews to ensure that I asked open-ended questions focused on answering the research question and designed to elicit detailed responses from my participants. Glenn and Urquhart (2019) claimed that semistructured interviews are used to obtain in-depth responses from participants. Therefore, I used semistructured interviews that require detailed responses from my participants to mitigate personal bias in my study.

I had experience working in small businesses, and I was aware of the type of employees who work in the small business sector. To mitigate biases in my interviews, I used epoche to gain a better understanding of my participants' individual experiences. Padmanabhan (2017) stated that when the researcher uses epoche, they describe participants' experiences exactly the way they are explained. My role as the researcher was to use an interview protocol to avoid my personal experiences and perspectives and mitigate bias. Gordon et al. (2018) posited that is important to inform the participants about the purpose of the interview. Therefore, my interview protocol was to remain consistent by informing each participant about the purpose of my interviews.

My primary responsibility to mitigate bias was to eliminate my personal experiences and perspectives by using only the experiences of my participants. My role as the researcher was to remain ethical using mandatory rules of the Belmont Report. The Belmont Report (The United States. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978) mentioned three key elements that should be used to protect participants in interviews: (a) boundaries between practice and research or if there is a human source (i.e. participant) involved in the research activity, the research must be reviewed and accounted for human source protection; (b) basic ethical principles, which consist of respecting participants opinions and choices without judgment; and (c) application, which is the necessary tool for how researchers conduct their research with the inclusion of humans. Therefore, the best way to protect my participants was to first ask them fill out a consent form, which kept their identities protected. Once they agreed to this action, I informed them that their identity would not be revealed. Finally, I ensured that they understood the purpose of my interview, and that their confidentiality would be respected.

**Participants**

The five selected participants within this study needed to satisfy three eligibility criteria: (a) location, (b) position, and (c) experience leading small business employees. My participants were required to be in the location nearest to my residence in Atlanta, Georgia. Their location made it easy for me to commute to and from my participants' locations and gave me time to conduct interviews in a specified time frame. My participants also needed to hold a small business supervisory position. All five small

business leaders needed expertise concerning key strategies they use to increase

employee productivity. Their expertise or knowledge with strategies to increase

employee productivity helped me answer my research question. All participants needed

experience in leading small business employees. Eva et al. (2018) stated that leaders

knowledgeable on strategies to improve employee productivity understand how

organizational outcomes rely on leadership strategies. Small business leaders can

influence employees to become more innovative and can lead employees to improve their

productivity (Taneja et al., 2016). When participants have experience leading employees

and influencing them to improve their productivity, it can help them answer the interview

questions. The participants' responses can also add value to the results of the study.

The strategy I used for gaining access to my participants was to contact them

informally by phone. Kmita (2017) posited that courteous, informal interactions between

the researcher and their participants promote a bond based on similarities. In each

informal phone call, I aimed to explain why I selected the leader as a potential

participant, and how their participation would be important to the research findings.

During the interviews, I provided my interviewees with consent forms that explained the

purpose of the study, participation risks, their privacy, and contact information. I asked

each participant if they would agree to review and review an informed consent form,

which gave them a better understanding of the study. Once the participants agreed to this

action, I informed each participant that their identity would not be revealed.

I established a working relationship with my individual participants by conducting

the following actions: (a) setting up a teleconference with them to explain the informal

consent forms and setting the stage for the interviews with reference to interview protocol, (b) allowing them to express any questions or concerns they may have with the research or the consent forms, and (c) establishing an open-door policy to reengage with participants. This action helped me to lessen the impact of research–participant complications during the interviews. Ticknor and Averett (2017) claimed that researcher–participant relationship can be complicated based on shifts of personalities, differences of opinions, or piqued emotions. I also ensured that I listened carefully to their interview responses and excluded all biases when they give their individual perspectives. To further establish a positive relationship with participants, I encouraged them to ask follow-up questions to clarify the purpose of the research and confirm that they were aware of their privacy. Guetterman (2017) posited that the best way to protect participants in a study is to write a summary during each interview to explain each participant's responses. It was also important for each participant's characteristics to align to my research question. Therefore, all five participants must have successfully implemented strategies to improve employee productivity in their organizations.

## Research Method and Design

The three main research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed. Qualitative researchers explore phenomena through the experiences and perspectives of the participants, from which they report data in a narrative form (Trainor & Graue, 2014). I chose the qualitative method to explore the participants' experiences with developing and implementing leadership strategies that increase employee productivity.

**Research Method**

Selecting the appropriate research method was critical for this study. Research methods consists of a collaboration of different components that are connected to produce a purpose for research (Schoonenboom, 2018). Husbands et al. (2017) claimed that the qualitative method was used for two basic reasons: (a) to provide new information for future models and (b) to provide in-depth information of individual models. Qualitative researchers can explore phenomena by forming new theories (Bansal et al., 2018). Using the qualitative method, I explored participants' experiences with forming and using leadership strategies to increase employee productivity.

Quantitative researchers aim to predict or control social phenomena, and they measure, evaluate, and form generalizations about their findings of a population (J. Park & Park, 2016). Quantitative researchers also use statistical data and numerous hypotheses to test relationships between variables (Tominc et al., 2018). J. Park and Park (2016) posited that quantitative researchers are concerned with using the justification of their research. Qualitative researchers do not aim to use justification, but they do aim to explore or discover research. Quantitative researchers quantify data using statistics (Apuke, 2017). The quantitative method was not appropriate for the current study because I did not test relationships or differences between variables, form a hypothesis, use statistics, or make justifications.

Mixed-methods researchers combine the qualitative and quantitative methods to form a theoretical perspective without limitations (Venkatesh et al., 2016). Molina-Azorin (2016) claimed that mixed-methods researchers can explore and justify research

problems and complex phenomena by combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

Mitchell (2018) described mixed methods as a way for researchers to use methodological

pluralism to heighten their research and examine philosophical assumptions. I used the

qualitative method because I justified problems and complex phenomena.

**Research Design**

Researchers using the qualitative method often select one of the following designs

to align with their chosen method: phenomenology, narrative, ethnography, or case study.

I chose to use the case study design to explore the participants' experiences with

developing and implementing leadership strategies that increase employee productivity.

Case study researchers focus on a case to explore a real-world understanding of a

complex social phenomenon (Ridder, 2017). Margaret (2016) posited that researchers use

case study designs to obtain a deeper understanding of the problem in their study and

help them to view the phenomenon at different levels. A case study is often designed as

one case in which the researcher examines an individual, a selected organization, or a

group of individuals in a community (Wrona & Gunnesch, 2016). I chose a multiple case

study to focus on the complex, real-life phenomenon of leadership strategies that

increased employee productivity. I also used semistructured interviews to ensure data

saturation and used methodological triangulation to define how small business leaders

use effective leadership strategies to increase employee productivity.

Researchers using the phenomenological design study the participants' lived

experiences of a phenomenon (Conklin, 2014). Priya (2017) claimed that

phenomenological researchers apprehend phenomena through their senses or

consciousness. When researchers decide to use phenomenology, they are focused on the experiences of their participants. Schwartz and Baek (2016) explained that the phenomenological design is used by researchers to study how individuals experience life. The phenomenological design was not appropriate for the current study because I was not studying the meanings of participants' lived experiences.

Narrative researchers obtain a collection of participants' stories of their experiences (Rooney et al., 2016). Martin (2016) posited that researchers can use narrative designs to gain a better understanding from stories provided by their participants. Shapiro (2016) described narrative studies as participants' thought processes and the actions they take in stories containing a beginning, middle, and end. The narrative design was not appropriate for the current study because I did not seek to explore the participants' stories.

Ethnographic researchers study the culture of participant groups with similar backgrounds or working relationships (Maes et al., 2017). Researchers using the ethnographic design study their participants in their physical settings (Bamkin et al., 2016). When researchers select the ethnographic design, they focus on entire groups of participants and how they act in certain situations. Sinead Ryan (2017) described the ethnographic design as a researcher's primary focus on people and cultures. The ethnographic design was not appropriate for the current study because I was not focusing on exploring cultures of groups.

**Population and Sampling**

The population included leaders from all small businesses in Atlanta, Georgia who had implemented leadership strategies that improved employee productivity. Qualitative researchers select the number of participants based on the scope of their study and the type of data they need to collect (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). In qualitative studies, sampling is important. Qualitative researchers often use purposeful sampling to explore issues provided by selected individuals who have experience or knowledge of that issue (Abrahams, 2017). The sampling method I used was purposive sampling. Sampling participants who openly volunteer to participate in a study can provide the researcher with quality data (Mehrotra, 2018). Once qualitative researchers have determined their predetermined participants, they can collect data from each participant's overall experience and knowledge (Regional Parameters and Solar Energy Enterprises, 2016). My participants had experience and knowledge using leadership strategies to increase employee productivity. The participants' experience and knowledge helped me answer my research question.

The population was leaders from all of the small businesses in the Atlanta, Georgia area. The sample size from the population consisted of five small business leaders. I chose one leader from each of the five small businesses who had experience implementing leadership strategies to improve employee productivity. Qualitative researchers using purposive sample can collect pertinent data by using intense interviews (Sharafizad, 2018). The sample size of a qualitative study can be justified by using data saturation (Bobby, 2016). Sample sizes should include enough participants to ensure that

all data collected are reliable and valid (Bhupathi & Venakata, 2017). The data collected

from my participants using semistructured interviews were reliable and valid to ensure

data saturation. The data collected were based on my participants' experiences and

knowledge of using leadership strategies to increase employee productivity.

I used a small sample size consisting of one business leader from five different

small businesses in this study. Bovopoulos et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative case

study using multiple individuals from five different businesses and semistructured

interviews to ensure data saturation. Boddy (2016) increased the sample size before

starting the data collection process to ensure data saturation. I used semistructured

interviews to ensure data saturation and define how small business leaders use effective

leadership strategies to increase employee productivity. Ballaro and Polk (2017) used

semistructured interviews as a form of data collection to explore different trends in their

research. The five participants I used aligned with the complex, real-life phenomenon of

leadership strategies that increase employee productivity.

Qualitative researchers are unable to determine accurate sample sizes for the

number of interviews to achieve data saturation (Hesso et al., 2019). I conducted

semistructured interviews by asking open-ended questions, reviewing participant

documents, and using reflective journaling to write down pertinent data. Qualitative

researchers who use open-ended questions can help them identify when data saturation is

complete (Tran et al., 2016). I used member checking to give my participants the chance

to review my data interpretations of their interview responses. I also used member

checking to continually allow participants to check the data collected for accuracy. Iivari

(2016) described member checking as a tool qualitative researcher use to invite their participants to approve the data collected from the interviews.

Qualitative researchers' primary obligation is to collect data which involves actively engaging with their participants (Arora, 2017). My participants explained their experiences with developing effective leadership strategies to increase employee productivity. Participants met the research study requirements to participate in the study, which consisted of the following criteria: (a) experience developing leadership strategies increasing employee productivity, (b) 5 to 10 years of experiences in the small business industry, and (c) experience leading 10 or more employees. Park et al. (2016) suggested participants articulate their answers to each interview question. I informed all potential participants, in the study, participation is voluntary. Participants who were aware of their choice to participate in a study but do not meet the requirements cannot participate. Participants who decided to participate in the study would need to provide valid examples of leadership strategies used in the past 5 years. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how small business leaders develop effective leadership strategies to increase employee productivity.

The semistructured interviews with each participant directly supported the research question. Qualitative researcher's interview questions must support the research question (Nelson, 2016). The semistructured interviews consisted of six open-ended questions supporting the research question. Ridder (2017) identified semistructured interviews as ways researchers explore reliable and valid life experiences of their participants. Furthermore, Klenke et al. (2016) suggested researchers change their

designed interview protocol if they are missing important semistructured interview

questions. Participants can also request additional interview time without limitations or

restrictions to answer each interview question. I was aware of participants' time and offer

flexible interview time slots to coincide with their work schedules. Participants selected

locations meeting their levels of comfort, preferably at their work location, to avoid

unexpected travel times. Participants and I agreed to a specified semistructed interview

location, with little to no outside interruptions or people. I validated if participants

selected interview space meets the requirements, such as: (a) suitable for computer,

phone, or recording device connections, and (b) chairs and tables before conducting each

interview. The Belmont Report (1979) mentions some key elements that should be used

to protect participants in interviews, such as: (a) the boundaries between practice and

research, and (b) if there is a human source (i.e., participant) involved in the research

activity, the research must be reviewed and accounted for human source protection.

Therefore, I advised participants of their confidentiality and how their privacy will be

maintained using a consent form.

## Ethical Research

As the researcher, ensuring that I protected my participants and abided by the

code of ethics was important while conducting this study. It is important for qualitative

researchers to place higher emphasis on the code of ethics while conducting their

research (Greenwood, 2016). Walden University's IRB required all students to follow the

code of ethics by reviewing each student proposed research study topics and approving

all students to proceed with their research if their study met ethical guidelines. Farooq

and de Villiers (2017) revealed participant's primary concerns were the lack of

anonymity and confidentiality. Qualitative researchers must be aware of participants'

confidentiality.

The participants received consent forms that explained the purpose of the study,

participation risks, confidentiality, and contact information. Qualitative researchers

should consider their research participants as important attributes to their data collection

process (Change, 2017). I ensured ethical behavior by asking each participant if they will

agree to review and sign an informed consent form, which will give them a better

understanding of the study. Consent forms should always be clear, concise, and focused

primarily on the key information that is needed for data collection (Bierer et al., 2017)

The consent form included a voluntary statement to inform each participant that their

choice to participate or their right to withdraw participating in the study. Qualitative

researchers must ensure their participants' participation is confidential and participants

are protected from harm during the research process (Madikizela-Madiya, 2017). The

Walden University's IRB guidelines require all participants provide a written statement

agreeing to the research guidelines. Once the participants have agreed to this action, I

immediately informed each participant that their identity will not be revealed, and the

only incentive I provided is a letter of cooperation to thank each participant for

acceptance to participate in this study (see Appendix A).

I issued a letter of invitation (see Appendix B) to a small business owner or

supervisor of each participants' place of work to request permission to conduct interviews

and collect data from small the small business leaders. The letters of cooperation

contained a request to conduct the interviews, provide participant confidentiality

requirements, and a brief explanation of the research process and ethical protocols. In the

letters of cooperation, the letters of invitation, consent forms, and interview protocols, I

re-evaluated my participants, gain consent, and identify the purpose of my doctoral case

study. The consent forms included an in-depth description of my research process. Cook

et al (2016) revealed participants expect consent forms to be clear and concise, provide

details of participants' roles in the research, and the location of the study. I followed the

code of ethics and ensure I conducted all participant interaction professionally and with

respect. Goodman-Delahunty and Howes (2019) stated the code of ethics is simply a

guideline to utilize professional conduct in a business setting. In the research process, the

IRB also abided by the code of ethics provided under the provision of Walden

University's Office of Research Ethics and Compliance (OREC) (Walden University,

2019). The participants received informed consent forms (see Appendix C), and

interview questions (see Appendix D).

The code of ethics was critical to the research process and should be enforced

when interacting with participants (Fleischmann et al., 2017). Walden University requires

data relative to participants to remain in a secure location for minimum of 5 years to

protect their privacy and confidentiality. I used the information collected from my

participants solely for the purpose of this case study. I kept my participants' identities

strictly confidential and only referred to each participant using titles such as Participant A

and Participant B. Researchers must always provide participants with a qualified promise

of confidentiality (Drake & Maundrell, 2017). I contacted each participant and validated

the research procedures, times of availability, the type of commitment necessary to participate in the study and include the confidentiality statements. Researchers using consent forms can reduce the levels of risks associated to their participants' confidentiality (Wong, 2016). The data collected from my participants adhered to the code of ethics, and my participants' identities remained confidential to reduce risks.

I ensured to follow the code of ethics by gaining approval from the participants' supervisors to participate in the semistructed interviews. Coppin and Fisher (2016) posited participants feel at ease when they have the approval of their leaders to participate in research interviews and prefer interviews be one-on-one to help ensure confidentiality. All the data collected from the participants was only used for the purpose of this study. Researchers who abide by a code of ethics helps them to build ethical sustainability and participant confidentiality (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016). I abided by the code of ethics by protecting my participants by properly securing all transcript data, recording devices, and flash drives in a protected place. Walden University only allows a total of 5 years to retain data; therefore, when the 5 years have been completed, I discarded and/or deleted all data associated with my participants. Finally, I received an approval number from Walden University IRB to conduct this study. Walden University's approval number for this study was 02-02-21-0416116.

**Data Collection Instruments**

In this qualitative multiple case study, I was the primary data collector. Data collection was effective and efficient method for researchers to collect data and evaluate information from a variety of sources to gain a valid and reliable visual of research

(Sudashan & Reddy, 2017). I used the following data collection instruments, which were semistructured interviews, collected documents, and reflective journaling.

Qualitative researchers can use semistructured interviews to conduce face-to-face interviews that can be transcribed, recorded, and analyzed to identify themes (Nelson, 2016). In the interview process, I asked my participants open-ended questions directly aligned to the research question. I took in-depth notes, transcribed all my participants' responses, recorded each interview, identified new or common themes, and asked all my participants follow-up questions. I used interview protocol to ask participants questions directly related to the research question, and the interview questions related specifically to the study. Gordon et al. (2017) claimed interview protocol could be used to access data related to participants' personal experiences. Once I completed the interviews, I asked my participants to set up an additional interview to validate the accuracy of my interpretations from their response. I used my Mac laptop's dictation to translate all the dialogue into visual text, and I asked my participants to if they are comfortable being recorded during each interview. I reviewed transcripts from each participants' responses and validated them for accuracy to help improve validity and reliability. Chadwick et al. (2016) posited semistructured interviews as a method a researcher can use to improve validity and reliability by enabling them to ask participants interview questions, transcribing participants' responses, and checking with participants for interpretation accuracy. I used journaling to accurately document all non-verbal gestures or any visual data that would be beneficial to the study.

I used a reflective journal to identify how participants use effective leadership strategies in their workplace. Edwards and Gallagher (2018) claimed that researchers use reflective journaling to collect participant's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Researchers using reflective journaling can concentrate on primary issues arising in the data collection process (Annik, 2017). I aimed to use reflective journaling to write down similarities and differences in responses to the interview questions throughout each participants' individual interviews. Morselli (2018) suggested qualitative case study journaling is influenced by the researcher's ability to interpret and reflect their participants' interview responses and conclusions. I also used reflective journaling to identify how participants explain their ability to use effective leadership strategies that improve employee performance, their office atmosphere, and employer-employee relationships.

I used the documentation method to collect each of the five small businesses documents leaders provide or validated to be beneficial to the case study. Documentation is a key step in data collection which includes recording and editing the data (Shukla, 2016). The data collected needed to align with the overarching research question for the proposed study: What strategies do some small business leaders use to increase employee productivity? As the interviewer, it was important to build a positive working relationship and gain the trust of my participants. Researcher and participant relationships can be complex based on personal experiences or mixed views; however, it is necessary for qualitative researchers to encourage positive working participant relationships (Ticknor, 2017). Qualitative researchers can use member checking to validate all data collected

from their participants, and allow participants to ask questions (Iivari, 2018). Tess et al. (2018) posited researchers use member checking to engage participants by returning their interview transcripts to be cross-checked. I also used member checking to gain participants' feedback to the data collected from the semistructured interviews. I aimed to use member checking to validate the accuracy of my interpretation of participant responses.

## Data Collection Technique

The data collection techniques I used to conduct this qualitative multiple case study were semistructured interviews, collection of the small business leader's strategy documents, and journaling. van Hilten (2018) described semistructured interviews as a way researcher connect their own experiences to the real-life experiences of their participants. Roulston (2016) suggested qualitative researchers use interviews to explain the purpose of their study. The data collection techniques helped me to align my findings to the research question.

I contacted five small business owners by phone, email or in person to request permission to conduct my case study and to interview their small business leaders. The business leader's owners will receive a Letter of Cooperation (see Appendix A) containing a request to conduct the interviews, provide participant confidentiality requirements, and a brief explanation of the research process and ethical protocols. Chen and Schiele (2017) used letters of invitation to inform participants of their confidentiality and anonymity. After the small business owners granted me permission to interview their leaders, I provided all five participants with a Letter of Invitation (see Appendix B).

Participants received the Letters of Invitation by either email or in-person describing the necessary qualifications needed to be a part of the study. In each letter, I addressed the following content (a) my research study topic, (b) the foundation of the research, and (c) participant qualifications. Hodgins and McNamara (2017) suggested researchers select their participants based on the knowledge they have with the specified research topic. I decided if the small business leaders meet the requirements to participate in the study based on their responses to the Letters of Invitation. Barrett et al. (2018) used consent forms to ensure participants were aware of the purpose of their study and their research process. Participants who qualified to participate reviewed a consent form (see Appendix C) to guarantee they were aware of the research process.

To conduct the interviews, I secured a location where each participant will be comfortable and will not be easily interruptible. I made sure that the secure location was validated and approved by the participants. I was attentive to each participant's times of availability and schedule all interviews in accordance to those specified timeframes and dates provided by the participants. Panagiotoglouet al. (2017) suggested researchers try to use the same time schedule for participant interviews. The interviews lasted for a maximum of 1-hour to ensure each participant will have ample time to respond to all interview questions located in the interviewing protocol document (see Appendix E), validate the collected data, and give the participants time to provide adequate feedback. Keerset al. (2017) claimed researchers use interview protocol to avoid participant misconception of their research question. Kishita et al. (2018) used semistructed interviews to develop interview questions based on their research question categories.

The semistructured interviewing technique will include open-ended questions, reflective journaling, and digitally recording participant responses.

I asked participants six open-ended questions in a semistructured interview. Van Quaquebeke and Felps (2018) described open-ended questions as ways an interviewer can invite their interviewees to share extended data solely focused on a specific subject. When researchers use open-ended questions for interviews, they enable participants to elaborate their responses (Rus, 2018). Open-ended questions require participants to provide in-depth responses to help researchers ensure data saturation (Overby, 2018). I will ask participants follow-up questions that are based my research question concerning strategies small business leaders use to increase employee productivity.

I used digital recording devices to collect the participants' responses. I transcribed all the data from the participants responses after they authorize the data to be use the research. I used my personal laptop to transpose all the participant's responses into a Word document. The Word document contained participants' transcribed responses and were provided to the participants for their individual review for authentication (Curran, 2018). Digital recording devices have been known to be useful tools for researchers to collect data from their participants (Shukla, 2016). I manually transposed the participant's data and upload all participant digitally recorded responses using my laptop.

There are several advantages to conducting semistructured interviews. Semistructured interviews help the researcher develop interview questions connected to the research question (Ballaro& Polk, 2017). Porter et al. (2018) claimed semistructured interviews enable participants to provide their knowledge and perspectives to interview

questions. I used semistructured interviews to collect participant's responses and follow up with participants to help ensure accuracy. Semistructured interviews can help the research identify themes and trends from the data collected from participants (Stewart, 2017). I will use semistructured interviews to increase my understanding on the types of strategies some small business leaders use to increase employee productivity.

There are several disadvantages for using semistructured interviews and observations. Semistructured interviews can be an issue for researchers based on participants' potential acts of biases (Fisher, 2017). To keep participants from becoming bias, I have developed open-ended interview questions that are aligned to the research question. Semistructured interviews and observations can time consuming based on setting up interviews with participants, transcribing the data, collecting feedback from participants, and reporting findings (Nichols, 2018). Farooq and de Villiers (2017) claimed interviewees do not have personal commitment to a study and can form biases. Disadvantages to semistructured interviews can be both time consuming and contain biases; therefore, it is important that I align my interview questions to my research question and purpose of the study.

Researcher can use member checking to help them ensure credibility of their research findings. Daniel (2018) suggested researchers use member checking to discuss the findings and any associated themes to their participants. I will use member checking to ensure that the data collected from my interviews and observations are accurate. Davis et al. (2017) claimed researchers should use member checking to help them define

emergent themes. I will use member checking to discuss interview findings with participants.

## Data Organization Technique

A well-developed system for organizing and tracking participant data is a vital element of case study research (Annink, 2017). To keep track of the participant's data, I used an electronic Word file labeling system. In each file, there were five folders containing the five participant's individual names, contact information, interviews, and important acknowledgment and approval of participation letters. Schaeffer and Olson (2018) claimed individuals who provide data are confident that electronic data will be secured. I stored the electronic data from my participants in a password sensitive external hard drive with USB compatibility. To appropriately store the hard copy data collected from my participants, I secured it in a filing cabinet containing a lock and key. Researchers securing participants' data is complex if exposed by others who do not have the right to use the data (Gururaj et al., 2018). Therefore, I abided by the code of ethics by protecting my participants, properly securing all transcript data recording devices, and flash drives in a protected place. Walden University (2019) only allows a total of 5 years minimum to retain data; therefore, when the 5 years have been completed, I will delete and shred all data associated with my participants.

## Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis approach includes a researcher's ability to identify patterns, categories, variables, codes, and themes from participants' provided information (Rose &Lennerholt, 2017). The data analysis approach I used was Yin's five-phased

cycle to complete the data analysis process. The five-phased cycle consists of compiling the data, disassembling the data, reassembling the data, interpreting the data, and forming a conclusion (Yin, 2016). Yin (2016) also revealed researchers should always double check their data to ensure that it is accurate, in-depth, useful, and there is no evidence of self-imposed biases when analyzing the data. In this qualitative multiple case study, I will analyze data by compiling and organizing my participants' individual responses to the research questions and review my reflective journal for new ideas or patterns and themes for coding. According to William and Moser (2019), coding is an essential part of qualitative research, which is important for researchers in the analysis process. I plan to incorporate other documents of information related to strategies small business leaders use to increase employee productivity into my analysis.

I will start the data analysis by reviewing the participants' recorded and transcribed interviews. Gaben et al. (2017) claimed participants' interview data can help the researcher discover new trends, leadership and business commonalities, and different perspectives of business concepts. I plan to use the data from the digital recording device to examine the participants' responses. I aim to use Microsoft Excel to organize themes and patterns. I will use participants' interview transcripts to identify and compile common themes, ideas, and patterns. Mertens et al. (2017) claimed qualitative data analysis can help the researcher quickly identify ideas or patterns and organize their data. I am to use my personal laptop to review the Word documents containing participant's responses from the individual interviews. My goal is to use NVivo coding software to identify themes and similar perspectives among the participants in the process for data

analysis. NVivo will be used to simplify the transcription of participant's recorded interviews. I aim to use NVivo to correct and edit my transcripts, and export them to different formats, if necessary. Guo (2019) used NVivo to identify trends and explain the purpose of theoretical sampling. SoNVivo will also enable me to identify and detach key words that are similar or have similar meanings and categorize them.

Once I have compiled the participants' responses and written trends, I plan to use member checking that will allow participants to check my interpreted data for accuracy. Researchers can use member checking by enabling participants to verify the data interpreted and collected (Iivari, 2018). I aim to use the collection of the small business leaders' strategy documents to identify analyze the data. Roberts and Brown (2019) described reflective journaling as a researcher's ability to take notes concerning participant's responses during semistructured interviews. I will request that participants provide current documentation, such as leadership strategy plans or employee improvement charts, they use to improve employee productivity. I aim to review the documentation to identify common themes. Researchers can use themes from documents to explore the different concepts developed throughout their study (Surbhi &Vij, 2018).

Compiling and dissembling data are important parts of the data analysis process. I will compile an organized set of data to form a stronger analysis. It is important for researchers to appropriately compile and organize their data before they identify themes and patterns for data analysis (Leung, 2017). To dissemble the data, I plan on developing different categories from my field notes and interviews to form codes. According to Yin (2016), a qualitative researcher's field notes are the foundation for keeping a record of

participant's gestures, stated perspectives, and all other things verbally or physically

explained. Sony and Nandakumar 's study (2018) explained researchers can use coding to

combine categories, themes, and patterns to compare results. Sony and Nandakumar's

study results are relevant to the findings of my study. Clarke and Veale (2018) posited

that coding is a way that researchers transition from data collection to data analysis. I aim

to use Microsoft Excel to organize, categorize, and identify similar themes.

Researchers can use a total of four data analysis methods in their study, which

are: (a) methodological triangulation, (b) researcher triangulation, (c) theoretical

triangulation, and (d) data triangulation (Abdalla et al., 2018). My goal is to use the

methodological triangulation method for this qualitative multiple case study to perform

data analysis. Qualitative case study researchers use methodological triangulation to

collect multiple sources of data through interviews, documents, observations, and other

adequate methods to gather data (Ashour, 2018). Triangulation helps researchers connect

theories and methods to produce better research outcomes (Jackson, 2018). I will use a

multiple data collection consisting of semistructured interviews, overviews of the small

business and leader's leader strategy documents, and reflective journaling.

**Reliability and Validity**

**Reliability**

Researchers who want to address reliability should enhance their study's

dependability. In qualitative studies, researchers use reliability to enhance understanding

and interpretation of research findings leading to the similar results (Daniel, 2018). I aim

ask participants six open-ended interview questions enabling them to respond without

any preconceived biases. According to Abiodun et al. (2019) dependability refers researcher's findings being consistent and repeatable. To ensure data saturation, I intend to use triangulation, member checking, reflective journal notes, and participants' response transcriptions to identify consistent and repeatable data trends. Researchers must ensure that the data collected from participants does not change or it will cause the dependability to become questionable (Campbell et al., 2017).

Researchers who use a data analysis process can enhance dependability and reliability of their research findings and results (Wirihana et al., 2018). The findings in my study may lead to a need for future research to find different patterns, themes, and results. Qualitative data is consistent when researcher's collection of data is dependable (Olson et al., 2016). To ensure dependability, I aim to keep the data collected consistent in participants' responses, documents, and field notes. Ayashi et al. (2019) explained reliability and dependability is centered on the level of quality, consistency, and trustworthiness in a study. I aim to request feedback from participants to ensure their transcribed responses are accurate, reliable, and dependable.

**Validity**

Researchers can ensure the quality of their study is valid by using three concepts: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, and (b) confirmability (Abdallaet al., 2018). I will use these concepts to show this study contains an in-depth data collection process and participants are provided with all transcribed interview data to ensure validity. In qualitative research, credibility is connected to reliability and validity through the trustworthiness of the data collected (Bennett & McWhorter, 2016). I will ensure the data

collected contains trustworthiness by reaching data saturation of the results and findings.

According to Viloria (2018), credibility is established by defining the results of

participants interview responses and using member checking. I will ensure my study

results are credible, and ensure the data collected addresses the findings from their

participants' perspectives.

Credibility. Qualitative researchers who use credibility in their study can enhance

the quality of their research (Parker & Northcott, 2016). I will use credibility to ensure

the data collected increases the quality of the study and research findings. Researchers

can use methods such as member checking to ensure credibility (Husbands et al., 2017). I

will use member checking to receive transcript corrections from participants, which will

ensure all collected data is accurate for the research process. I aim to use interview

protocol by asking participants six open-ended questions pertaining to the difference

leadership strategies used to improve employee productivity. Forero et al. (2018)

explained interview protocol as being a tool qualitative researchers can use to extend

participants' responses and ask for more in-depth information. When researchers want to

enhance the credibility of their study, they should include the data collected from their

participants is authentic is trustworthy.

Transferability. Transferability is the ability of study reviews to develop their own

observations and situation; therefore, researchers must ensure their data collection

process and analysis is in-depth and accurate (Parker & Northcott, 2016). Researchers

can demonstrate how they will enable others to determine the transferability of the

findings (Adleret al., 2018). I used interview protocol and reached data saturation to

demonstrate transferability of the findings. According to Zhu, Fors, and Smedberg (2018) researchers can compare their data collection process and data analysis to other studies to identify or demonstrate transferability. To demonstrate transferability, I adhered to the study's data collection and analysis techniques for the research design and presented findings other researchers can use to conduct future research.

Confirmability. Qualitative researchers can enhance the confirmability of their study by ensuring that the data collected, and the results of their study are supported by others and confirmed (Gordon & Gordon, 2017). To enhance confirmability in this study, I asked participants probing interview questions to gain more understanding of their responses. Researchers can use probing questions to inquire more information from their participants, and to get an idea of why the participants answered questions in certain aspects (Braun et al., 2018). I used follow-up member checking to ensure that all the participant's transcribed data is accurate. Qualitative researchers can use member checking to return interview transcripts and reports to their participants for review (Tess et al., 2018). I used methodological triangulation to enhance data saturation throughout the data collection and analysis process, which will ensure credibility. Methodological triangulation uses data collection techniques such as participant interviews to ensure credibility (Deans et al., 2018). When researchers enhance confirmability, they can ensure the data collected is valid, reliable, and confirmed.

Data saturation. Researchers can ensure data saturation when their collected data begins to sound or look like previous data. Saunders et al. (2018) stated qualitative interviews can be great identifiers of data saturation when participants' responses to the

interview questions begin to sound the same. I asked participants the same six open-ended questions based on leadership strategies they use to improve employee productivity. However, the participants' responses to my interview questions can become similar, ensuring data saturation. To ensure data saturation, researchers need to complete an in-depth data collection and analysis process until no new themes or relationships amongst data emerge (Kiernan & Hill, 2018). I used semistructured interviews to help ensure data saturation and clearly define how small business leaders use effective leadership strategies to increase employee productivity. According to Carmichael and Cunningham (2017) when the data in a study is be replicated and no new themes or patterns develop and become redundant, data saturation is achieved. Therefore, I made sure the data collected was reliable and valid, and no new themes or information were present to ensure data saturation.

**Transition and Summary**

The purpose of section two was to detail my role as the researcher, identify who my participants are and why I selected them, and to extend the nature of study in my research method and research design. Section two also identified the scope of my study by defining the population and describing and justifying my sampling method. Finally, section two explained my data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity sections.

I will complete my study with section three. Section three includes a brief explanation of my purpose of study, and what my overall findings are from the study. I provide a detailed discussion on the applicability of the findings with respect to the

professional practice of business. I also provide further implications for social change, recommendations for the results of this study, and indicate how the results might be disseminated. Finally, I included a reflection on my experience within the DBA Doctoral Study process, in which I discussed possible personal biases or preconceived ideas and values, the possible effects of those on the participants or the situation, and the changes in my thinking after completing the study.

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

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to identify the strategies that some leaders of small businesses use to increase employee productivity. I collected data from five small business leaders by using nonproprietary documents provided by the leaders, journaling, and conducting semistructured interviews by phone. The participants were asked six-open ended questions referencing the types of leadership strategies they use to increase employee productivity. I used the methodological triangulation method to perform data analysis. The leadership strategies used by the participants aligned with Vroom and Yetton's (1973) decision-making model of leadership theory, which was the conceptual framework for the study. In reviewing the participants' interview responses, I identified similar themes regarding strategies to increase employee productivity.

**Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question for this multiple case study was the following: What strategies do some small business leaders use to increase employee productivity? I conducted the semistructed interviews by telephone, and prior to each interview the participants allowed me to record them. I used reflective journaling to note important keywords, similarities and differences between the participants, and strategies each participant used to improve employee productivity. I also reviewed participants' documents to explore how they use strategies to improve their employees' performance. The selected participants were from different small businesses located in Atlanta, Georgia. The participants had a minimum of 5 to 10 years of leadership experience and used leadership strategies to make improvement to their employees' overall performance.

I discovered four themes in the data collection and analysis processes: (a) leadership styles, (b) communication barriers, (c) problem solving, and (d) motivation. I reached data saturation when I could not identify any new themes by using semistructured interviews, reflective journaling, and organizational documents provided by participants. Once I completed the data collection process, I labeled each participant using letter and number codes. I used the letters PA to designate the participants, and I connected the letters to the chronological number, which helped keep them in order. The interviewed participants received the following label formats: PA1, PA2, PA3, PA4, and PA5.

All four themes stemmed from leadership strategies the participants used to increase employee productivity: (a) leadership styles, (b) communication barriers, (c) problem solving, and (d) motivation. The themes were discovered during the data analysis process and were aligned to the Vroom and Yetton's (1973) decision-making model of leadership theory. Small business leaders commonly use leadership styles, such as empowerment leadership and servant leadership, as strategies to improve employee productivity.

**Theme 1: Leadership Styles and the Participants**

In concluding each interview, I noted that the participant provided valuable information that could help increase current and future leaders' ability to improve employee productivity using effective leadership strategies. PA1 and PA3 stated that situational leadership was one of the strategies they used, and it worked best to improve their employees' performance. PA1 and PA3's statements related to Vroom and Yetton

(1973) theory when they claimed that the only way a leader can determine whether their leadership style is appropriate is by reviewing how effective the chosen leadership style is in any given circumstance. PA1 explained

> situational leadership helped them to realize that they could not lead their employees the same way, because they all have different personalities. Therefore, as a leader, it was important for me to understand the value of connecting with my employees personally, to make them comfortable.

PA3 stated

> by using situational leadership, I can understand my employees' strengths and weaknesses. It is important, as a leader, to get to know my employees. Additionally, it depends on the situation at hand, in which I can quickly identify what form of leadership strategy employees will need.

Leadership that encourages employees to value change throughout their organizations can improve the overall health of the organization and motivate employees (Blanchard et al., 2020). PA1 and PA2 shared that using motivational leadership to influence change management can increase employees' ability to become motivated. PA1 stated

> I use change management to promote the use of the motivational leadership strategy. By using this strategy, it helps me gain buy-ins from employees to adapt to the constant organizational changes. For example, I share best new practices to engage employees to work hard and followed by providing them with direction.

PA2 explained "I implement new changes, which enables employees to create new innovations and improve their performance. Change is also highly important because it motivates employees to produce positive outcomes for the end-user: thinking outside of the box."

I identified the small businesses policies on employee and employer roles and responsibilities from the documents presented by PA3. In these documents, I realized that their code of ethics considered all employees were perceived as having a stance on their position, and leaders were encouraged to provide an open-door policy to help employees engage with them one-on-one. Their code of ethics also revealed that it is in every employee's best interest to be honest, have integrity, do the right thing, and provide support to the end users. All employees are deemed as important benefactors of each small business because they have the most face-to-face interaction with consumers. Leaders at the different small businesses engage employees by using effective leadership strategies to improve employee productivity.

*Leadership Styles and the Literature Review*

According to the literature review, leaders should decide what type of leadership style is best suited to help their employees improve their productivity. Al-Awamleh (2021) suggested that leaders who use the strategic leadership style approach can make business decisions quickly and can identify the root causes for unexpected business crisis. When leaders choose an effective leadership style, they can influence positive changes for their employees. Leaders who want to improve employee productivity should use effective communication skills. Mercader et al. (2021) suggested that when leaders use

effective communication skills to improve employees' performance, they are also capable of producing better professional and organizational outcomes. When leaders can effectively communicate with their employees, they increase their ability to develop positive employer–employee relationships. Turaga (2019) posited that leaders who use effective communication skills improve not only employee productivity, but also the overall performance of the organization. When leaders and their organizations can effectively communicate with their employees, they can help employees make better business decisions and improve job satisfaction.

Leaders who communicate effectively with their employees can see improved employee innovative behavior and employee productivity. Mircetic et al. (2019) suggested that when leaders effectively communicate how employees should complete challenging job tasks, it increases their ability to become more innovative and perform at a higher rate. When leaders empower their employees to adapt more innovative behaviors, it can lead to better working environments and increase business outcomes. Williams (2021) posited that leaders who effectively communicate with their employees ensure that their employees develop or adopt new business ideas, which improves their productivity. When leaders enable their employees to be innovative, they can improve employee performance and employer–employee communication.

### *Leadership Styles and the Conceptual Framework*

In the conceptual framework, I explored Vroom and Yetton's (1973) decision-making model of leadership theory, which revealed that there is not one leadership style that can be considered the best way to increase employee productivity. This theory

indicates that leaders can adopt a multitude of leadership styles to improve employee

performance. For example, leaders who empower their employees to take charge of their

work use the empowerment leadership style. S. I. Wong and Giessner (2018) referenced

the empowerment leadership style to show how leaders lessen their roles and

responsibilities by empowering employees to take more leadership roles. When leaders

want to influence change in employee productivity, they use the transformational

leadership style developed by Burns (2003) who described transformational leadership as

a way transformational leaders engage their followers and increase their morale. In

reference to the conceptual framework, Vroom and Yetton (1973) stated that the only

way a leader can determine whether their leadership style is appropriate is by reviewing

how effective the chosen leadership style is in any given circumstance.

In the decision-making model of leadership theory, Vroom and Yetton (1973)

posited that leaders who include their employees in the decision-making process will

experience increased employee productivity. Leaders of small businesses could use the

collaboration between leaders and their employees to develop strategies to increase

employee productivity. According to Oteshova et al. (2021), leaders who increase

employee productivity will encourage employees to become passionate about reaching

organizational outcomes.

**Theme 2: Communication Barriers and the Participants**

Communication barriers was the second theme that was discovered in the data

analysis process. This theme relates to the literature review because leaders could opt to

use the transformational leadership style to effectively communicate with their

employees, which can lead to an increase in their productivity. Leaders in the small

business industry revealed that when employees and employers lack the ability to

communicate, it can cause them to not only have negative outcomes but also produce

poor productivity rates. Leaders who want to engage their employees to improve their

productivity, stay motivated, and maximize their efforts should use effective

communication (Ballaro et al., 2020). In Interview Question 5, I explored key barriers to

implementing successful strategies for improving employee productivity. PA1, PA3, and

PA5 explained that communication barriers can cause a decrease in employee

productivity and an increase in negative outcomes. PA5 stated

> I used open communication to avoid any employer and employee communication
>
> barriers. I find that having open communication give my employees the ability to
>
> discuss any issues or concerns relative to their job positions and work
>
> environment. If employees are not given the chance to speak up, they can become
>
> stagnant, decrease their performance, and become dissatisfied with their overall
>
> job.

PA5 posited "I ultimately avoid communication barriers by communicating with

my employees, to find out if there are any training gaps, misunderstandings, or if there is

a need for one-on-one discussions. Leaders should always be prepared to communicate

with their employees." During my observation and journaling, I noted that leaders like to

understand why employees lack the ability to communicate with them. I discovered that

some employees do not feel valued or they are not empowered to take on leadership

roles, causing a communication barrier. PA5 also provided documents they give to

employees, which explain the steps to successful performance. PA5 stated "In the step to success documents they help employees specifically understand how communication is important to increasing their productivity. However, leaders have identified how to effectively communicate with their employees by including them in all aspects of their small businesses.

### *Communication Barriers and the Literature Review*

In the decision-making model of leadership theory, Vroom and Yetton (1973) posited that leaders who include their employees in the decision-making process will experience increased employee productivity. Therefore, leaders who want to avoid communication barriers with their employees must understand the importance of open-door communication to improve employee satisfaction and productivity. PA1 stated "When I connect with employees using effective communication, it makes them feel comfortable. Communication builds employee trust and loyalty to their organization and enables them to make important decisions with their team, causing increased productivity."

Consistent with the literature view, leaders who want to improve employee productivity should use effective communication skills. Leyshon (2021) suggested that when leaders use effective communication skills to improve employee performance, they are also capable of producing better organizational outcomes. When leaders can effectively communicate with their employees, they increase their ability to establish positive employer–employee relationships. Buljat and Ivankovic (2019) posited that leaders who use effective communication skills can improve not only employee

productivity, but also the overall performance of the organization. When leaders and their organizations can effectively communicate with their employees, they can help employees make better business decisions and improve their productivity levels.

***Communication Barriers and the Conceptual Framework***

In relation to the conceptual framework, Vroom and Yetton (1973) suggested that a leader's ability to develop effective leadership strategies may be driven by their decision to discover new ways to improve employee productivity. When leaders can effectively communicate with their employees, they increase their ability to establish positive employer–employee relationships. Fiel-Miranda and Miranda (2019) posited that leaders who use effective communication skills can improve not only employee productivity, but also the overall performance of the organization. According to Vroom and Yetton (1973), leaders should also evaluate their ability to make decisions that would improve employee productivity. When leaders and their organizations can effectively communicate with their employees, employees can understand business processes better and improve their performance.

Leaders who communicate effectively with their employees can see improved employee innovative behavior and increased employee performance. Lingard et al. (2019) suggested that when leaders effectively communicate how employees should complete demanding workloads, it increases their ability to become more innovative and perform at a higher rate. Leaders can empower their employees to adapt more innovative behaviors, leading to better working environments and business outcomes. Khan et al. (2020) posited that leaders who effectively communicate with their employees ensure

that their employees can develop or adapt to new business practices. When leaders enable their employees to be innovative, they can improve employee performance and employer–employee communication.

**Theme 3: Problem Solving**

The third theme that was discovered during data analysis was problem solving. In the literature review, Audenaert and Decramer (2018) revealed that leaders should influence their employees to improve their critical thinking skills, which can help them become more creative and successfully complete job tasks. When leaders enable their employee to engage in problem solving, it can motivate them to improve their productivity. Lorenz and Kraemer-Mbula (2019) claimed that leaders of some small businesses can enhance employees' ability to use problem-solving skills in their everyday work environments. Employees who are empowered to use problem solving can help leaders identify and discover new action plans that will help their small business develop new innovations (Rama Krishna et al., 2019). The literature review revealed problem solving also helps employees share knowledge with their teams to increase productivity and overall quality of organizational outcomes (Matoskova, 2019).

*Problem Solving and the Participants*

Leaders encourage employees to engage in problem-solving, and work alongside their employees to discover new problem-solving techniques, stemming from higher-level executives to the lower levels. PA3 expressed, "'Leaders need to empower their employees to engage in problem solving by teaching them about the goals of the organization, identify if they understand the value they set within the organization, and

training employees to achieve goals. When employees feel comfortable to engage in team efforts, they can become successful problem solvers."' PA4 further explained, "'I often listen to employees' feedback, because it is adequate to effect problem-solving within the team. Problem-solving enables employees to add their own strategies and empowers them to lead."' Leader PA5 claimed, "'Problem-solving between team members and their leaders provides more insight. Problem-solving also develops leaders and their employees to use the 5 Whys approach, which includes the following: (a) define, (b) measure, (c) analyze, (d) improve, and control."'

In question 6 of the interview, the participants were able to share additional strategies concerning their organization's effective leadership strategies for improving employee productivity. PA4 stated,

Leaders should always encourage their employees to take on leadership roles, understand the value of their position, and have a good skillset such as problem-solving. I would tell any other leader to never scale their leadership strategies to fast, because every employee is different, and they all have their own way to solve expected and unexpected situations to produce positive outcomes.

PA5 further explained,

Problem-solving is an effective and efficient tool leaders can use to improve employee productivity. For example, if a leader wants to discover gaps in performance, they will need to communicate with their employees one-on-one. This action would be considered as problem solving because the leader can

communicate with their individual employees to identify why certain employees are improving their productivity and others are lacking.

Employees who contain higher knowledge can successfully solve problem on the job and create new innovations (Al-Zoubi et al., 2019). PA2 stated, "'Employees can be one hundred percent responsive when leaders put much needed resources in their hands, such as empowerment, motivation, and engagement.'"The problem-solving theme relates to the literature review by validating how it is important for leaders to hold employees accountable and enable them to lead.

### *Problem Solving and the Literature Review*

Leaders who can find solutions for complex situations use leadership strategies focused on decisive problem solving. Hobbach et al. (2021) revealed that leaders use decisive problem-solving and self-efficacy to establish clear and concise business strategies, identify effective employee performance parameters, and combine intelligent resources to maximize shareholder wealth. According to the literature review, when leaders use decisive problem-solving it enables them to identify positive solutions to help them increase employee productivity. Shu (2020) revealed that problem solving skills help organizational leaders identify resolutions to complex situations. The literature review further explains when leaders can solve problems associated to improving employee productivity, they not only impact organization's competitive advantage, but can also influence their employees to become problem solvers.

Leaders should use problem solving to promote employee productivity through creativity. Rama et al. (2019) revealed that creative problem-solving includes leaders and

their employees identifying new alternatives to develop business solutions. Leaders should enable their employees to use creative problem-solving to help them improve their productivity. Galeazzo and Furlin (2019) revealed that leaders should influence their employees to improve their critical thinking skills, which can help them become more creative and select the best solutions to complete job tasks. Therefore, when employees can solve problems, it can help leaders trust their employee's ability to make business decisions and improve employee productivity.

### *Problem Solving and the Conceptual Framework*

In the conceptual framework, it was revealed in the decision-making model of leadership theory by Vroom and Yetton (1973) that leaders who include their employees in the decision-making process will experience increased employee productivity. Leaders who understand the value of their employee's ability to solve problems, can improve employee productivity. Song and Gu (2020) explained problem-solving as a good way for employees to share information on successfully completing organizational goals and enhance leaders' ability to share the leadership role. In reference to Vroom and Yetton's (1973) theory, leaders can decide to use different strategies to solve problems and avoid lacking employee productivity.

Researchers have also used the decision-making model of leadership theory to examine how leaders should solve problems, such as a lack of effective leadership strategies or the lack of decision-making strategies needed to improve employee productivity. For example, the conceptual framework reveals how Ahmad et al. (2017) used Vroom and Yetton's theory to show how leaders can influence employees to solve

problems using their productivity. When leaders can trust their employees to solve

problems, they help employees improve their productivity at higher rates.

**Theme 4: Motivation and the Participants**

The fifth theme that emerged from data analysis process was motivation. Leaders

who want to engage their employees in business processes to improve their productivity

use motivation. One of small business leader's primary concerns is employee motivation,

because it can impact the overall success of their business (Campos&Zuniga, 2019).

When leaders motivate their employees to make decisions and take on leadership roles, it

influences them to improve their performance. PA3 and PA5 both stated they use

motivation as a leadership strategy to not only improve employee productivity, but also to

empower their employees. PA3 explained, "'I motivate my employees to be better at

what they do; therefore, I try to influence them with identifying their performance rates,

providing recognition with bonuses and awards, and empowering them to take additional

responsibilities outside of their daily assigned job tasks.'" When employees are

motivated, it can increase their ability to improve their performance, causing an increase

in positive business outcomes (Reizer et al, 2019). PA5 stated, "'Employees need to be

motivated to take on leadership roles; therefore, I am able to discover how and what the

employees can do to improve their own productivity.'" PA5 also presented several

documents that outlined their small businesses stance on using motivation tactics to

engage their employees in everyday business processes. I annotated these documents

were sufficient to improve employee productivity, because they described why

motivation was important and how motivation can help not only the business remain in a

competitive state against competitors, but also help employees step into more leadership roles.

I discovered that employee motivation was extremely important for each participant. When employees are motivated by their leaders, they can improve their productivity. A businesses success greatly depends on how leaders use effective leadership strategies to motivate their employees and their employee's productivity (Strategic Direction, 2018). PA1 claimed, "'Motivation is what helps leaders connect to their employees and it can ultimately encourage them to become team leaders. Motivation also helps leaders identify certain leadership strategies that can promote improved employee performance. I value employees' ability to perform at their highest potential, because it shows that they trust me as their leader, they are loyal to the business, and they can make decisions.

### *Motivation and the Literature Review*

Leaders who want to improve their employee's performance through inspiration and engagement use motivation. Campos-Garcia et al. (2019) described motivation as a persons' will and behavior to improve their performance and meet organizational success. When employees are motivated, they can improve their individual performance by successfully completing their task related goals. Reizeret al. (2019) claimed employee motivation as important to an organization's ability to survive and highly important to the workplace. Leaders who know how to motivate their employees not only improve employee engagement and empowerment, but also employee productivity.

Leaders who do not use motivation can cause employee productivity to decline. For example, in the literature review Khan and Wajidi (2019) posited employee motivation as the most important element of a business' success. Employees are motivated when they are encouraged, empowered, and trusted to improve their performance. Ouakouak et al. (2020) claimed employees are motivated when they are satisfied, have shared workloads, and given rewards to improve their productivity. When leaders can effectively motivate their employees, it can help them identify leadership strategies that will impact improved employee performance.

### *Motivation and the Conceptual Framework*

Leader's use of motivation to increase employee productivity, directly aligns with Vroom and Yetton's (1973) decision-making model of leadership theory. Vroom and Yetton (1973) suggested that organizations have many goals that they need or want to reach; therefore, the more leaders can motivate their employees, the better they can achieve organizational goals. The final theme directly aligns to Vroom and Yetton's decision-making model of leadership theory, in the literature review, and proved to show how employee retention can be effective when leaders enable their employees to make decisions.

Businesses contain a multitude of employees that can provide different perspectives, experiences, and decision-making skills. Employee decision-making is important for leaders, because it produces knowledge sharing and team learning leading to a powerful and competitive organization or business (Tian &Zhai, 2019). I concluded in the findings that leaders using effective leadership strategies can help them identify the

type of leadership styles will work to improve employee productivity aligning with the conceptual framework and review of academic literature.

## Applications to Professional Practice

The results of this qualitative multiple case study are important to gain value-added knowledge on the type of leadership strategies leaders can use to keep employees empowered, engaged, and increase their performance. Throughout this study, I explored effective leadership strategies small business leaders use to improve employee productivity. The results and recommendations in this study will detail how small business leaders can improve the competitive advantage and overall outcomes of their businesses. Nonetheless, the leadership strategies defined by the small business leader's real opportunities other leaders can use to promote employee motivation, engagement, and decision-making skills. When leaders empower their employees to make adequate business decisions, it helps them reach organizational goals (Majewski, 2019). If leaders use the findings from this study, they could discover new leadership styles to improve their employee's productivity, avoid poor performance throughout the organization, and identify any underlying gaps relevant to improving business practice.

Leaders who understand the importance of using effective leadership styles can impact employee motivation, engagement, and decision-making skills. Employee's real-life experiences can help them make decisions producing better business outcomes for their organizations (Tohidian & Abbaspour, 2020). Leaders need to define clear and concise leadership strategies to increase employee performance and ensure employees understand their expectations. Employees are the most important assets a small business

can have; therefore, it is important that small business leaders abide by their core values provided in their organizations' policies. Leaders can also improve employee productivity by empowering their employees to complete tasks with new innovations and promoting work-life balance for employees.

The findings within this study are contingent to improving business practice, by focusing on how leaders can define the appropriate leadership styles to increase employee performance. Leaders can contrast the strategies presented within this study or reconfigure their currently used leadership strategies. The themes discovered within this study were valuable, clear, concise, and simple effective leadership strategies small business leaders can use to improve employee productivity. Small business leaders can impact organizational success by improving employee productivity and keeping their organizations in a competitive market against their competition.

## Implications for Social Change

This study contains implications for social change directly focused on different types of effective leadership strategies small business leaders can use to improve employee productivity. When leaders use effective leadership strategies, they can create alternative approaches employees can use to complete their tasks successfully. Sugahara et al. (2021) revealed that social impacts can cause an increase in a business' ability to create new innovations, such as technology, health services, education, and various other product and service innovations. Small business leaders can also impact social change by helping other leaders identify better business practices to increase their local business' profitability. Leaders can impact social change by not only focusing on the strategies they

use to improve employee productivity, but also developing new skills and empowering

employees to discover new entrepreneurial opportunities (Prahalad, 2018). When leaders

want to help their local businesses stay competitive, they must understand the value of

influencing employees, organizations, cultural change, and behavior.

Leaders who use effective leadership strategies can encourage their employees to

improve their productivity by use of support, rewards, engagement, and work-life

balance. When small business leaders use employee retention as an effective leadership

strategy, they can empower them employees to create their own strategies and

contributions to producing positive organizational outcomes (Dhanpat et al., 2018). It is

important for leaders to incorporate employee retention to keep a good work-life balance

for their employees or they can be tempted to leave their business or organization.

Employee retention is an important effective leadership strategy that can improve

employee productivity and keep local business communities actively successful. Zivkovic

(2020) revealed leaders who are not capable of establishing work-life balance, rewards,

and benefits are the reason 75% of businesses lack employee retention.

The findings throughout this study include effective leadership strategies leaders

can use to improve employee productivity throughout their work environments. Leaders

must consider changes associated to how their employees achieve their individual goals,

how to identify effective leadership strategies that help promote successful outcomes, and

how to maintain a positive work-life balance to increase employee satisfaction. When

leaders want to keep employee loyalty and trust they need to discover effective leadership

strategies that enable work-life balance. Small business leaders can take the necessary

approaches to uphold local human resources, by investing in strategies that will increase employee engagement and empowerment. Consequently, leaders can provide implications to social change by paying attention to their employee's needs and where they lack in improving employee productivity. These effective leadership strategies can ultimately affect not only the future of local communities but also the futures of economies throughout the United States.

## Recommendations for Action

The data I gathered throughout each participant's interview could potentially influence change to current effective leadership strategies small business leaders use today and encourage them to identify new techniques to increase employee productivity to produce positive business outcomes. Small business leaders who build a strong foundation of skilled, talented, and knowledgeable employees can lead to improved employee productivity (Ali & Mehreen, 2020). Small business leaders must understand the value in using effective leadership strategies to not only increase employee productivity, but also how they can motivate and empower their employees to take leadership roles within their work environment. My recommendation for action is that leaders recognize what strategies can help their employees become productive, enable their employees to make business decisions, set up an open-door policy for their employees to discuss their new ideas or innovations, and use effective communication to engage their employees. Small business leaders can implement and execute the example effective leadership strategies discussed throughout this study to improve the overall success of their organizations.

Leaders who want to execute the use of effective leadership strategies in terms of increasing employee performance, should understand the importance of valuing their employees. Leaders who value their employees often avoid the use of tedious tasks given to employees and provide them adequate skill sets that help them improve their performance (Mrowinski et al., 2020). When leaders do not use leadership strategies or define what leadership strategies work for their employees, they can cause negative impacts to corporate sustainability and negatively alter their competitive advantages against competitors. In each participant interview, I was able to understand how discovering what leadership strategies worked to help leaders improve their employee's overall performance using further research. Small business leaders can use Vroom and Yetton's (1973) decision-making model of leadership theory to gain insight on how there is not a single type of leadership strategy that will work to increase employee productivity, instead leaders can use a multitude of strategies to encourage their employees to be more proficient in their job tasks.

The findings from this study provided several types of strategies the participants used to improve employee productivity. The results of this study can serve as an aid to help current and future small business leaders realize that there are numerous leadership strategies that could work to help their employees improve their productivity. The data collected, in this case study, could influence small business leaders to develop training courses for all their employees on the different types of leadership strategies, empower leaders and their teams to gain new perspectives on leadership, and leaders could also engage their employee by having small business effective leadership conferences. I think

that these recommended actions could help leaders maximize shareholder's wealth throughout organizations. All participants will have access to the results of this study and scholars will be able to access this study on ProQuest. I also recommend that leaders use conferences to gain attention from other small business leaders who want to learn about effective leadership strategies that could also improve the rate of their employee's productivity.

## Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of the qualitative, multiple case study was to identify strategies that some small business leaders use to increase employee productivity. Small business leaders revealed effective leadership strategies they implemented and executed the Atlanta, GA area, which ultimately aligned to the academic literature review and conceptual framework in this study. The information gathered from the small business leaders could be a useful tool for other leaders to help them maintain employee empowerment and increased rates of employee productivity. Scholars who conduct research on effective strategies could further the research in the following ways: (a) choosing a single corporation or business to contrast the different types of leadership strategies being used, (b) select employees to interview to gain an understanding of their views on leadership strategies, (c) opt to use a different location outside of Georgia, or (d) use the quantitative method to form a series of hypotheses to identify how effective leadership strategies impact employee productivity.

New scholars could review the different types of conferences, training courses, or team development programs businesses use to enhance employee engagement and

performance, which can lead to a reduction in employee turnover rates and an increase in successful organizational outcomes. The participants in this study discussed the importance of communication as a part of the type of leadership strategies they use to avoid employer-employee communication barriers. New scholars could also evaluate how leaders use effective communication as a leadership strategy to improve employee productivity. Leaders who use employer-employee effective communication as a leadership strategy avoid a decrease employee performance (Helle et al., 2020). The data collected from employees' views on effective leadership strategies could help leaders of small businesses and organizations define how they can improve employee productivity.

Future scholars could further the research by choosing different geographical locations to conduct their research. Scholars could expand the research outside of Georgia to initiate larger populations of leaders of small businesses and organizations. Consequently, the recommendations from this study enable other scholars to collect new data and formulate a better understanding on how effective leadership strategies can improve employee productivity.

## Reflections

In my overall experience with my participants, I was thankful they agreed to participate in this study, and they all had 5 to 10 years of experience leading employees. I understood how important it is for leaders to define the types of leadership strategies that can improve employee performance and produce successful outcomes throughout the work environment. I used purposeful sampling to choose the small business participants in this study. The small business leader's decision to participate, provide their signature

of participation, and provide their overall experience in this study helped me complete my doctorate and complete this challenging business rewarding goal. However, there were some unexpected occurrences such as a couple of selected participants dropped out of the interviews, which caused me to go back and reuse purposeful sampling to pick replacement participants.

In addition to participant changes, I had several changes within my thinking after completing this study such as, leaders do not always know upfront what strategies work to improve employee productivity. Therefore, it is up to the individual leader to pay attention to their employee's performance rates. This action could ultimately help leaders quickly identify what type of leadership strategy should be used to improve their employee's performance. I also recognized how each participant held themselves accountable for the negative and positive outcomes of their employee's productivity. When leaders want to ensure they can maintain a competitive advantage against competitors, they often evaluate employee performance.

## Conclusion

Leaders constantly use effective leadership strategies to avoid a decline in their employee's productivity (Strategic Direction, 2020). When leaders understand the value of improving employee productivity, they also gain insight on how to better motivate, engage, empower, and communicate with their employees (Rathnaeera et al., 2020). Effective leadership strategies are critical for small business successful outcomes. Small business leaders who want to remain sustainable, profitable, and effective need to measure their ability to improve employee productivity (Sookdeo, 2020). If leaders lack

the leadership skills necessary to improve employee performance, it can cause employees to become stagnate in their ability to trust their leaders and be loyal to their organization.

The findings in this study could help current and future leaders discover new leadership strategies to help them improve employee productivity and produce better small business outcomes. In this study, I conducted semistructured interviews by asking open-ended questions, reviewing participant documents, and using reflective journaling to write down pertinent data. The participants I selected were small business leaders from Atlanta, GA. The themes that morphed from the data analysis process were leadership styles, communication barriers problem-solving, innovation, motivation, and employee retention associated to employee productivity.

I chose the decision-making model of leadership theory as the primary concept for this multiple qualitative case study. During the semistructured interviews, each participant was able to express their experiences with using effective leadership strategies that helped them improve employee productivity. The information provided by the participants directly aligned with academic review of literature and the conceptual framework. I used the triangulation method to compare the data and the participants responses collected during the semistructured interview questions. In review of research findings, I recommended that small business leaders influence their employees by engaging them in making leadership decisions, empower them to develop new business processes, and trust that employees can lead their teams. The overall data revealed that employees positively respond to leaders who can identify the effective leadership strategies that work to improve their productivity.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Candice Rodgers, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in Business Administration with a concentration of Leadership at Walden University. I am conducting research on strategies some small business leaders use to increase employee productivity. The title of this study is: "'Improving Employee Productivity Using Effective Leadership Strategies."' I am conducting this study to focus on the complex, real-life phenomenon of leadership strategies that increased employee productivity.

I am seeking phone interviews with small business leaders who meet the following criteria:

- The small business leader must currently hold a small business supervisory position.
- The small business leaders must have expertise concerning what key strategies they use to increase employee productivity.
- All participants must have experience in leading small business employees.

I developed the study selection criteria to ensure that each participant will have the knowledge needed to answer the research question, which is aligned to the study. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are entitled to withdraw at any time, to include, after I have completed the data collection for the study. I will ensure that your identity is protected throughout the interview and that none of your responses to the interview questions will be published or publicized. All of your responses to the interview questions will be recorded for data analysis and reporting, specifically for this study, and no information will identify you or your organization. I will be asking a small business representative to provide business documentation associated to strategies used to increase employee productivity.

I am requesting that you participate in this study, please contact me at: 404-536-0036 or candice.rodgers@waldenu.edu if you are interested in participating. I will also contact you within the next five to ten business days to answer any questions or concerns you may have and reiterate on your decisions to participate in this study.

To protect your right to privacy, no signature of consent is requested. Instead, you can indicate your consent by clicking here:

Thank you for your interest, time, and consideration. Best regards,

Candice Rodgers
Doctoral Candidate
Doctor of Business Administration Walden University

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

I would like to invite you to participate in my research study called *"'Improving Employee Productivity Using Effective Leadership Strategies*."' I am a research student from Walden University, and I am conducting a research study about how small business leaders can improve employee productivity using effective leadership strategies. I am researching this concept because the study may lead to positive social change by providing leaders of small businesses with leadership strategies to increase employee productivity, which could lead to increased community employment and an increase in local tax revenues to benefit citizens in local communities.

I am requesting to interview small business leaders in order to identify their experiences developing and implementing leadership strategies that increased employee productivity for improving organizations' performance.

If you decide to take part in the study, please review and fill out the Consent Form. Please read the consent form, which contains information to help you make an informed decision about taking part in the study or not. It also provides my contact details for questions or concerns.

I will get in touch with you by telephone and/or email. A week after the first telephone interview, I will get in touch again to ask some more questions by email. The amount of time this would take is approximately 30 minutes.

Thank you for your help

Best regards,

Candice Rodgers

Email: Candice.rodgers@waldenu.edu

Appendix C: Consent Form

**Contact Information**: Candice.rodgers@waldenu.edu

**Researcher:** Candice N. Rodgers

**Title of Research Study:** Improving Employee Productivity Using Effective Leadership Strategies

**Supervising Study:** Walden University

Introduction: The purpose of this Consent Form is to request your participation in this research study. This study will consist of interviews with small business leaders who have experience using effective leadership strategies to improve employee productivity. This form presents information about the study so that you may make a fully informed decision regarding your participation.

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this study is to identify the strategies that some leaders of small businesses use to increase employee productivity.

**Procedures:**

1. The interview will be audio recorded and will last for a maximum of 1-hour. The researcher will email a transcript of the interview to enable you to make an corrections.
- If there are any associated documents that you can share to detail how their leadership strategies are effective, please provide these in your response email (for example: team assessment documents).
- The researcher might also email you to ask follow-up questions, after the initial interview.

**Here are some sample questions:**

1. What strategies have you used to improve employee productivity?
2. What strategy did you find worked best to improve employee productivity?
3. How did your employees respond to your different strategies to improve employee productivity?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will not result in any penalty to you or any loss of benefits to which

you may otherwise be entitled. You may decide to stop participating in the research at any time without penalty or loss of other benefits.

**Risks to study participants:** The researcher will adhere to a code of ethics to reduce risks. Participating in this type of study can involve some risk of the minor discomforts that could be encountered in daily life, such as stress. However, participating in this study will not pose risk to your safety or well-being.

**Payment:** No thank you gifts, compensation, or reimbursement are offered for your participation.

**Benefits to research participants and others:** The primary benefit of this research is to gain a better understanding and knowledge of the types of strategies that small business leaders can use to increase their employees' productivity.

**Privacy:** The researcher's coding system for how names, contact information, and research data will be securely stored. The information collected will not be used for any purpose other than this research study. The researcher will store the electronic data from participants in a password-protected external hard drive with USB compatibility. To appropriately store the hard copy data collected from participants, the researcher will secure it in a filing cabinet with a lock and key. Walden University requires that data be retained for a total of 5 years; therefore, when the 5 years have been completed, the researcher will delete and shred all data associated with the participants.

**Contacts and Questions:** You can ask questions of the researcher by email. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312- 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **02-02-21-0416116** and it expires on **February 1, 2022.**

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

**Obtaining Your Consent**

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words "'I consent."'

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to improve employee productivity?

2. What strategy did you find worked best to improve employee productivity?

3. How did your employees respond to your different strategies to improve employee productivity?

4. What leadership strategies helped your employees understand the value of increasing their productivity?

5. How did your organization address key barriers to implementing successful strategies for improving employee productivity?

6. What else would you like to share with me concerning your organization's effective leadership strategies for improving employee productivity?