

A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES
OF MIDDLE MANAGERS: SELF-DETERMINED LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE
BANKING INDUSTRY

by

Daniel Kyle Ray

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills. The theory guiding this study is Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory and its relationship with lifelong learning. This study aimed to answer the central research question: What are the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills? Data collected from individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts were synthesized using open and axial coding to identify patterns and connections in the resulting data. Data analysis followed the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method described by Moustakas. Following an in-depth analysis of the collected data, five major themes emerged. Learning and employment growth, lifelong learning and adaptation, organizational implementation of learning, referrals and career advancement, and personal growth through experience and accomplishment offer a valuable perspective into middle managers' experiences in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills. These themes provide insight into the various aspects of their personal and professional growth journey. The study concludes by discussing the implications and findings for future research.

Keywords: heutagogy, lifelong learning, self-determination, social capital

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, my creator, who patiently awaited me to find Him. To the memory of Linh Tran, who could not make this journey himself after being called home to our Lord. Thank you, brother, for befriending me and setting me on this path. To Randy Cribb, for seeing me as I would become, showing me what sacrifice looks like, and teaching me the value of integrity. To Tim Sibley and Chuck Sowers for helping me recognize the voice in my head as God's call to be a servant leader. I am so thankful for our friendship.

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List of Abbreviations

Adaptive Learning Systems (ALS)

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET)

Central Research Question (CRQ)

Existence, Relatedness, and Growth Theory (ERG)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Lifelong Learning (LLL)

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)

Organismic Integration Theory (OIT)

Self-determination Theory (SDT)

Sub Question (SQ)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills. In this study, lifelong learners are defined as adults who profess to be self-determined and exhibit intrinsic motivational behaviors based on their lived experiences. A significant part of this study involves capturing extrinsic motivational factors that may influence a participant's decision to pursue lifelong learning through self-determined behaviors guided by rewards and recognition. An overview of historical, social, and theoretical contexts that support the need for the study is provided in this chapter. Self-determination theory (SDT), defined by Deci and Ryan (2000, 2017), is the theoretical framework guiding this study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a concise summary highlighting the necessity of exploring the study's phenomena within the context presented. Research questions, problem statements, and purpose statements are included in the proposal.

Background

Despite being a relatively recent construct in the United States, lifelong learning as a concept has a significant history (Lifetime Learning Act, 1975). It was a concern for the newly formed country as a means of establishing and maintaining economic growth during the late 18th century. With the increase in immigration and calls for social reform throughout the 19th century, lifelong learning and education continued to play an essential role in the growth and evolution of the country (Smith, 2020). Finally, through various acts of Congress, the United States government began focusing its educational efforts on promoting lifelong learning among its citizens in the 20th century. This study will summarize lifelong learning in the United States,

including its historical, social, and theoretical contexts. As part of a heutagogic approach, learners develop skills like self-determination, autonomy, critical thinking, reflection, and innovation - all of which are essential for a successful lifelong learning experience (Blaschke, 2021).

Historical Context

Many of the United States' founding fathers advocated for learning and education for the masses (Juneja, 2015; Smith, 2020; Sullivan, 2021). George Washington was a self-educated founding father of the United States. He spoke openly about the importance of continual education on the country's economy after it gained independence from England (Harrison, 2015). Thomas Jefferson endeavored to establish colleges and universities throughout the United States to transfer European knowledge and create a well-informed populace (Henderson, 2013). Benjamin Rush promoted behaviors of lifelong learning as a standard and necessary duty of citizenship and the common good for all humankind (Unger, 2018).

Religion was a driving factor in promoting learning during the 19th century (Baker, 2019; Smith, 2020). Beecher emphasized the need for the masses to be educated so that "morality could be instilled systematically" (Smith, 2020, p. 102). Beecher also spoke about "education free from the influence of bad example" (p. 103). The United States had a male literacy rate of 97% in the North and 81% in the South despite the lack of a nationwide public school system thanks to informal education sponsored by churches and apprenticeship programs through 1840 (Richman, 1994). Mann pushed for the creation of common schools across the United States, taught by well-trained teachers so that everyone could receive the same level of education (Janak, 2019; Smith, 2020).

Lifelong learning is a concept that has been introduced previously in education (Lifelong

Learning Act, 1975). The foundations of self-determined and lifelong learning are based on theories presented in the early 20th century by Dewey and Yeaxlee (Barros, 2012). Dewey viewed growth as the aim of education (Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2020) and was an early advocate for continued education into adulthood (Dewey & Hinchey, 2018). Yeaxlee (1929) used the term lifelong education to first bring attention to the need for its practice in the modern era. Lifelong education became lifelong learning in the United States through the Lifetime Learning Act (1975), which expanded continued education from childhood to retirement and beyond. The Higher Education Act (1965) provided financial assistance for students pursuing education beyond high school, including colleges, universities, and vocational schools. The Lifelong Learning Act (1979) amended The Higher Education Act of 1965 by establishing the title of "Lifelong Learning" and providing access to education and training opportunities to all citizens of the United States throughout life.

Technology advances will continue to make lifelong learning essential for long-term employability (Blaschke, 2021). In modern times, employers seek skills that can be acquired and maintained through higher education and online learning environments (Blaschke, 2021; Fearon et al., 2019). As a result, heutagogy is becoming increasingly important in today's society since lifelong learning is a vital part of adult development. Education and learning have been shown in history to impact children through pedagogy significantly. A growing emphasis has been placed on lifelong learning for adults through the implementation of andragogy (Knowles, 1977). Heutagogy promotes directive learning in pedagogy and self-directed learning in andragogy through self-determined learning (Jones et al., 2019).

Social Context

The education process does not end when a child completes their formative years

(Dewey, 1916; Rüber et al., 2018; Wenger, 2022). Many United States founding fathers emphasized lifelong learning through self and social awareness (Harrison, 2015; Henderson, 2013; Unger, 2018), and technology continues to be an essential means of ensuring equitable access to education for all (Nimmi et al., 2021). Those who wish to be lifelong learners are less likely to experience social capital and employability issues (Knipprath & De Rick, 2014; Saridaki & Papavassiliou-Alexiou, 2021). In the technology age, society can access online resources for lifelong learning at a cost-effective rate (Houlden & Veletsianos, 2019). Massive open online courses (MOOCs), educational websites, and other types of distance learning are examples of this type of education.

Galeshi and Bolin (2020) recommend lifelong learning to assist individuals who have become disenfranchised in society to become productive citizens and find meaningful employment. The rapid advancement of technology may lead to job loss among older adults, and lifelong learning may improve their ability to return to the workforce (Coelli & Tabasso, 2018). Participation in civic life, well-being, life satisfaction, and overall health positively correlate with self-determined individuals who actively pursue lifelong learning (Heckman et al., 2017; Jackson & Dean, 2022). Qvist and Munk (2018) describe volunteering as an informal activity taken on by adults with tendencies toward lifelong learning who forego employment or choose to retire.

Theoretical Context

Different teaching approaches for diverse learner groups are addressed in the theoretical context of pedagogy, andragogy, and heutagogy in education. Pedagogy refers to teaching children in an environment that is structured and led by the teacher (Blaschke, 2012; Dance, 2023; Darby & Newman, 2014). The theory of andragogy promotes self-directed adult learning and integrates participants' life experiences into the learning process (Knowles, 1977).

Heutagogy extends the concept of andragogy even further by emphasizing learner autonomy, self-determination, and independent problem-solving while teachers serve as facilitators (Hase & Kenyon, 2015; Jones et al., 2019). A thorough understanding of these frameworks can help inform effective instructional strategies in diverse educational settings and for learners of various abilities.

Pedagogy refers to teaching children and is one of the most traditional and widely practiced methods in educational settings (Blaschke, 2012). In this approach, the teacher is the authority figure, guiding and directing the learning process (Dance, 2023). The teacher is responsible for designing and delivering the curriculum, setting learning objectives, and selecting appropriate teaching materials (Darby & Newman, 2014). The students are considered passive knowledge recipients and are expected to follow the teacher's instructions and guidelines. The classroom environment is typically structured, and the content is designed to facilitate comprehension and retention (Dance, 2023).

Andragogy is a concept developed by Malcolm Knowles in the 1970s, primarily focusing on adult learners (Knowles, 1977). Unlike children, adults are assumed to have different characteristics and learning needs. In andragogy, the teacher takes on a more facilitative role, recognizing that adults are self-directed and bring their life experiences and motivations into the learning process (Jones et al., 2019). Instead of being passive recipients of information, adult learners are encouraged to actively participate in setting their learning goals, identifying relevant learning experiences, and contributing to the overall learning process (Knowles, 2020). The role of the teacher is to provide guidance, support, and resources, taking into account the learners' prior knowledge and experiences (Knowles, 1977, 2020).

Heutagogy is an extension of andragogy, introduced by Stewart Hase and Chris Kenyon

in 2000 (Hase & Kenyon, 2015). Learners' autonomy and self-determination are even more strongly emphasized. Learning paths and strategies are designed by learners in a heutagogical approach (Hase & Kenyon, 2015; Jones et al., 2019). Students are encouraged to be highly reflective and to take an active role in identifying their individual learning needs and objectives. Teachers or mentors are facilitators in heutagogy to facilitate learners' development of the skills and abilities they need to become self-directed learners (Hase & Kenyon, 2015; Jones et al., 2019). Students are encouraged to develop their abilities to find and critically assess information, solve problems independently, and continuously adapt their learning methods (Hase & Kenyon, 2015).

Problem Statement

The problem is that middle managers are reluctant to pursue lifelong learning. In recent research, lifelong learning, human capital, and employability are positively correlated, yet little is known about people's resistance to lifelong learning (Nimmi et al., 2021). In their research, Agonács and Matos (2019) found that heutagogy, or self-determined learning, has been studied in limited ways. In addition, they noted that their study had limitations due to the geographical and cultural distribution of the selected population and the size of their sample (Agonács & Matos, 2019). It is, therefore, necessary to conduct further research in the field of heutagogy using samples drawn from populations with greater diversity and size, such as those living in North America.

Gillaspy and Vasilica (2021) contributed to the field of heutagogy by suggesting that future research should explore the interaction between self-determination and learning environments. Thongmak (2021) indicates that more research is required in Western countries to replicate studies conducted in Southeast Asian nations on self-determination, organizational

readiness, and lifelong learning through online learning environments. According to Stoten (2021), we should continue to explore convenient, customized training programs for middle managers to fill the gap in their expertise. Furthermore, Stoten (2021) agrees with Thongmak (2021) that more analysis is required to understand the value of self-determination in addressing organizational challenges.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills. At this stage in the research, lifelong learning will be generally defined as the purposeful pursuit of gaining knowledge and developing new skills for personal development and career advancement through formal and informal opportunities throughout one's life (Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2020). A person who pursues lifelong learning is committed to acquiring knowledge and developing new skills for personal development and career advancement through various formal and informal opportunities throughout their life (Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2020). Those who are self-determined and committed to lifelong learning strive to achieve their potential by constantly expanding their knowledge and skills intellectually and emotionally (Van Tonder et al., 2022).

Significance of the Study

Research on lifelong learning has been supported by well-established studies in this area, covering constructivist elements, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, as well as heutagogy (Blaschke, 2012; Hase & Kenyon, 2015; Lock et al., 2021). In contrast to other studies, this study takes a different approach by focusing its efforts on middle managers in the banking industry. Conversely, related literature is concerned primarily with participants in the healthcare

industry or focuses on specific disciplines within education (Dou et al., 2016; Herzberg et al., 2017; Lee & Lee, 2022). Moreover, it distinguishes itself from other studies by focusing on a population in North America instead of European or Asian countries (Gillaspy & Vasilica, 2021; Stoten, 2021; Thongmak, 2021).

Theoretical Significance

The theories and exploration of the related literature are well suited to this study as it focuses on the lived experiences of its participants, who are self-determined and motivated to pursue lifelong learning in their personal and professional lives (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2022). The empirical findings of this study are underpinned by the self-determination theory and are further supported by multiple theories on motivation and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995; Rosli & Saleh, 2022; Shaw et al., 2021). A self-determined learning and heutagogy process is characterized by three psychological constructs: competence, belonging, and autonomy. Growing evidence suggests that these constructs can provide valuable metrics and other indicators for measuring and predicting individual and group motivational factors associated with engagement in learning environments (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Vergara-Morales & Del Valle, 2022).

Self-efficacy, motivation, and social support have been studied to understand better why people lack self-determination and do not pursue lifelong learning. According to researchers, individuals who lack confidence in their abilities are more inclined to pursue learning opportunities than competent individuals who succeed in new situations (Rubenstein et al., 2017). A person may be incapable of engaging in lifelong learning if they lack intrinsic motivation or are burdened with extrinsic factors such as time and resources (Boomaars et al., 2018). Social support from family, friends, and coworkers is essential to fostering self-

determination and lifelong learning behaviors (Morningstar et al., 2018; Surdick et al., 2021).

Empirical Significance

Several studies have emphasized the importance of self-determination, motivation, and lifelong learning from the perspective of andragogy (Knowles, 1977; Knowles et al., 2020). A quantitative approach has been used in other studies to analyze related data (Chukwuedo et al., 2021; Lockwood et al., 2018). In current studies, empirical data is sourced from case studies and other methods that make assumptions beyond this research's scope (Bouchard et al., 2020; Muir, 2020; Yan et al., 2021). Several gaps in the literature are filled by this study. To close this gap, more qualitative studies that utilize a transcendental phenomenological approach are needed to capture and analyze the lived experiences of groups in North America (Gillaspy & Vasilica, 2021; Stoten, 2021; Thongmak, 2021). An analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors described by the study's participants addresses that need. Using the data collected, it identified common themes and motifs discovered in the lived experiences and stories that participants shared.

Practical Significance

This study has practical significance in its deliberate selection of the setting, participants, and organization to contribute to the well-being of adults. By focusing on adult learners and exploring the principles of andragogy and heutagogy, the study seeks to shed light on practical learning approaches that can enhance the lives of individuals beyond traditional educational practices. Research findings may be shared with academic institutions, employers, and policymakers to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults at work and in the community.

The practical relevance of the study is based on its potential to help organizations fulfill their corporate social responsibilities. Companies increasingly recognize the value of giving back

to society and positively impacting their employees and the community (Sorour et al., 2020).

Organizations can foster a culture of continuous improvement and growth among their employees by incorporating lifelong learning programs aligned with the principles of andragogy and heutagogy (Murthy & Pattananyak, 2019). As a result, a more skilled and adaptable workforce may be created, improving job satisfaction, productivity, and boosting job performance.

As well as promoting lifelong learning through andragogical and heutagogical approaches, the promotion of lifelong learning has also been shown to positively impact the community (Kruszelnicki, 2019). As Kruszelnicki put it, adults can become an important part of their communities when they develop the skills and knowledge that will help them contribute to that community. The volunteer might serve as a mentor or educator, sharing their expertise and passion for learning with others. This cascade effect can lead to a more informed and engaged society in which individuals are more confident and proactive in dealing with challenges and pursuing opportunities because of the cascading effect (Kruszelnicki, 2019).

The study also has significance for the fields of pedagogy and andragogy beyond its practical implications for organizations and communities. There has long been a dominant teaching approach based on pedagogy, but in recent years, research and practice on education have recognized the importance of andragogy for catering to adult learners (Agonács & Matos, 2019; Jones et al., 2019). Based on this foundation, the study advances the discussion of learner autonomy and self-direction in adult education by exploring heutagogy. This study has advanced the fields of pedagogy and andragogy by adding data that brings more attention to the value that heutagogy holds for society (Agonács & Matos, 2019; Blaschke, 2012; Jones et al., 2019). This

research contributes to a greater understanding of how adults learn best and the factors that promote effective lifelong learning.

Research Questions

This transcendental phenomenological study is focused on the lived experiences of adults in the banking industry. The central research question is designed to target only adults who demonstrate the behavior of self-determination and lifelong learning. In the first two sub-questions, motivation factors that affect self-determined learning are addressed both intrinsically and extrinsically. Thirdly, the third sub-question is designed with constructivism in mind to link individual perceptions of self-determination and lifelong learning.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills?

Sub-Question One

What factors have influenced the heutagogical learning behaviors of middle managers in a banking environment?

Sub-Question Two

How do middle managers in a banking environment describe adaptive learning systems in their own lives as part of their pursuit of lifelong learning?

Sub-Question Three

What are the perceptions of middle managers in a banking environment on the relationships between heutagogy and lifelong learning?

Definitions

1. *Adaptive learning system* - Systems that use algorithms, artificial intelligence, machine

learning, and other computer-aided approaches to personalize the learning experience (Wang et al., 2020).

2. *Extrinsic motivation* - Motivation by external factors that lead to creativity, innovation, acquiring new skills, and perseverance to overcome obstacles and challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2022).
3. *Heutagogy* - The process by which learners are encouraged to discover solutions independently of formal teaching (Hase & Kenyon, 2015).
4. *Intrinsic motivation* - Motivation by internal factors that lead to creativity, innovation, acquiring new skills, and perseverance to overcome obstacles and challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2022).
5. *Lifelong learning* - A self-initiated focus on personal development through formal and informal training (Barros, 2012; Sangrà et al., 2019).
6. *Self-determination* - Taking voluntary action to own and control autonomy, belonging, and building competencies to satisfy intrinsic and extrinsic motivational needs (Deci & Ryan, 2017).

Summary

This chapter presented the historical, social, and theoretical contexts of the study's problem and objectives. The significance of the study was discussed using relevant literature that describes self-determined and lifelong learning. A description of the research questions and their importance to the study is also provided. A list of essential definitions concludes the chapter. A particular challenge is that middle managers are hesitant to embrace continuous learning, and additional research is needed in Western nations to replicate the research conducted in Southeast Asian countries regarding self-determination and lifelong learning. This transcendental

phenomenological study aimed to elucidate the firsthand experiences of middle managers in the banking industry who use heutagogical approaches to foster their capacity for lifelong learning.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills. An evaluation of the motivational factors behind lifelong learning among middle managers is conducted through a systematic literature review. The current literature is reviewed in two sections in this chapter. The first section discusses motivational aspects of self-determination theory, self-efficacy, and constructivism, while the second section synthesizes recent literature on motivation, individual and organizational needs, and heutagogy. Several motivational theories, satisfaction, and lifelong learning factors are also examined in further literature. The chapter concludes by showing a significant gap in the current literature regarding the lifelong learning of middle managers in the banking industry, demonstrating and justifying the need for this study.

Theoretical Framework

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a psychological theory that examines the motivations that drive an individual's behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2022). People have innate psychological needs related to autonomy, competence, and relatedness that are essential for optimal functioning and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2002). When these needs are met, people are more likely to engage in self-directed, intrinsically motivated behaviors aligned with their values. SDT has been extensively used in various fields, such as education, health, and sports, to help people reach their goals and live fulfilling lives (Ryan & Deci, 2022; Ryan et al., 2006).

Deci and Ryan (2014a) developed the self-determined theory to explain how people strive to accomplish goals and master skills to grow. People achieve self-determination by

fulfilling their needs for competence, belonging, and autonomy (Howard et al., 2016; Nalipay et al., 2019). Several external motivators or extrinsic factors are associated with self-determination theory, including wages, rewards, and recognition (Deci & Ryan, 2014b; Van Den Broeck et al., 2019). Among the factors contributing to intrinsic motivation are knowledge and independence (Deci & Ryan, 2014b; Van Den Broeck et al., 2019).

Deci and Ryan (2014a, 2017) describe SDT as a quest for competence, belonging, and autonomy to meet psychological needs. Taking action to satisfy those needs is an outward manifestation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors (Deci & Ryan, 2014a; Howard et al., 2016). Motivation from within may include yearnings for knowledge and an eagerness for independence (Deci & Ryan, 2014a; Van Den Broeck et al., 2019). Several external motivational factors can motivate an individual, including a desire for increased wages, accolades, and peer recognition (Deci & Ryan, 2014a; Van Den Broeck et al., 2019). Bandura (1995, 1997) points out that self-efficacy is another decisive motivation for developing competencies through mastery and vicarious experiences.

Competence is the need to find happiness in our work while continually challenging ourselves to be more than merely proficient (Yu et al., 2021). An individual's competency in the workplace is more than a measure of their skills; it includes their ability to establish an identity in their workplace (Hornung, 2019). An individual's ability to perform their duties depends upon establishing behaviors that result in clear, comprehensive, and meaningful job descriptions (Hornung, 2019). Massive open online courses (MOOCs) allow self-determined learners to enhance their competencies at will by learning new skills and mastering those they already possess (Martin et al., 2018).

The notion of belonging in the workplace includes organizational citizenship, where

behavior at work may differ from behavior outside the workplace (Pathak & Srivastava, 2020). A sense of belonging also involves overall job satisfaction as a determining factor for our passion for our jobs (Pathak & Srivastava, 2020). Several studies have demonstrated that video games are integral to people's desire to be socially connected online (Vella et al., 2017). There is a growing recognition that organizations need non-territorial seating to increase opportunities for belonging and promote self-determination through belonging (Gatt & Jiang, 2020).

Self-determination and motivation are characteristics that reflect autonomy and independence (Stoszkowski & McCarthy, 2018). They also represent our cultural behaviors and desires for self-government and self-regulation in government (Suksi, 2021). In many ways, autonomy can be viewed as a product of Kantian ethics, which function as the foundation for our morality (Arvanitis, 2017). In self-determination, autonomy and independence are cross-cultural elements that promote positive interactions between individuals from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds (Nalipay et al., 2019).

Unlike Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-determination theory considers security and self-esteem outcomes when basic needs are unmet (Deci & Ryan, 2002). As part of these basic needs, we strive to feel satisfied, feel a sense of belonging, and find fulfillment in living a fulfilling life (Gagné, 2014). Individuals who exhibit behaviors of self-determination are likely to be motivated to continue to learn throughout their lives (Ryan et al., 2006).

The cognitive evaluation theory (CET), a sub-theory of SDT, proposes that innate psychological needs include competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985a). A person's intrinsic motivation and well-being are influenced by these needs (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Competence pertains to one's ability to perform actions and make decisions, whereas autonomy pertains to the freedom to choose and take control of one's life (Deci & Ryan, 2013, 2014a). The

fulfillment of these needs leads to feelings of self-determination and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2014b).

This innate psychological need for self-determination and intrinsic motivation must be satisfied according to CET (Sheldon & Prentice, 2019). An individual who feels competent, autonomous, and related to their pursuits is more likely to engage in activities for their own enjoyment and personal satisfaction rather than solely for external rewards or pressures according to Sheldon and Prentice. CET also emphasizes the impact of environmental factors on intrinsic motivation. The theory distinguishes between two types of environmental factors: autonomous-supportive and controlling environments. Supporting autonomy may provide opportunities for choice, acknowledges and values individual perspectives, and provides support and positive feedback to meet psychological needs. An environment that exerts external pressure, uses rewards or punishments, and limits individuals' autonomy undermines intrinsic motivation (Sheldon & Prentice, 2019)

Cognitive evaluation involves determining whether there is autonomy within an activity or situation (Zhao et al., 2022). The more individuals perceive that their autonomy is being supported and their psychological needs are being met, the more likely they are to experience a cognitive evaluation that enhances their intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2014a, 2017; Zhao et al., 2022). Alternatively, if the perception is that autonomy has been restricted or undermined, then the cognitive evaluation may undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2013, 2014b).

Organismic integration theory (OIT) is a sub-theory of self-determination theory that explains how satisfying basic psychological needs leads to a sense of coherence and unity within the self (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2017). It describes how a coherent sense of self results from satisfying individual needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness in a harmonious manner,

resulting in a harmonious integration of the individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2013; Suzuki & Aramata, 2021). Evidence shows that individuals who experience optimal functioning and flow experience more remarkable personal growth, psychological health, and well-being (Abuhamdeh, 2021). Individuals who fail to meet their elemental psychological needs experience disharmony, fragmentation, and a sense of separation from themselves and others (Lombas & Esteban, 2017). The result is a decrease in well-being, psychological distress, and an experience of meaninglessness (Jones et al., 2021).

As proposed in SDT, OIT assumes that satisfying basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness will lead to the internalization of extrinsic motivation along the continuum (Deci & Ryan 1985b, 2000, 2017). When individuals feel supported in their autonomy, competence, and relatedness, they are more likely to internalize regulations and values, leading to a more harmonious integration of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Jones et al., 2021). A disruption in the internalization process occurs when individuals experience external pressure, restrictive environments, or psychological sabotage, resulting in a decrease in autonomy and a decrease in integration of regulations (Suzuki & Aramata, 2021). The individual may experience feelings of disharmony, fragmentation, and a sense of separation from themselves and others, as well as a decline in well-being and meaninglessness.

Individuals who internalize regulations in a more autonomous and harmonious manner tend to enjoy greater psychological health, well-being, and personal growth (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Those who rely heavily on external and controlling forms of motivation are more likely to suffer from psychological distress and reduced well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2013). OIT may offer valuable insights into the dynamic interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and emphasizes that individuals' autonomy and basic psychological needs must be supported in order to

maximize their well-being and functioning.

Related Literature

The literature review focuses primarily on three topics of interest. The study is particularly interested in theories of motivation because it is necessary to examine the literature extensively, given the interconnection between various theories of motivation and the theory of self-determination. The secondary topic of interest in this study is the connection between individual and organizational needs. Heutagogy is the study's final primary topic of interest, supporting motivation and workplace needs. This study's thesis statement and research questions directly relate to heutagogy as it covers aspects of lifelong learning. Furthermore, the three primary topics of interest are the motivation to continue the research on self-determined learning by middle managers beyond a banking or financial organization.

Theories on Motivation

Several connections were found between related literature and multiple theories of motivation. There was a profound connection between the literature cited throughout this study and theories of motivation. There is a tendency among these theories to lead back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs in one form or another. It would be remiss not to provide details specific to each motivational theory associated with the literature reviewed in this study.

Throughout history, motivational theory has been studied in many forms, and this study is not designed to adhere to any particular motivational theory. Instead, elements of several motivational theories based on their relationship to self-determination theory and the capacity for learning throughout life are integrated throughout the study. Nevertheless, themes discussed in the related literature section originate in Maslow's hierarchy of needs and motivation theory (Maslow, 1943, 1954). Several other theories exist, including the motivational-hygiene theory

(Herzberg et al., 1959), the theory of needs (McClelland, 1961), the expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), the expectation-value theory (Atkinson, 1964), and the existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory (Alderfer, 1969). The theories include equity theory (Adams, 1963), reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1953), goal-setting theory (Locke, 1969), and self-coherence theory (Dweck, 2016).

Hierarchy of Needs

Motivational theory was developed by Abraham Maslow during the 1950s as part of the humanistic psychology school of thought (Maslow, 1954). In his view, Maslow was able to improve upon the works of Skinner and other behaviorists of his time by emphasizing the positive aspects of maximizing a person's well-being (Maslow, 1943, 1954). His theory's visual representation is a pyramid consisting of five levels, each representing a priority of human needs for realizing their full potential. During the course of satisfying prior requirements in a hierarchy, people realize that they have higher needs. Deficiency needs are addressed at the first four levels of the hierarchy (Maslow, 1954).

Deficit needs are based on physiological needs and are followed by safety needs. The psychological needs form the basis for all other needs. These include food, water, shelter, clothing, and sleep. There are three basic safety needs: safety, security, and freedom from fear. Families and society contribute to the fulfillment of these needs. When our physiological needs are met, we desire a sense of order and control in our lives. "Contrary to popular opinion, workers are willing to be held accountable when they have adequate training, control of resources, scheduling, and so forth" (Herzberg et al., 2017, pp. 16-17).

Love and belonging are the third and fourth deficiency needs, followed by self-esteem needs. It is necessary to develop relationships with other people once our safety needs have been

met (Noltemeyer et al., 2020). Self-esteem is a combination of self-worth and respect (Cameron & Granger, 2018). A sense of self-worth is the desire to be a member of a group, make friends, and experience love and affection, especially in online social environments (Li et al., 2020). Our competence and skills in interacting with others are increased when we have respect from others (Clucas, 2019).

The pursuit of self-actualization represents our highest need (Schoofs et al., 2022). It encompasses the concepts of self-fulfillment, achieving our full potential, and becoming the best version of ourselves we can be. It is commonly referred to as a growth need. A person is unhappy if their deficiency needs are not fulfilled, whereas they are happy if their growth needs are met (Krems et al., 2017). As we strive to achieve our highest potential, it represents the best version of ourselves. "Achievement can stand independently of recognition as a source of good feelings about the job. Recognition is somewhat more rarely independent of achievement" (Herzberg et al., 2017, p. 94).

Motivation-hygiene Theory

Herzberg et al. (2017) argue that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are mutually exclusive. In this context, Maslow's hierarchy of needs examines the work environment. It is commonly called Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory because motivation and hygiene are important factors in determining job satisfaction (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are not considered to be antagonistic concepts in the theory. It is more accurate to say that no satisfaction is the opposite of job satisfaction, or vice versa. As a result, the two types of satisfaction measurements must be measured and evaluated separately.

Self-actualization is more likely to occur when motivation factors are present. Among these factors are recognition, job status, responsibility, ownership, and work, which improve

motivators that lead to increased job satisfaction (Mihalca, 2021). The factors associated with hygiene encourage us to avoid unpleasant experiences (Herzberg et al., 2017). This includes the people we report to, our relationships with our co-workers, company policies, and their salaries. Worker job dissatisfaction can be decreased by improving the hygiene of our workspace (Howard et al., 2016). It is important to note that improving one does not necessarily result in an improvement in the other. Separate treatment is required for each of them.

This theory was developed by Herzberg et al. (2017) to understand how motivation influences employee performance and organizational productivity. A critical incident analysis survey technique was used to determine the satisfaction level of accountants and engineers in Pittsburgh during the 1950s (Herzberg et al., 2017). Researchers expanded their study to include teachers, nurses, women, scientists, and other professionals. There is still great relevance to his theory in the present day (Lee & Lee, 2022).

Theory of Needs

A theory of needs was introduced by McClelland (1961) to explain the desires of individuals for achievement, affiliation, and power. Today, the theory continues to be analyzed through the lenses of technology, diversity, and organizational structures (Rybnicek et al., 2017). Recent studies have also examined the integration of the theory of needs and the theory of self-determination (Burk & Wiese, 2018). Using self-determination theory, Burk and Wiese (2018) demonstrated a 1:1 relationship between the need for accomplishment and competence, affiliation and relatedness, and power and autonomy. As an alternative, Schuler et al. (2018) examined the similarities and differences between the theory of needs and SDT support and SDT as a theory on its own, not in contradiction with McClelland's theory of needs. Three factors contribute to the theory's relationship with self-determination. In SDT, there is a close

connection between the need for affiliation and power and the need for belonging and autonomy (Bhattacharya & Mittal, 2020). Furthermore, the authors argue that achievement and competence constitute the weakest link in SDT.

In McClelland's view, organizations should focus on raising the ambitions of their employees by modifying their behavior (Hoffarth, 2019). In such initiatives, self-determination theory may be developed once the individual assumes responsibility for their behavior and takes control of it. It is also stressed in the theory that organizations should recognize when they are not meeting the needs of their employees and provide opportunities for them to do so (Gribanova & Abeltina, 2020).

Expectancy Theory

Vroom (1964) developed the expectancy theory to demonstrate the relationship between expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy is the belief that a given behavior will produce a specific outcome, instrumentality is the belief that a specific reward will result from that outcome, and valence is the value placed on the final reward (Vroom, 1964). The concept of expectation is concerned with the present rather than the past or present (Vroom, 1964). As in equity theory, valence is based on the perceived outcome, just as inequity is based on the perceived outcome in equity theory (Hayibor & Collins, 2015). In both cases, the goal is to achieve satisfaction.

The expectation theory describes motivation as "the degree of eagerness and the probability of success in achieving a goal" (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017, p. 1104). It is possible to coach motivation, provided it is measurable, where the motivation force equals the product of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (Zaslan & Zaslan, 2022). The intrinsic satisfaction of a job includes the job, the job status, and the job condition; there is no

(Malek et al., 2020) have found that there is a direct relationship between job satisfaction and performance. Efficacy is a component of expectancy, such that higher efficacy equates to higher expectancy (Olivier et al., 2018). There is a similarity between these factors and those of the motivation-hygiene theory.

Expectancy Value Theory

It was Atkinson (1964) who developed the expectation value theory to describe the expectation of success based on a person's belief in his or her abilities, as well as the values the person emphasizes as the reasons for engaging in activities to achieve it. Darby and Willingham (2022) outline self-efficacy and locus of control as expectancy factors and intrinsic interests and self-image as value components. A sense of expectation and self-efficacy is an important motivational belief in people who actively seek achievements while seeking success in their lives (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020).

A sense of usefulness is akin to a sense of belonging, both of which contribute to higher job satisfaction and motivation at work, as outlined by Ismayilova and Klassen (2019). Self-determination theory also recognizes the importance of confidence and competence in overcoming challenges, as well as networking and mentoring (Darby & Newman, 2014). Individuals with higher levels of confidence should also expect higher success as a result of their efforts (Nagle, 2021). Expectancy-value theory has been extensively studied from the perspective of both learners and workers, and newer literature emphasizes the theory's relevance for mentoring (Kuhn et al., 2022).

Existence, Relatedness, and Growth Theory

The hierarchy of needs theory was simplified and made more flexible by Alderfer (1989). The original five levels of Maslow's (1954) theory were reduced to three levels, which Alderfer

labeled existence, relatedness, and growth. He combined Maslow's psychological food, water, safety, health, and security needs into the first level as existence. Alderfer defined relatedness as maintaining personal relationships through social interaction, replacing Maslow's love and belonging. In Alderfer's growth theory, the individual's desire to improve is a combination of Maslow's esteem (self-esteem and self-confidence) and self-actualization (discovery, morality, and innovation). Alderfer points out that people do not move linearly from a lower level to a higher level, as Maslow suggested. In reality, people move between levels and are working on multiple levels at once (Alderfer, 1989).

Generally, people tend to put greater effort into the lower levels when they are suffering at the higher levels, according to Alderfer (1989). When people revert from a higher level to a lower level, they experience frustration and anxiety, which can lead to a decrease in motivation (Yang et al., 2021). In the view of Maslow, there is no reverting, and frustration and anxiety arise as a result of not being able to achieve the next level as expected (Alderfer, 1989; Poulou & Norwich, 2019; Yang et al., 2022). There is a need for organizations and leaders to recognize and acknowledge these frustrations to maintain motivation in the workplace (Alderfer & Guzzo, 1980; Poulou & Norwich, 2019; Yang et al., 2022).

Equity Theory

Adams (1963) developed equity theory based on the perception of fairness as a motivating factor. Equity theory states that motivation is triggered by the perception of fairness and increases or decreases depending upon the degree of fairness perceived (Long et al., 2022). According to the theory, a fair distribution of resources would result in the same benefits (rewards), as well as equal costs (contributions) (Yang et al., 2022). There is, however, a difference in perception between cultures when it comes to fairness. The factors that motivate

individuals in Western cultures may not be the same factors that motivate individuals in other cultures (Long et al., 2018).

Equity theory is based on inputs and outputs (Adams, 1963). An input is represented by the skills, time, loyalty, commitment, and sacrifices that workers perceive as contributing to their job or role in the organization (Maqsoom et al., 2021). Wages, rewards, and security are examples of outputs and recognition that the organization perceives as contributing to the worker's well-being (Maqsoom et al., 2021). Equity occurs when inputs and outputs are equal such that fairness is reflected in the environment, for example, the distribution of work within an organization (Scheel et al., 2019). In some literature, game theory has been applied to equity theory, e.g., creating competition to win labor contracts (Swain et al., 2020).

Reinforcement Theory

In Pavlov's early works (1927), reinforcement theory focused on classical conditioning behaviors. Reinforcement theory was extended by Skinner (1953) to include operant conditioning behaviors. The consequences of behavior motivate people to behave positively to receive positive rewards (Kang et al., 2021; Skinner, 1953). Additionally, people are encouraged to avoid negative behaviors that do not result in rewards or punishment (Kang et al., 2021; Skinner, 1953). In this way, people are motivated to repeat what is positive and avoid what is negative (Skinner, 1953; Thorndike, 1898).

Several studies have demonstrated the benefits of reinforcement and self-determination theory for both individuals and organizations (Kumari et al., 2021; Park, 2021). Boosting morale and generating greater enthusiasm in the workplace is easier for the masses to accomplish than for an individual (Kumari et al., 2021). Communication is essential in reinforcement theory, whether the target is a large group of people or a specific individual (Kim, 2021).

Goal Setting Theory

Initially introduced by Locke (1969), the goal-setting theory holds that performance on tasks is closely linked to goals. A deeper examination of the theory reveals the importance of motivation in achieving goals and completing tasks. Communication and feedback are factors that contribute to motivation that lead to higher performance and success for specific and challenging goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). When meaningful feedback is provided, motivation can also be incentivized, increasing quality and performance (Robison et al., 2021). When goals are specific and detailed, it is easier to gauge the effort needed to achieve them, whereas vague goals are more likely to result in low success rates and reduced motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between job satisfaction and goal commitment, while many have found no link between the two (Demirkol, 2020). A study conducted by Demirkol (2020) addressed this discrepancy by incorporating self-efficacy into the measurement of both variables. It has been suggested by Locke and Latham (2019) that goal-setting theory should be revised and it should be stressed that commitment to a goal assumes that the individual is committed to it. Locke & Latham (1999) also emphasized that individuals should set goals instead of being designated to improve motivation. Through such commitments, people may gain self-efficacy through their increased confidence and competence to maintain employability through personal and job satisfaction (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2019; Clements & Kamau, 2017).

Self-coherence

A new theory of motivation has been proposed by Dweck (2017), which focuses on human and psychological needs that revolve around self-coherence. Hagège et al. (2018) discuss

self-coherence as a means to address confidence and competence in making effective decisions under circumstances of cognitive dissonance resulting from changes in the internal and external environments that affect our behavior. In her study, Dweck (2017) asserts that goals become traits that contribute to the formation of behavior patterns. Berdicchia and Masino (2018) summarize her approach as three needs: acceptance, predictability, and competence. Self-competence is closely linked to leadership and job performance. As part of her model, trust, control, and self-esteem may be added, with self-coherence as its core (Dweck, 2017). Furthermore, Dweck (2017) examines the relationship between personality (traits) and motivation.

An individual's sense of existence is anchored by their sense of self-structures, which include functions such as identity, esteem, extension, and image that motivate them toward long-term goals (Budd, 1993). Humans view the self as a coherent entity spanning time from the past to the present and into the future, according to Libby and Eibach (2011). There is a negative relationship between self-coherence and cognitive dissonance, when individual beliefs are out of sync with or do not complement one's behavior (Hagège et al., 2018). As a theoretical construct, cognitive dissonance has been around for over 60 years (Hinojosa et al., 2016). This study does not explore this theory further. However, it is recognized that it has a profound influence on self-coherence theory in terms of satisfying individual and organizational needs (Hinojosa et al., 2016).

Self-efficacy Theory

The Canadian-American psychologist Albert Bandura was a professor at Stanford University from 1955 to 1995. It was Bandura who coined the term self-efficacy in 1977 (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in his or her abilities and skills to

overcome obstacles that may hinder their success. According to this theory, a person's ability to achieve his goals is determined by how well he views or feels about himself. After experiencing failure, setbacks, or disability, people with high self-efficacy are more likely to recover and continue (Iwanaga et al., 2020). Low self-efficacy may lead to a person losing confidence, doubting their abilities, and avoiding difficult tasks. Self-efficacy is a life skill that evolves with age (Bandura, 1977).

The four principal elements of his theory are performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Rosli & Saleh, 2022). An individual's performance accomplishments result from positive experiences and practice through success and failure (Zaman et al., 2021). When we observe how other people handle success and failure, we believe that we may be able to achieve similar results. A role model is essential for building self-efficacy in individuals who lack the experience necessary to achieve positive outcomes through vicarious experiences (Kong et al., 2017).

Positive feedback, encouragement, and coaching from others are all elements of verbal persuasion (Bumann & Younkin, 2022). Our moods, emotions, and physical interactions significantly impact our stress levels as an emotional arousal. A higher stress level may lead to adverse outcomes, and controlling our emotions will help us improve our self-efficacy (Ozyilmaz et al., 2017). Using surveys and peer feedback to measure the effects of emotions in the workplace may provide categorical data that will enhance organizational self-efficacy (Shaw et al., 2021).

Constructivism

Dewey (1916), Bruner (1961), Piaget (1971), and Vygotsky (1978) are the leading theorists of constructivism. The constructivism theory has been enriched by the contributions of

each of its theorists. There have also been many interpretations added over the years by others. For this study, the cognitive forms of Piaget and the social conditions of Vygotsky were reviewed for their relationship to motivation and self-determined learning. There was no examination of radical constructivism in the literature review.

Motivation is the key to learning in a constructivist environment (Yustina, 2020). There is a mutual exchange of knowledge and authority between the facilitator and the learner in the learning process (Piaget, 1971; Vygotsky, 1978). The cognitive constructivism theory refers to knowledge acquired through learning when a learner is ready to learn (Piaget, 1971). Learning occurs when the learner is motivated and builds on previous knowledge (Bowles et al., 2017; Piaget, 1971; Vygotsky, 1978). The social constructivist notion of knowledge is based on the concept of scaffolding (Bowles et al., 2017; Vygotsky, 1978), which refers to the process of obtaining knowledge through collaboration. Depending on how the learner relates knowledge to their environment, learning takes place within context, which results in varying perspectives of reality (Stoller, 2018).

Individual and Organizational Needs

To foster a positive work environment and achieve success, it is imperative to recognize and address the needs of individual workers in the context of organizational management and leadership (Northouse, 2019). A traditional authoritarian leadership style, characterized by a top-down approach with few considerations for employee input, may need to be more effective in meeting the needs of today's workforce (Ucar et al., 202). Rather than adopting a top-down approach, organizations may benefit from adopting a bottom-up approach (Northouse, 2019; Ucar et al., 2021).

Servant leadership emphasizes the leader's role as a servant to their followers (Irving &

Berndt, 2017; Northouse, 2019). A key focus of the organization is to understand and meet its employees' needs, empower them, and facilitate their growth and development. This approach aims to encourage leaders to support their team members, provide guidance and resources, and foster a work environment that fosters collaboration, trust, and mutual respect among team members. Embracing a servant leadership style can help organizations build stronger relationships with their employees, resulting in greater job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity (Irving & Berndt, 2017; Northouse, 2019).

Bercu and Onofrei (2017) dive into management theory to address employee needs in the workplace, particularly through job performance feedback. Employees' development and growth need constructive feedback (Harvey & Green, 2022). It is beneficial for employees when they receive feedback on their performance, allowing them to understand their strengths and areas for improvement. It is also a sign that the organization values their contribution. The result is increased motivation and job satisfaction, as individuals feel recognized and supported as they progress in their careers (Harvey & Green, 2022).

When managers understand and address the needs of their employees, they are more likely to create a supportive environment that promotes employee growth and satisfaction (Williams & McCombs, 2023). The authors introduce language that may resonate more with contemporary managers to modernize and adapt Maslow's theory to today's management practices. Authentic leadership, ostracism, and nurturing confidence are among the concepts they incorporate. Authentic leadership involves being genuine, transparent, and true to oneself, which builds employee trust and credibility. Ostracism refers to the negative effects of exclusion and social rejection in the workplace, emphasizing the need to create an inclusive and supportive work environment (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2017). Employees empowered to believe in their

abilities and feel self-efficacious are more likely to be confident (Malureanu et al., 2021).

Leadership and Career Mobility

Leadership is defined as the capacity to motivate others (Northouse, 2019), and research into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation continues today (Kumari et al., 2021). In implicit leadership theory, character traits and essence play an important role (Khorakian & Sharifirad, 2018; Latta, 2019; Offermann & Coats, 2018). In their study, Schyns et al. (2020) examined motivation from a leadership perspective beyond implicit leadership theories through the lens of the self-concept. As a result of self-efficacy and self-determination, the motivation to lead may result from meeting our physiological and psychological needs (Badura et al., 2020).

Leadership requires a combination of soft and hard skills that may not be learned in formal education, according to Munir (2021). Experience and knowledge sharing between peers often facilitate the acquisition of these skills, which leads to a sense of cognitive significance in the workplace (Liu et al., 2019a). Similarly, under-education and over-education in the workplace can harm career mobility. The relationship between education and wages in the workplace was examined empirically by Büchel and Mertens (2004). For younger workers entering the workforce, overeducation may provide upward mobility later in their careers. A wide range of professionals were included in their study, including architects, chemists, engineers, scientists, and mathematicians (Büchel & Mertens, 2004).

Trust, Communication, and Innovation

The ability to build trust and communicate effectively are two soft skills that leaders should possess at a high level of competency (Zamora-Polo et al., 2019). Using digital learning environments can also enhance organizational motivation and self-determination (Li, 2019). A leader must build trust among all team members (Furumo, 2018). Creating a culture of trust that

motivates and inspires workers to excel at their strengths requires effective communication (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021).

Leaders of organizations who establish trust and open communication with their employees directly influence innovative work behaviors that enhance long-term employability (Stoffers et al., 2019). An organization seeking a competitive advantage in an ever-changing market and social economy must invest in innovation (Xie et al., 2018). The role of innovation in combatting the problems associated with globalization and unstable labor markets is crucial to ensuring the longevity and sustainability of organizations in the 21st century (Duradoni & Di Fabio, 2019).

Job Satisfaction

Integrating work and life requires positive verbal feedback at home and at work (Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020). Encouragement is crucial to performance, particularly in agile working environments (Denning, 2018). Workplace success also depends on one's well-being. Stress, worry, depression, and anxiety can adversely affect a worker's working environment, so maintaining high levels of self-efficacy in the workplace is essential (Havermans et al., 2018). To promote self-efficacy and success at work, consistent feedback, peer modeling, participation, and the ability to make choices are simple approaches (Hawes & Nelson, 2021; Lee & Lee, 2021).

Those who pursue higher education, pursue a career outside of their training, or explore other areas of interest are influenced by their social experiences (Arendale & Hane, 2016). Cooperative learning environments promote group mentalities that lead to individual success. It has been demonstrated that peer-assisted learning promotes higher success rates among individuals still deciding what they want to do in life (Arendale & Hane, 2016). Job seekers view

organizations that provide training opportunities and access to multiple learning avenues as a positive benefit and contribution to meeting their needs (Grover et al., 2018).

Role Satisfaction

Role satisfaction is important in determining self-efficacy in working adults (Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020). Many people may find themselves in positions in which they are overqualified and often overeducated. Several studies conducted by Baert et al. (2013) have concluded that managers should only hire workers whose education and experience levels match their roles. The result was a higher retention rate and a greater sense of self-efficacy for the worker (Baert et al., 2013). Those who accept roles that are not appropriate for their level of education experience an adverse effect on their well-being and life balance (Piper, 2014). Self-efficacy may be negatively affected by poor decision-making because a person fails to realize their full potential through their true potential (Bauwens et al., 2018). Worker role satisfaction is also recognized as a well-being factor in corporate social responsibility (Bauwens et al., 2018). As Piper (2014) explains, over-education is a concern among adults, and there are both benefits and risks associated with achieving role satisfaction through continuing education.

Job crafting is creating job descriptions and job descriptions that effectively bolster engagement and motivation in the workplace and reduce the effects of job burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). A positive relationship exists between work environment and long-term employability where informal and informal learning exists (Stoffers & Van der Heijden, 2018; Stoffers et al., 2019; Van der Heijden et al., 2015). Research on workplace learning has shown that role satisfaction changes as people age. Organizations may gain competitive advantages by investing in their workforce (Nazir et al., 2018) and by crafting jobs and designing roles that influence worker satisfaction (Di Fabio, 2017).

Perseverance and Resilience

Perseverance and resilience play an important role in the ability of an individual to adapt to changes in their environment constantly and consistently (Mayordomo et al., 2016). The ability to persevere is overcoming obstacles and setbacks in pursuit of happiness and pleasure (Disabato et al., 2018). The correlation between perseverance and autonomous efforts is stronger than between perseverance and peer-related activities (Gerhards & Gravert, 2020). The desire to become better versions of ourselves may be driven by our self-determination over time. Mental health depends on perseverance and well-being for developing and maintaining spiritual resilience (Rogers et al., 2022).

Individuals with personal resiliency can recover from challenges or adversity (Di Fabio & Peiró, 2018; Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018). Several factors contribute to career resilience, including job satisfaction, job level, and salary (Han et al., 2019). A person's resilience may also be used to measure their well-being, especially during times of crisis and other challenging events throughout their lives (Forycka et al., 2022). Liu et al., 2019b describe resilience as a competency necessary for surviving extended periods of stress and environmental change. Individuals who possess a high level of resilience and autonomy are likelier to succeed in the working environment than those who perceive themselves as constrained by their organization (Gardner, 2020).

Reciprocity and Social Influence

Liu et al. (2022) conclude that reciprocity is essential to building relationships and developing trust, which reduces anxiety. Reciprocity may be related to social exchange theory, in which positive social interactions lead to positive performance, and negative interactions lead to adverse results (Zhu et al., 2021). Mahmoodi et al. (2018) found that people respond to social

inputs in a reciprocal manner that mirrors the input, such as showing respect when respect is given, which may enhance their self-efficacy (Mahmoodi et al., 2018). Leader-member exchanges occur due to reciprocal social exchanges between superiors and subordinates over time. (Dansereau et al., 1975).

Social influence is a popular topic of organizational research, and recent literature examines the motivational factors behind individual use of social influence to accomplish goals (McAllister et al., 2016). Maintaining social influence during a leadership transition is important, especially at the executive level, when information and knowledge must be transferred smoothly (Yi et al., 2020). Additionally, social influence is essential for the success of people entering a new organization or learning community, as the ability to establish social networks facilitates acclimation to the new environment (John et al., 2017; Sadewo et al., 2020).

Lifelong Learning and Heutagogy

In terms of constructivism, lifelong learning refers to the lived experiences of individuals who are motivated to pursue learning throughout their lives actively (Chukwuedo et al., 2021). The value and motivation to be lifelong learners may vary depending on their backgrounds, culture, or worldviews. Historically, constructivism can be traced back to Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky (Duman & Karakas-Ozur, 2020; Esteban-Guitart, 2018). In recent years, lifelong learning has been associated with adulthood, where learners participate actively in the learning process through discovery (Mohammed & Kinyo, 2020). Following the transition from pedagogy to andragogy, heutagogy is considered the next level of learning (Blaschke, 2012; Jones et al., 2019). The main differences between heutagogy and andragogy are that heutagogy emphasizes spontaneous learning, learner-centeredness, and self-awareness, whereas andragogy emphasizes linear learning, guided instruction, and promoting adult motivation to learn (Blaschke, 2012;

Knowles et al., 2020).

Hase and Kenyon (2015) coined heutagogy as an instructional strategy focusing on the importance of building competence, belonging, and autonomy in an environment in which the learner takes charge. It differs from pedagogy (teaching children) and andragogy (facilitating learning in adulthood), where the learner follows the instructions of the instructor and has little or no influence on the education they receive (Jones et al., 2019). It is important to recognize that heutagogy aims to modernize adult learning to meet the individual needs of learners in much the same way that Knowles (1977) extended pedagogy into andragogy to utilize the current technologies in use. Heutagogical learning processes are characterized by double-looping and triple-looping, with online and distance-based education predominantly taking place through online learning environments (Agonács & Matos, 2019).

Heutagogy is an educational theory that supports blended learning approaches that help students to build competence, autonomy, and independence across a wide range of cultures and populations (Blaschke, 2012). Additionally, heutagogy extends andragogy to include self-determination, self-direction, and self-regulation as part of the learning process (Lock et al., 2021). Heutagogy is necessary to maintain high-quality workforces in the 21st century, as learners and organizations need one another to succeed (Romero, 2015). In other words, it is the act of self-regulation and self-direction that arises out of an intrinsic motivation based on lived experiences (Blaschke et al., 2014).

Self-determined learners initiate, plan, monitor, and control what, how, where, and from whom they learn by setting their own goals (Hase & Kenyon, 2015). The concept of independence in learning is gaining popularity throughout the world (Blaschke, 2021; Rahmah et al., 2018; Stecula & Wolniak, 2022). It has become common practice for organizations to offer

self-paced study opportunities and sponsor learning environments such as MOOCs to encourage independent learning at work (Agonács et al., 2019). Other examples of independent learning include distance-based universities that offer graduate-level certifications, MBAs, and PhDs.

Autonomy

Autonomy is a self-determined need that is fulfilled when learners develop self-regulating competency skills that enable them to relate to those they admire (Vergara-Morales & Del Valle, 2021). Self-determined workers are more likely to perceive increased job satisfaction when they have autonomy in the workplace (Dou et al., 2016). It has been suggested that mentoring may benefit the perception of job satisfaction through autonomy as it promotes self-empowerment for both mentor and mentee (Matthews et al., 2019). In this respect, autonomy means that self-determined learners take an active role in their education, even if they are not expected to do so alone or without guidance.

Satisfying individual needs is a conscious act of intrinsic motivation essential to engaging others and the external environment (Noonan, 2022). A sense of engagement may further promote autonomy for self-determined learners seeking to own and control their learning environment through self-initiation and choice (Deci & Ryan, 2014a). Individual perceptions of success and failure in the working environment are influenced by job autonomy (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). In this context, a positive relationship exists between autonomy and well-being (Stiglbauer & Kovacs, 2018).

Ownership

It is a conscious decision and self-determined act to take personal responsibility for education (Dommett, 2018). Metrics that assess ownership of personal learning include engagement, self-direction, self-efficacy, and self-monitoring-(Case, 2020). A sense of technical

ownership of the work environment, culture, and psychological safety may increase or decrease perceptions of a positive learning environment (enjoying one's work). Establishing objectives for planning long-term career aspirations and assessing gaps in skills and needs demonstrate increased ownership through self-awareness and self-efficacy (Segarra & Gentry, 2021). Networking, establishing relationships, developing rapport, and becoming lifelong learners capable of critical thinking also enhance feelings of ownership (Sui et al., 2013; Szabo, 2019). Taking responsibility for one's actions and achieving a purposeful goal from within strengthens the ability to create and sustain teamwork within the workplace (Mayhew et al., 2007).

The ability to own something is an intrinsic behavior that combines experience with learning to create optimal learning conditions for self-directed learning pursuits (Ausburn, 2004; Knowles et al., 2005). According to Knowles et al. (2005), intrinsically motivated adults find real-world applications for their learning and are more apt to assume ownership of their educational journey. A growth mindset may also contribute to ownership, especially among adults pursuing advanced degrees, certifications, and professions beyond a master's degree (Burton, 2020). Effort and engagement are important factors that determine how much self-directed learning impacts personal growth and improvement (Porter & Freeman, 2020). The organization should respect the intellectual privacy of the learner as a function of their autonomy when encouraging ownership through self-directed learning (Rubel & Jones, 2016).

Psychological and Spiritual Well-being

An individual's well-being is defined as their ability to function at a high level (Diener, 2009). A person's well-being is associated with their personality (Ryff, 2013) and continues to be the focus of organizational research (Inceoglu et al., 2018; Schockman & Thompson, 2021). The spiritual dimension of well-being is often overlooked as a measure of personal well-being

(VanderWeele et al., 2021). It is argued by Deci and Ryan (2000) that a person's well-being is critical to their ability to function effectively within their environment.

Intrapreneurial self-capital is also closely associated with the well-being of individual resiliency (Duradoni & Di Fabio, 2019). More specifically, eudaimonic well-being refers to our psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy within an environment conducive to happiness (Deci & Ryan, 2013; Guest, 2017). A recent study by Tang et al. (2019) highlights the important role self-determination plays in meeting our competency needs to enhance our well-being on a whole. Other factors contributing to well-being, such as emotions, support systems, personality traits, and physical health, are also included by Ryan and Deci (2001).

Leaders are also concerned about the well-being of their followers and direct reports (Michel et al., 2021). Leaders who engage their followers using a learning-centered approach contribute to the well-being of those they serve by encouraging active participation in the learning environment (Abdulaziz Alfayez et al., 2021). Human resource managers prioritize the well-being of their employees in an effort to attract talented individuals to an organization while retaining existing talent (Malhotra et al., 2020).

Eudaimonia and Well-being

The highest human good, according to Aristotle (2002), is eudaimonia, which refers to happiness, well-being, and flourishing (Di Basilio, 2021; Tesar & Peters, 2019). Di Basilio and Ryff (1989) define eudaimonia as an individual's pursuit of a complete life through reflection and habit (Di Basilio, 2021). The literature also discusses it as the characteristics or qualities that enable an individual to perform well with confidence and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2008). A sense of eudaimonia provides individuals with how to seek out new relationships, develop new

skills, and improve their critical thinking skills (Deci & Ryan, 2006, 2017; Peters et al., 2018).

Deci and Ryan (2006) explain that having a sense of well-being is essential to living a fulfilling life through self-determination, which means taking responsibility for one's own education. The lack of opportunities in the lives of working adults can make it difficult for them to maintain eudaimonia and well-being (Shim & Sim, 2020). It has been demonstrated that well-being and compassion are interconnected and that these two factors may lead to self-transcendence (Liu et al., 2021; Lomas & Ivtzan, 2015). Developing self-compassion may lead to compassion for others through self-discovery (Chio et al., 2021). Blasco-Belled et al. (2019) link empathy to a person's overall well-being as a component of emotional intelligence. As a final point, emotional intelligence is indirectly correlated with well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Miao et al., 2016).

Lifelong Learning

Learning throughout one's lifetime is a complex process that includes formal and informal learning opportunities that are motivated by self-determination to achieve personal and professional growth (Sangrà et al., 2019). From the perspective of human capital, Schuller et al. (2004) also examined the benefits of learning. According to their research, those who returned to education reported a greater sense of trust, civic duty, health, and citizenship. As well as a decrease in incarceration rates, they reported a decrease in crime.

A study by Heckman et al. (2017) examined the decision of several age groups to return to school or complete their formal education. According to the study, higher education reduces poverty and depression and raises self-esteem. Other benefits reported in their research included an increase in civic engagement and an overall improvement in health. In their study, Heckman et al. (2017) attribute these findings to a rise in self-esteem and a reduction in incarceration as

individuals become more educated.

Krogulska et al. (2021) investigated how adults decide whether to continue their education. Adults were found to be unaware of the consequences of not practicing and developing lifelong learning habits. It was discovered that many workers were facing technology-related issues and other challenges. Keeping up with the educational needs of the workplace will assist workers in remaining relevant in their careers (Krogulska et al., 2021). Professional development benefits society across a wide range of disciplines and professions (Drude et al., 2019). Online learning environments that are interactive and adaptive have become a popular trend in lifelong learning (Drude et al., 2019) and facilitate the learning process through micro-steps.

Rüber et al. (2018) also studied the practice of lifelong learning. They observed a recent trend of adults returning to school or pursuing other avenues of continuing education. Many employers are willing to collaborate socially with individuals who strive to improve themselves (Rüber et al., 2018). Adults seeking to self-actualize and control their sense of self-efficacy display these behaviors and actions as examples of learner responsibility (Msila, 2020).

Confidence and Competence

Competence is an essential soft skill for maintaining high levels of employability (Rodríguez Martínez et al., 2021). Panadero et al. (2017) describe self-assessments as subjective measures of individual competency and understanding. They play an important role in promoting lifelong learning habits. A learner's self-efficacy is measured by their perception of their achievements, accomplishments, and the acquisition of newly acquired knowledge (Martinez & Muoz, 2021). Self-assessment methods have recently evolved from quantitative measures that measure the learner's outcome to qualitative measures that evaluate the learner's learning process

(Panadero et al., 2017).

Developing competence and confidence requires active learning in group settings (Bingham et al., 2021). Empowerment, citizenship, inclusion, and employability are additional benefits of these behaviors (Chughtai, 2019; Giancaspro et al., 2021). The higher education sector is a good example of an active learning environment that allows learners to deliberate and think critically (Gereluk, 2020). An organization that is transparent about its data collection and how it uses learner analytics to enhance and promote active learning creates a greater sense of belonging and inclusion among learners (Jones et al., 2020).

Belonging, Social Inclusion, and the Role of Technology on Relatedness

Belonging and social inclusion are essential aspects of human well-being and have become even more relevant in recent times, particularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected people worldwide (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021). Pandemic-related social isolation highlighted the importance of belonging and maintaining connections due to the pandemic. There has long been a focus on social inclusion in research and literature related to special education and disability, where efforts are made to ensure that all individuals can participate in society and in educational settings (Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2020). In recent years, however, social inclusion has expanded beyond these specific fields as self-determined learners increasingly seek diverse educational opportunities in higher education.

As Stentiford and Koutsouris (2020) explain, higher education institutions are evolving to meet the needs of diverse learners, creating inclusive learning environments sensitive to individual differences and preferences. In today's higher education environment, self-determined learners seek various educational opportunities (Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2020). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, technology had already transformed the learning environment (Gravett &

Ajjawi, 2021), and learners have sought alternate blended approaches for monitoring and controlling their learning through the use of technology for a long time (Boud et al., 2018). The use of technology in higher education may serve as a bridge to improving relatedness through continued education and lifelong learning, aligning individual heutagogical needs for belonging with organizational needs for improving quality and competence at work (Orazbayeva et al., 2019).

It is important to acknowledge technology's role in enhancing learning opportunities and supporting relatedness. Several tools and platforms have already been developed to enhance the learning environment before the pandemic. Gravett and Ajjawi (2021) discuss how technology facilitates connectivity and fosters a sense of belonging in virtual learning environments. A blended learning approach incorporates traditional and online learning methods, allowing learners more control over their learning progress and adapting the process to suit their needs (Boud et al., 2018). Through this personalized approach to learning, learners may experience a greater sense of relatedness and engagement since they feel empowered and motivated to take charge of their education.

The integration of technology in education can also be used to improve relatedness and meet the needs of self-determined learners who are seeking continued education and lifelong learning in higher education. As Orazbayeva et al. (2019) described, technology can support a heutagogical approach in which learners take a more self-directed and autonomous role in shaping their learning experiences. It is possible to offer flexible and personalized learning opportunities through technology, aligning with individual heutagogical needs for belonging and connection. This alignment can also be advantageous to organizations seeking to improve the quality and competence of their workforce, as employees who are provided with continuous

education and lifelong learning opportunities are more likely to feel engaged, valued, and motivated to contribute significantly to the organization's success.

Human Capital

Human capital can be defined as the quality of life and well-being experienced through job and role satisfaction (Di Fabio & Peiró, 2018). Human and social capital has recently been the subject of research focusing on their significant impact on individual and societal well-being (Lucia-Casademunt et al., 2018). A person's human capital consists of skills, knowledge, and abilities acquired through education, training, and experience. In contrast, social capital refers to the value derived from social networks and relationships, which may provide access to resources, support, and opportunities (Tasheva & Hillman, 2019).

In recent years, human and social capital have been studied in the context of economic development and workforce outcomes (Tahseva & Hillman, 2019). Individuals with higher levels of human capital, such as advanced education and specialized skills, are more likely to have access to diverse social networks and social capital (Ceci et al., 2019). It may be possible to increase job opportunities, career advancements, and earnings potential due to these networks. Consequently, strong human and social capital can contribute to individual success and the overall economic growth and prosperity of modern societies (Shiell et al., 2020).

The relevance of recent research on human and social capital for addressing social inequality and promoting inclusivity is also critical. The concept of social capital has been demonstrated to be a valuable resource for marginalized and disadvantaged groups (Eriksson et al., 2021). Those from underprivileged backgrounds may have limited access to formal education and employment opportunities. Still, their strong social networks can provide informal support, mentorship, and resources to help them overcome these challenges, according to Eriksson et al.

Today's society can work towards reducing disparities and promoting equal opportunities for all individuals by recognizing the importance of social capital and fostering inclusive social networks (Eriksson et al., 2021).

Human and social capital has become even more important in the era of rapid technological advances and globalization (Grzegorzcyk, 2019). Automation and artificial intelligence are reshaping the job market, emphasizing adaptable skills and continuous learning (Tambe et al., 2019). As a result, investing in human capital becomes an increasingly important strategy for individuals who wish to remain competitive in the labor market and navigate the changing employment landscape successfully. The world's interconnectedness through technology also emphasizes the importance of social capital in building bridges between diverse communities, cultures, and countries (Grzegorzcyk, 2019). Studies in this area provide valuable insights into how social networks facilitate international collaborations, knowledge exchange, and global problem-solving, making modern societies more resilient and interconnected.

Mentoring and Social Capital

In addition to formal and informal mentoring, peer mentoring, cultural mentoring, and group mentoring are also available (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019). Mentoring can also be related to transformational learning theory, in which disorienting dilemmas require critical reflection and discussion (Cranton, 2016; Mezirow, 1978, 2006). It is difficult to teach transformative learning since it is an inherent process (Cranton, 2016). Depending on the learner's needs, mentorship may be active or passive (Broughton et al., 2019). Mentors and mentees must develop a genuine relationship (Mälkki & Green, 2014).

There may be a connection between mentoring and social capital in the context of belonging in self-determined learning. Liu et al. (2020) demonstrate the importance of coworker

relationships for personal and organizational growth. Developing these relationships fosters learning that positively impacts personal growth and development and meets the heutagogical needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Priest et al., 2018). A mentoring program can build trust and respect between leaders and followers, thus empowering aspects of leadership (Gower et al., 2022). A reciprocal self-efficacy model may also contribute to developing confidence and competence (Paloma et al., 2020). Adults may benefit from mentoring in terms of higher earnings, career advancement, job satisfaction, and job advancement (Kay & Wallace, 2009).

Active and Adaptive Learning

Adaptive learning scaffolds reduce the burdens or adjust the difficulty level associated with a given learning task based on the individual's problem (Borrella et al., 2022; Taylor et al., 2021). Gonzalez-Castro et al. (2021) define adaptive learning as a method of automatically assigning learning activities tailored to individual learners' abilities and competences. Increased engagement with frequent assessments of conceptual learning leads to better engagement and equitable academic performance in racially minoritized groups (Liu et al., 2017; Park et al., 2021). Learners who collaborate and work together to accomplish their learning goals can improve their soft and hard skills through active learning (Betti et al., 2022).

It has been extensively researched over the last three decades to determine how adaptive learning can be used to meet each individual's learning needs and abilities (Wang et al., 2020). Adaptive learning may also mitigate equity issues associated with large classrooms or groups of learners within an organization (Wang et al., 2020). Recently, gamification and games have gained attention for delivering content and facilitating adaptive learning (Vanbecelaere et al., 2019). A key characteristic of adaptive learning is “personalizing learning to meet students’

diverse needs" (Liu et al., 2017, p. 1606).

Self-awareness in Learning

Many advanced degree programs in management, such as MBAs, include courses, lessons, and other materials on self-awareness (Lawrence et al., 2018). Advanced leadership programs aim to increase self-awareness and facilitate the transition from management to leadership for MBA graduates (Svalgaard, 2018). A person's ability to develop self-awareness does not happen overnight, and it takes a substantial amount of time for the process to occur (Carden et al., 2021). Self-awareness and heutagogy are closely linked through self-efficacy and other self-paradigms that evolve and develop over time (Carden et al., 2021).

The goal of workplace coaching is to personalize learning in the workplace through collaboration (Bozer & Jones, 2018). Learning in the workplace enhances self-efficacy and has been shown to improve performance, engagement, and job satisfaction (Bandura, 1977; Bozer & Jones, 2018). Developing self-awareness is a key characteristic of transformational leaders (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Southwest Airlines and TD Industries have employed servant leadership techniques recently to develop their employees into more capable leaders (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018).

Summary

Many theories explain the motivating and demotivating factors that may lead to success and learning in the workplace. Still, few exist that examine the study's phenomenon in the financial or banking industry. There is a great need for additional research to fully understand human behavior in motivational theory, heutagogy, and lifelong learning. There is extensive research on the benefits of lifelong learning, and a surplus of empirical evidence exists to support those benefits beyond the studies themselves. However, the literature is missing studies and

qualitative research that examine the motivations of those adults who actively pursue lifelong learning to satisfy their basic psychological needs. Exploring these patterns more closely may create a greater sense of social responsibility.

Educators and researchers need to conduct relevant research to advance the field of education and transfer of knowledge. Theory alone does not contribute to the literature and is insufficient to advance the field. A review of commonly used words and phrases in motivation, self-efficacy, and self-determination theories has been provided in this chapter to examine existing literature in more detail. The topical analysis synthesized that literature by examining heutagogy, motivation, job satisfaction, role satisfaction, well-being, lifelong learning, competence, belonging, inclusion, relatedness, autonomy, mentoring, social capital, leadership, and career mobility. By including this transcendental phenomenological study in Chapter Two, future researchers can fill in the gaps in the existing literature about heutagogy and lifelong learning in the banking industry.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills. This section begins with an overview of the research design and research questions. The next section describes the setting, the participants, and the researcher's position. In this chapter, procedures, and plans for collecting data are described to establish the study's trustworthiness. The third chapter discusses the methods used in a qualitative study on the lived experiences and motivational factors that influence middle managers in the banking sector to engage in self-determination and lifelong learning. The principles of self-determination theory have been incorporated into this qualitative study, which proposes that people are motivated when they feel confident, competent, autonomous, and connected to others. The findings of this study will contribute to the growing literature on motivation and self-determination theory in organizational settings.

Research Design

The aim of this study was to identify common themes shared by middle managers in the banking industry who practice heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills by focusing on significant statements, perceptions of learning events, and clusters of meaning. To conduct this study, I selected a transcendental phenomenological design. In particular, I deemed Moustakas' (1994) methods for capturing, reading, clustering, and describing participants' lived experiences to be the most effective analysis method. Choosing this field of study broadened my philosophical understanding and axiological assumptions regarding the inherent value of lifelong learning. In keeping with Berger's (2015) recommendation, I have considered aspects of my

positionality, such as my personal experiences and professional beliefs, when designing this project.

The transcendental phenomenological research design was convenient and offered the most accurate and reasonable approach to achieving the study's objectives. The approach is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2018), who emphasize the importance of the observer's or researcher's presence in the studied environment. Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (2018) emphasize that qualitative research involves examining things in their natural habitats. Therefore, the above research design is appropriate for this qualitative study to understand the self-determined learning behaviors of middle managers in the banking industry who are interested in lifelong learning and the factors that influence those behaviors.

A systematic and methodical approach is necessary for qualitative research to be successful. The phenomenology study reintroduces the modern researcher to the traditional tasks of philosophy without applying empirical science (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The method allows for exploring individual curiosity by observing the world through various lenses and perspectives while bracketing the researcher's experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Structure plays an important role in transcendental phenomenological research. The method adds value to research design by identifying assumptions, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting findings by describing the essence or shared experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Through proper research and design, I could generalize qualitative data using a phenomenological approach (Guenther & Falk, 2019).

Research Questions

The research questions for this transcendental phenomenological study focused on the lived experiences of adults in the banking industry. The central research question is designed to

target only the adults who exhibit self-determination and lifelong learning behaviors. The first two sub-questions address intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors of self-determined learning. The third sub-question is designed with constructivism in mind to allow for descriptions of individual perceptions that may connect self-determination and lifelong learning through other realities.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills?

Sub-Question One

What factors have influenced the heutagogical learning behaviors of middle managers in a banking environment?

Sub-Question Two

How do middle managers in a banking environment describe adaptive learning systems in their own lives as part of their pursuit of lifelong learning?

Sub-Question Three

What are the perceptions of middle managers in a banking environment on the relationships between heutagogy and lifelong learning?

Setting and Participants

This section aims to identify the research setting and the reasons behind its selection. It describes the banking industry in a large metropolitan area where participants were selected for the study. It concludes by describing the study's participants and the process used to solicit them.

Setting

Northeast Florida's banking industry is rapidly growing, with many middle managers

playing a critical role in ensuring organizational success (JAXUSA, 2022; PR Newswire, 2021; Seacoast Bank, 2022; The Business Journals, 2021). A significant portion of the region's economy is derived from the banking industry. Managing teams effectively is an essential function of the middle manager in any organization (Goldstein, 2020). The Northeast Florida region offers abundant opportunities for middle managers to advance their careers and contribute meaningfully to their organizations' success. Considering the value of middle managers' perspectives, experiences, and challenges, this qualitative study targeted middle managers.

In the banking industry, middle managers are essential as they oversee various functions, including operations, customer service, compliance, and risk management (Kumar et al., 2021). They also play a critical role in driving organizational success by implementing strategies, setting targets, and monitoring performance to ensure the bank achieves its financial objectives (Goldstein, 2020). As the banking industry grows in Northeast Florida, middle managers must develop their skills and stay updated with industry trends and technologies.

During this study, motivational and learning factors contributing to middle managers' well-being were identified. Analysis of the study's findings led to the identification of strategies for improving employee engagement, retention, and performance in the banking industry. Middle managers may improve their performance by investing in professional development and helping their organizations remain competitive in a marketplace that is becoming more complex and dynamic.

Participants

During the study, the selected participants were asked to describe their lived experiences with lifelong learning. A substantial emphasis was placed on establishing a sample pool as large as possible to control the effect diversity may have on the final sample of selected participants

(Gruijters & Peters, 2020). My Liberty University email account and my personal Gmail account were used to communicate with participants.

Purposeful, criterion-based sampling from a sample pool of approximately 175 middle managers throughout Northeast Florida was used to select participants for this study. Using purposeful sampling in this qualitative research ensured that selected participants and sites provided the information necessary to understand the study's central phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The selection of participants was based on criteria that ensured they were aligned with the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were accessible to me through Microsoft Teams, on-site interviews, and email correspondence.

Middle manager respondents were asked to provide voluntary answers to demographic questions regarding gender, age range, ethnicity, years with the organization, formal education, and descriptions of the value of lifelong learning in the workplace. Various demographics and educational backgrounds were considered when selecting a sample to ensure a diverse sampling and saturation of the initial sample population (Patton, 2015). The final study began with 15 participants who responded positively to actively pursuing lifelong learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The final selection process was designed to ensure participants represented a balanced mix of gender, ethnicity, age, educational level, and a shared affinity for lifelong learning. Characteristics such as national origin, religion, political affiliation, sexual preference, and marital status were purposefully excluded to focus on the phenomenon rather than the demographics of the study's participants. Keeping the criteria limited ensured replication in future studies using similar participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were selected from various departments, divisions, and areas of responsibility throughout the organization. The

participants had various formal education levels, including no college, some college, a bachelor's degree, and a graduate degree and above. I relied on the participants' self-reports and self-identification accuracy as part of the purposeful selection process.

Researcher Positionality

My most notable achievements have resulted from many successive failures. I failed seventh grade twice because of poor attendance. A disruptive home life prevented me from completing ninth grade. My first job was terminated when I was 19, and I was unmarried with two children at 20. A workplace accident allowed me to earn my GED at 25. Until the age of 38, my rehabilitation and many new jobs in information technology prevented me from continuing my formal education. I graduated with my Bachelor's degree at age 45, earned my MBA in Project Management at 48, and began the journey of becoming a Ph.D. at the age of 49. While pursuing my Ph.D., I also completed a Master's in Teaching and Learning and a Master's in Data Analytics. The Fall of 2023 will mark the start of my Master's degree program in Political Science as I anticipate completing my Ph.D. just before the semester begins.

It was not until I was 30 that I came to know God. Despite lacking formal education and a normal upbringing, I discovered my relevant success through His grace. I learned that my curiosity and innate, lifelong learning behaviors result from His many blessings. As a servant leader, I represent God's expectations by pursuing lifelong learning, even though I am a poor example to follow (English Standard Version Bible, 2016, 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 2:3-5). There are likely to be many others who have similar lived experiences to mine. My purpose for selecting this study was to describe better the motivators and essence found in the lived experiences of self-professed lifelong learners and to advance the field of education. His hand is on my shoulder, His voice is in my ear, and His wisdom guides me to fulfill my life's purpose

according to His will.

Interpretive Framework

I employed the interpretive framework of social constructivism in my study. A social constructivist perspective emphasizes the importance of social interactions and cultural context in shaping individuals' understanding and perception of reality (Greifeneder et al., 2018). My research aimed to comprehend a complex phenomenon by examining participants' perspectives and lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Utilizing the social constructivist approach, I recognized that the participants' motivations for lifelong learning were diverse and multifaceted. Instead of imposing preconceived notions or theories on the data, I allowed their subjective descriptions to guide my understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this manner, I could capture the richness and complexity of their experiences in their own words.

I witnessed a common thread connecting the participants throughout the study, despite their differences in motivations and experiences. A shared understanding and social influence shaped their engagement in lifelong learning as a result of this communal pattern. I applied my background and worldview to interpret these shared experiences. Researchers must acknowledge that their perspectives and biases influence the interpretation of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Having recognized this, I knew how my lens might affect my interpretation of the data. Due to this reflexivity, I was able to be more transparent about how my interpretations might affect the findings.

I took an inductive approach, allowing the data to guide the development of themes and patterns rather than imposing preconceived notions. Throughout this iterative process, I gained a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. In examining this phenomenon, I learned

that many factors affect participants' motivation to pursue lifelong learning.

Philosophical Assumptions

Researchers' philosophical assumptions reflect their values and personal beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These beliefs or suppositions are fundamental to the way individuals interpret the world around them and make decisions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In qualitative research, researchers use four philosophical assumptions to formulate the findings of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I communicated my philosophy using ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions. I purposefully refrained from conducting my study using teleological assumptions.

My philosophy throughout my career is that people acquire knowledge through interactions with the world around them. Knowledge evolves due to people participating in social and cultural events. Learning for me is also a process of discovery and failure, as I am willing to make mistakes but not willing to repeat them. People cease to acquire knowledge, understanding, and learning for various reasons, including lack of confidence, fear of failure, judgment, and rejection. The lack of confidence in modern society is the most significant obstacle to self-actualization and social equity. Additionally, I believe transcendentalism is appropriate for examining the participant's awareness or intention to learn over the long term, as Husserl described it (Giorgi, 2009).

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumptions are concerned with the meaning of the characteristics of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I do not acknowledge the existence of multiple realities in this study. I hold a monistic view of reality, believing there is only one objective reality independent of individual perceptions and perspectives. I am aware that there are multiple realities in the minds of others, but I also recognize that each may interpret the same reality differently. Their unique

experiences, beliefs, and values may influence their perceptions.

I committed to being objective and unbiased in this study, valuing the diversity of perspectives among the participants and seeking to understand their descriptions of reality on their terms rather than imposing my preconceptions. By employing a specific theoretical lens (SDT), I sought to enhance my understanding of the collected data and gain deeper insights into the participants' viewpoints. I did not allow my perspective to interfere or cause me to judge the participants' descriptions throughout this study.

Epistemological Assumption

I adopted a specific epistemological stance, which refers to the philosophical assumptions concerning how knowledge can be gained and what constitutes valid knowledge. Creswell and Poth (2018) outline several epistemological assumptions that focus on gaining knowledge through intimate contact with the study's participants or phenomena. I spent extended periods of time with the study's participants to establish an intimate relationship with them. The study's participants and I spent time establishing trust and rapport before the study was officially launched. The data was collected by observing the participants' behaviors, listening to their thoughts, and engaging in meaningful discussions.

I aimed to understand the participants' perceptions of reality within the context of the banking industry. To achieve this, I employed a method that involved establishing close and personal relationships with each participant in the study. By doing so, I aimed to gain a deep and nuanced understanding of their perspectives, experiences, and beliefs related to the research topic. Additionally, I maintained contact with the participants even after the study was completed. This post-study contact allowed me to clarify further and verify certain findings or gain additional insights that emerged after the initial data collection.

Axiological Assumption

Axiological assumptions in qualitative studies require that researchers make their values known in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I wish to be fully transparent and acknowledge that my biases are present in this study and that I have bracketed out those biases to maintain value in the analysis. A bracketing approach ensures interpretations are grounded in the data rather than being influenced by my biases. (Moustakas, 1994). I engaged in bracketing as a means of acknowledging my preconceived notions and biases concerning the study's topic. However, I consciously set these biases aside during data collection and analysis to avoid letting them unduly influence the findings and interpretations.

Nevertheless, I shared personal details about my life to explain my beliefs and values regarding lifelong learning, my relationship with God, and my belief that I have been called to perform this study by Him. As a researcher, I acknowledge how my personal beliefs may influence the research process and interpretation of the results to some degree by being transparent about my involvement and values. This openness is essential to this qualitative study, as it allows readers and other researchers to critically assess the potential impact of my biases on the study's outcomes. My transparency enhances trustworthiness and credibility, allowing readers to evaluate the extent to which my beliefs have influenced the study's design, data collection, and analysis.

Researcher's Role

My research is guided by a social constructivist framework for gathering and collecting data as well as for including myself as a human instrument during the presentation of my findings. My study did not include direct reports, nor was it conducted among those to whom I had given a peer review, 360-degree feedback, or provided a personal recommendation. These

measures were taken to protect my integrity and to avoid any conflicts of interest that may have resulted in an additional bias in my research.

Currently, I am a vice president with a global bank in Northeast Florida, serving as a senior project management lead, responsible for overseeing multiple initiatives. The initiatives I manage are related to the organization's use of digital learning technologies for ongoing employee training. I have direct access to third-party vendors and non-personally identifiable information about using the learning technologies I manage. I cannot access individual training assessment scores, personal improvement plans, or pass/fail rates for individual assessments. As a researcher, I did not choose participants for my study whom I had authority over, nor did I select participants whom I could influence directly.

Procedures

The procedures for this study required multiple levels of permission. As part of the protocol for the study, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Liberty University and the participants granted me permission to collect and analyze data. My dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Board provided me with feedback on my questions and were always monitoring my progress throughout the process. The data collected, analyzed, and reported by the study were scrutinized and evaluated by my committee once the study had been completed.

Permissions

My dissertation committee reviewed my prospectus before seeking the Director's approval. Upon receiving approval from the Director of Qualitative Research, I submitted my prospectus to Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). I was permitted to proceed with minor edits (replacing anonymous with confidential), and I sent out my recruitment letters immediately after receiving permission from the IRB. It was necessary to follow this approval

process to protect human subjects' safety, security, and identity (Gall et al., 2007). The letter of approval from the IRB can be found in Appendix A.

The consent form presented to participants briefly described the study's purpose, assured confidentiality, and stated that all withdrawal requests would be honored (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As part of the consent form, I included definitions for adaptive learning and lifelong learning, as well as a description of the purpose of my study, so that potential candidates would have a better understanding of why they were being sought. As part of the consent form, participants were provided with details regarding the collection and analysis of data so that they could make an informed and voluntary decision to participate in the study. The participant consent form can be found in Appendix C.

Recruitment Plan

Recruitment of participants for a dissertation study is one of the most crucial aspects of scientific research, as the quality and representativeness of the sample can significantly influence the study's validity and generalizability. I recruited middle managers in the banking industry who were not already part of my immediate professional network for this study. The recruitment process involved various strategies to identify and reach out to potential participants to achieve this objective.

The recruitment process was initiated by contacting my contacts to identify potential participants. These valuable resources disseminated the recruitment message to their networks. I leveraged my connections via social media platforms such as LinkedIn to identify potential participants further and asked these connections to share my recruitment letter with their networks. It was almost impossible for me to achieve any success using social media. The most effective and dominant strategy was to ask potential participants to share information about my

study with their colleagues, co-workers, and friends within the industry. The number of applicants I had to choose from was well over 150 within a short time. The recruitment letter can be found in Appendix B.

The active recruitment process began with a convenience sampling of new contacts I made to identify candidates who practice lifelong learning. Based on the study's selection criteria, I selected candidates based on the purposeful sampling approach to achieve homogeneity (Patton, 2015). Candidate selection was based on their status as middle managers employed by a banking institution in Northeast Florida. The selected participants reflected various demographic characteristics, such as gender, age range, ethnicity, years of experience with the organization, and level of formal education.

Data Collection Plan

According to Moustakas (1994), transcendental phenomenological studies are an intentional approach to understanding how the human mind relates to phenomena. This study investigated middle managers' pursuit of lifelong learning as a phenomenon in the banking industry. It was the primary purpose of this study to gather data to understand the phenomenon (Epoché) as expressed by each participant (Reduction) to provide textural representations of the essence (Imaginative Variation) described by each participant. A summary of the meanings and essences captured through the triangulation of data is presented in the paper's final section.

For phenomenological studies, Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) validate data quality using three data sources. The data collected during this transcendental phenomenological study came from three sources. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and journaling using open-ended questions. Data sources were selected to provide an in-depth understanding of the central research question and three supporting sub-questions to achieve the

study's objectives. A generic demographic survey was conducted as part of the study to identify participants who met the study's criteria for purposeful sampling. It was essential to collect demographic data to validate the research and add credibility to it.

The first step of the data collection process was to conduct semi-structured interviews (Gall et al., 2007). The use of focus groups was the second method used. My goal was to encourage conversation and dialogue that led to in-depth responses following a prescribed protocol by prompting and probing participants. In the third step, participants were required to answer open-ended questions through journaling. Participants were encouraged to ask me questions throughout the study and to ask one another questions during focus group sessions, as Patton (2015) suggested.

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

Moustakas (1994) explains that phenomenological research relies on meaningful questions that guide the research process toward its goals. As a result, semi-structured interviews were the principal method of data collection. During each interview, open-ended questions were used to gather qualitative data from participants, including verbal and non-verbal data, as recommended by Cohen et al. (2018). I designed these questions to answer the research questions of the study. The individual interview questions can be found in Appendix D.

I tailored the interview sessions to allow participants to ask questions of me at any time during the interview. I worked with each participant to ensure a stable internet connection was present before conducting interviews through Microsoft Teams. The interview sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes. The shortest interview was 16 minutes, while the longest interview lasted 57 minutes.

Individual Interview Questions

Background Questions

1. Tell me about yourself and how you came to be employed with this organization. CRQ
2. How did you become employed in your current role? CRQ
3. Thinking about your previous and current work experience, describe the factors or motivators that led you to accept your current role. SQ1

Assessment Questions

4. Considering only the requirements of your role, describe what a typical workday or week looks like for you. SQ3
5. Considering what you do for the organization outside your current role, describe how you spend the rest of your workday or week. SQ3
6. What are your views, opinions, or beliefs on learning and training within the organization? SQ3
7. How would you describe the purpose of adaptive learning in the workplace to others? SQ2
8. Describe how well this organization implements adaptive learning in the workplace and what it can do to improve it. SQ2

Heutagogy and Lifelong Learning Questions

9. Outside of the required training the organization provides, describe the types of learning you pursue as part of growing your career. SQ1
10. As a lifelong learner, describe what lifelong learning is and what it means to you as an adult. SQ1
11. Reflecting on your experiences with lifelong learning, how would you promote it amongst your adult friends? SQ1

12. Reflecting on your experiences with lifelong learning, how would you convince members of this organization to adopt lifelong learning as an organizational standard? SQ3
13. Thinking about adaptive learning, describe how it has affected your pursuit of lifelong learning at and away from work. SQ2
14. Aside from the opportunities this organization provides, describe the other forms of adaptive learning you seek in pursuing lifelong learning. SQ2
15. Please share anything else regarding your pursuit of lifelong learning you feel we did not adequately cover in our interview today. CRQ

The individual interview questions were divided into three categories: background, assessment, heutagogy, and lifelong learning. The background questions were designed to provide participants with an opportunity to share their personal experiences before joining the organization where the study will take place. Introduction questions were open-ended and did not challenge participants' personal beliefs or natures. Additionally, the questions served as measures of motivation, autonomy, belonging, confidence, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2017) and allowed me to establish rapport with each participant (Patton, 2015). The assessment questions were constructed to build on the participant's motivation, autonomy, belonging, confidence, and competence in their current organizational role. The heutagogy and lifelong learning questions were designed for the same reasons as the first two categories but targeted those experiences outside the organization. The ultimate purpose of each question was to obtain data regarding each participant's motivation, self-determination theory, and constructivism, as outlined in chapter two of this study.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis plan for individual interviews was based on memoing and pattern

matching (Saldaña, 2021). The memos and transcriptions from each interview were used to understand each participant's lived experience prior to coding and developing themes (Maxwell, 2020). The interviews were recorded using the recording and embedded transcription features of Microsoft Teams. Transcribing audio to text was performed using advanced speech recognition software provided by Microsoft Teams (Saldaña, 2021). The observations I made during each interview were limited to handwritten notes to capture my interpretation of the mannerisms and descriptions of the participants as I heard them for the first time (Maxwell, 2020; Moustakas, 1994).

Additionally, I documented each participant's kinesics, proxemics, and vocalics, as Ellingson suggested (2017). Each transcript was reviewed multiple times, and each participant verified the accuracy of the transcribed text during the analysis (Saldaña, 2021). The transcripts of each interview were emailed to participants within 48 hours of the interview. Most participants reviewed and returned their transcripts within one week, and only a few included corrections or requests to alter their wording.

I developed themes based on inductive and content analysis coding as I became familiar with the data. I chose inductive coding because of its flexibility in revealing unexpected themes and patterns in the data (Xu & Zammit, 2020). My choice of content analysis coding was based on analyzing written and verbal communications to detect patterns and trends in the data (Kleinheksel et al., 2019).

Focus Groups Data Collection Approach

The method of using focus groups as a second data source is based on a practice developed by Nothcutt and McCoy (2004), which categorizes data according to affinities or shared interests revealed in group settings that might not have been discovered in one-on-one

interviews. According to Patton (2015), a leading authority on qualitative research and the use of multiple assessments, focus groups can also be a useful tool for evaluating data. In qualitative research, focus groups may be useful when participants are hesitant to share openly during one-on-one interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018. p. 164). See Appendix E for the focus group questions.

Groups were purposefully formed in focus groups to promote greater diversity among participants who shared a common belief and positivism toward lifelong learning. Each focus group session lasted approximately 35 minutes. The focus group sessions were facilitated using Microsoft Teams. I enabled transcription during each session to ensure that I focused on studying the phenomenon rather than individual participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Easy access to participants made forming three groups of five participants convenient.

Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to the group and tell us how long you have considered yourself a lifelong learner. CRQ
2. How do you think other adults view lifelong learning? SQ1
3. What experiences about lifelong learning empower you to continue its practice as an adult? SQ1
4. How has lifelong learning impacted you and those around you since becoming a lifelong learner as an adult? SQ3
5. How has adaptive learning in this organization affected you? SQ2
6. What advice would you give someone who isn't a lifelong learner to help them in their adult career and personal life? SQ3
7. Considering those adults outside the organization, what resources would you recommend

for pursuing heutagogy and lifelong learning and why? CRQ

Each focus group question was designed to stimulate and encourage open discussions between participants that elicited debate, ideas, stories, and other experiences. Qualitative research requires participants to be provided with a safe, collaborative environment to share their experiences with one another and the researcher (Patton, 2015). Study participants were asked to share their version of reality with others through questions that included elements of constructivism. Participants were also allowed to gain insight into the realities of others. Participants were introduced to one another through Question One, which served as an icebreaker. The second to fourth questions stimulated discussion about lifelong learning outside the workplace. Questions five to seven elicited conversations on lifelong learning specific to the workplace.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

My data analysis plan for individual interviews was based on memoing and pattern matching (Saldaña, 2021). The memos and transcriptions from each interview were used to establish an overall picture of each participant's lived experience before coding and developing themes (Maxwell, 2020). Each interview was recorded using Microsoft Teams audio and video. To transcribe audio to text, I used advanced speech recognition software provided by Microsoft Teams (Saldaña, 2021). While conducting each interview, I took handwritten notes to capture my interpretations of the participants' mannerisms and descriptions as I heard them for the first time (Maxwell, 2020; Moustakas, 1994).

As suggested by Ellingson (Saldaña, 2021), I also recorded each participant's kinematics, proxemics, and vocalics. Each transcript was reviewed multiple times, and the accuracy of the transcribed text was confirmed with each participant during the analysis (Saldaña, 2021). A

transcript was emailed to each participant within 48 hours of the interview. I received the transcripts of each focus group participant within one week of reviewing them. There were no requests for corrections or additions from the participants.

I developed themes using inductive and content analysis coding methods after thoroughly understanding the data. Inductive coding was chosen for its ability to reveal unexpected themes and patterns in the data (Xu & Zammit, 2020). I used content analysis coding to identify patterns and potential trends (Klinheksel et al., 2019) to analyze written and verbal communications.

Journal Prompts Data Collection Approach

As a result of journaling, participants can reflect on open-ended questions before sharing their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Journaling allows participants to capture their voice and language in daily conversations as a source of data collection (Moustakas, 1994). My primary reason for choosing journaling as a means of collecting data was to better understand the role adaptive learning plays in the recent adoption of lifelong learning within the banking sector. It is well known that confidence is fundamental to learning (Bandura, 1977), and it may be possible to provide additional insights into this phenomenon by studying language.

Participants in the study were sent journal prompts by email and asked to reflect further upon the questions asked during one-on-one interviews and focus groups. The journal prompts can be found in Appendix F. All participants had one week to respond to the journal prompts. This period of reflection allowed the participants to share their lived experiences with the shared lived experiences of others and aligns with van Manen (2014) and Moustakas (1994) regarding the purpose of phenomenological studies. I received all journal prompts within 72 hours of sending them.

Journal Prompts Questions

1. What factors of lifelong learning would you emphasize the most as your organization's CEO? SQ1
2. What effect will adaptive learning have on organizations' perception of lifelong learning in the workplace as society becomes more dependent on technology? SQ2
3. What influences you the most to pursue lifelong learning, and what effect does it have on your career, well-being, or society as an adult? SQ3
4. What would you share with the world regarding heutagogy and lifelong learning if you were given the opportunity? CRQ

The purpose of questions one to four was to solicit responses describing the lived experiences of each participant after they had completed the individual interviews and focus group sessions. The questions were designed to encourage reflection and retrospection on past, present, and future perspectives on lifelong learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The purpose of question one was to determine how everyone would enhance or advance lifelong learning for other adults and what deficiencies or factors of workplace hygiene still need to be addressed. In question two, participants were invited to share their opinions on how adaptive learning technology can facilitate individual learning in the workplace. The third question was designed to identify any internal or external motivational factors that have influenced the pursuit of lifelong learning throughout adulthood. In question four, participants were asked to provide additional insights regarding heutagogical lifelong learning.

Journal Prompts Data Analysis Plan

My journal prompt data analysis plan followed a similar approach I used for memoing and pattern-matching participants' lived experiences in my individual interviews and focus groups (Maxwell, 2020). Furthermore, I recorded my interpretations and reactions to each

journal's prompt response as I read them for the first time (Maxwell, 2020; Moustakas, 1994). I also included detailed documentation of my interpretations.

I developed themes based on inductive and content analysis coding throughout my study of the data. Inductive coding was chosen since it is flexible and allows for discovering unexpected themes and patterns in data (Xu & Zammit, 2020). By evaluating written and verbal communication, I identified patterns and trends in the data using content analysis coding (Kleinheksel et al., 2019).

Data Synthesis

Word clouds have a visual nature that makes it easy to understand the overall content and identify recurring patterns or themes for further examination (DePaolo & Wilkinson, 2014; Hearst et al., 2020). The most prominent words or concepts from the participants' descriptions were identified in a word cloud generated from the text captured during the interviews, focus groups, and journaling sessions. I followed several recommendations by Hearst et al. (2020) to improve the quality of the generated word cloud before my initial exploratory analysis. My attention was drawn to larger and bolder words in the word cloud. I focused on these words as having the greatest impact on the participants' descriptions to obtain an initial understanding of their word choice before I began coding their responses (DePaolo & Wilkinson, 2014; Hearst et al., 2020).

Coding provides a method to analyze data once the data collection process has been completed (Saldaa, 2021). Coding is a process by which short phrases summarize data as categorical groups so that they can be compared at a later date (Saldaa, 2021). The information that I gathered was coded as I developed them, e.g., (attributes, motifs, and metaphors) based on the information that I obtained. I used axial coding to categorize the codes according to themes

and compared them to identify patterns and connections in the resulting data (Silverstein & Auerbach, 2009; Maxwell, 2020). This process promoted the meaningful synthesis of the patterns and connections identified during my analysis (Guenther & Falk, 2019; Polkinghorne, 2005). As part of my final synthesis, I applied selective coding to connect categorical data into a core category (Saldaña, 2021).

My data synthesis included exploratory analysis of text captured during one-on-one interviews, focus group sessions, and journaling from each participant. Exploratory analysis allowed me to group, cluster, and synthesize multiple data sets using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen analysis method (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I accomplished the exploratory analysis using the NLTK Python library to generate a word cloud of the top 50 words from all texts (see Appendix G) and performed qualitative data analysis using NVivo. I used exploratory analysis to construct a unified description of reality according to participant descriptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen analysis method encouraged me to include a complete description of my experience of the study's phenomenon as part of my data synthesis (Moustakas, 1994). It consists of a seven-part process for analyzing, recording, horizontalizing, clustering, synthesizing, reflecting, and constructing a textual-structural description useful for synthesizing my data (Moustakas, 1994). The textual-structural description included a detailed composite of the setting, context, and a thick description of the phenomenon. My synthesis concluded with constructing a composite-textural description of the meanings and essences from all experiences described in the analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The composite-textural description was my final synthesis of the Epoché, transcendental-phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation processes to satisfy the methodology of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative studies is achieved through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used these foundational concepts to establish trustworthiness in my study and demonstrate reliability, rigor, and objectivity.

Triangulation is used to confirm findings and minimize bias to increase the validity and quality of my study (Cohen et al., 2018). I used data triangulation to examine participants' lived experiences from multiple viewpoints to establish this study's validity (Patton, 2015).

Credibility

Credibility measures how well a study's findings accurately describe reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I discovered the truth of the phenomenon in this study using individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts to gather and analyze data to enhance and strengthen the study through data triangulation. My data collection plan incorporated a transcript review by participants and myself to further the study's credibility (Hagens et al., 2009). Member checking (Gall et al., 2007) and peer debriefing were vital for establishing credibility in qualitative studies to describe the reality of the phenomena of my study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used member checking and peer debriefing to add credibility through accuracy to my study.

Transferability

In general, transferability indicates that a study's findings may be applied in other contexts and future research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study has rich and detailed descriptions of the data, data triangulation from multiple sources, reflection on biases, and member checking that facilitate transferability (Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and thick descriptions (Geertz, 2008) also aided in the transferability of the study's findings.

Dependability

A study is considered reliable if it is consistent and repeatable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A qualitative study's consistency over time indicates its dependability (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). My data analysis plan for this study incorporated member checking and credibility in parallel to enhance its objectivity and dependability (Patton, 2015). Epoché was incorporated into my data collection and analysis plans to minimize errors and biases in my findings (Moustakas, 1994). The use of Epoché throughout my study resulted in consistently repeatable results that can be used in the future (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My dissertation committee conducted an inquiry audit of my dissertation.

Confirmability

A study's confirmability is considered to be its neutrality when the researcher has demonstrated that no personal biases, motivations, or interests are present (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A key aspect of my study was transparency, which included comprehensive descriptions of procedures data collection and analysis, and a valuable report for auditing and future research (Moustakas, 1994). I provided detailed descriptions of the reasons for my decisions throughout the research and references to existing literature (Nowell et al., 2017). Using three data sources to triangulate and bracket out my biases was beneficial for confirming my findings during retrospection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Ethical Considerations

I needed approval from my dissertation committee before pursuing IRB approval. During the process of collecting data, all methods of data collection were scrutinized and evaluated. I obtained a letter of approval from the Liberty Institutional Review Board before I solicited participants to participate in my study. Participation in the study was completely voluntary on the

part of all participants.

Signed consent forms describing the risks and benefits of this study were used to obtain participant consent. The participant consent form can be found in Appendix C. My consent form explained my intentions and the context of the data collection (Patton, 2015). Participants' pseudonyms replaced all personally identifiable information in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A password-protected computer and secure cloud storage protected my confidential information. Data was not stored or transferred using removable storage devices such as USB sticks. After three years, all data will be disposed of per Liberty University's IRB.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of middle managers pursuing lifelong learning in the banking industry using a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach. The study utilized open-ended questions in individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts to address all research questions. The study's findings were trustworthy due to its use of three primary data collection methods. Procedures and methods used in the study were designed to be transparent and open to scrutiny by academics and peer reviewers. The ethical considerations of all stakeholders have been taken into account. The study's data analysis strategy followed Moustakas' (1994) suggestion of using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, which synthesizes a composite-textural description of all meanings and essences constructed, satisfying the methodology of transcendental phenomenology.

I considered a hermeneutical phenomenological approach to his study. However, Husserl's first introduction to transcendentalism was best suited for understanding participant awareness or intentionality concerning lifelong learning (Giorgi, 2009). Furthermore, I considered the implications of epistemological assumptions. An axiological assumption was

chosen to understand what middle managers in a banking environment value most about lifelong learning.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter presents the findings of a transcendental phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry who practice heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills. The purpose of this study is to gain a deep understanding of how these middle managers engage in lifelong learning and how it impacts their personal and professional lives. Lifelong learning, defined as the purposeful pursuit of knowledge and skill development throughout one's life, is crucial for personal growth and career advancement (Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2020). Self-determined and lifelong learners are motivated to continuously expand their intellectual and emotional skills and knowledge (Van Tonder et al., 2022).

This chapter begins with participant descriptions, providing an overview of the individuals involved in the study. Following that, the data analysis findings are presented using narrative themes, charts, graphs, and tables organized according to themes that emerged from the data. Finally, the chapter concludes with the responses to the research questions as level one headers, summarizing the key findings and insights obtained from the analysis. These findings lay the foundation for the subsequent chapter, presenting a comprehensive interpretation and discussion of the results.

Participants

There were 14 middle-level managers from a variety of genders in the data set, including males and females, who participated in this study. As the age range of the participants spans from 20 to 65, it is evident that there is a broad range of experience and maturity within the group, which is indicative of a diverse group. Aspects of the ethnic composition of the middle

management group reveal that the participants fall into three categories: White (W), Hispanic (H), and Black (B), which is indicative of the ethnic diversity among the middle management group. As a result of the mixed background and experience of participants in the dataset, it is possible to draw some conclusions regarding the possibility of diverse perspectives and approaches within the workplace being influenced by the data.

The participants' employment length significantly varied regarding their professional backgrounds, as shown in Table 1. The range extends from 1 year to 31 years, implying a wide range of experience levels within the middle management cohort. On average, the participants have been employed for approximately 8.21 years. This average employment range indicates a mix of relatively shorter tenures alongside some individuals who have demonstrated longer-term commitment and loyalty to their organizations. The varying ages and lengths of employment suggest a combination of seasoned professionals with extensive industry knowledge and younger managers who may bring fresh ideas and a contemporary perspective.

Table 1

Middle Manager Participants

Participant	Gender	Age Range	Ethnic Group	Years with Organization	Formal Education
Alan	M	40-44	White	5	MBA
Bruce	M	35-39	Hispanic	5	Some College
George	M	50-54	Hispanic	10	Bachelor's
Jimmy	M	60-64	White	21	Bachelor's
Judy	F	25-29	White	3	Master's

Participant	Gender	Age Range	Ethnic Group	Years with Organization	Formal Education
Julia	F	45-49	White	7	Bachelor's
Laura	F	45-49	White	6	Associate
Matt	M	25-29	Black	4	Bachelor's
Michael	M	35-39	Black	9	Some College
Rodrigo	M	20-24	Hispanic	6	None
Shay	F	25-29	White	1	MBA
Stephanie	F	25-29	Black	6	Bachelor's
Susie	F	55-59	Black	31	Associate
Todd	M	45-49	Hispanic	11	None

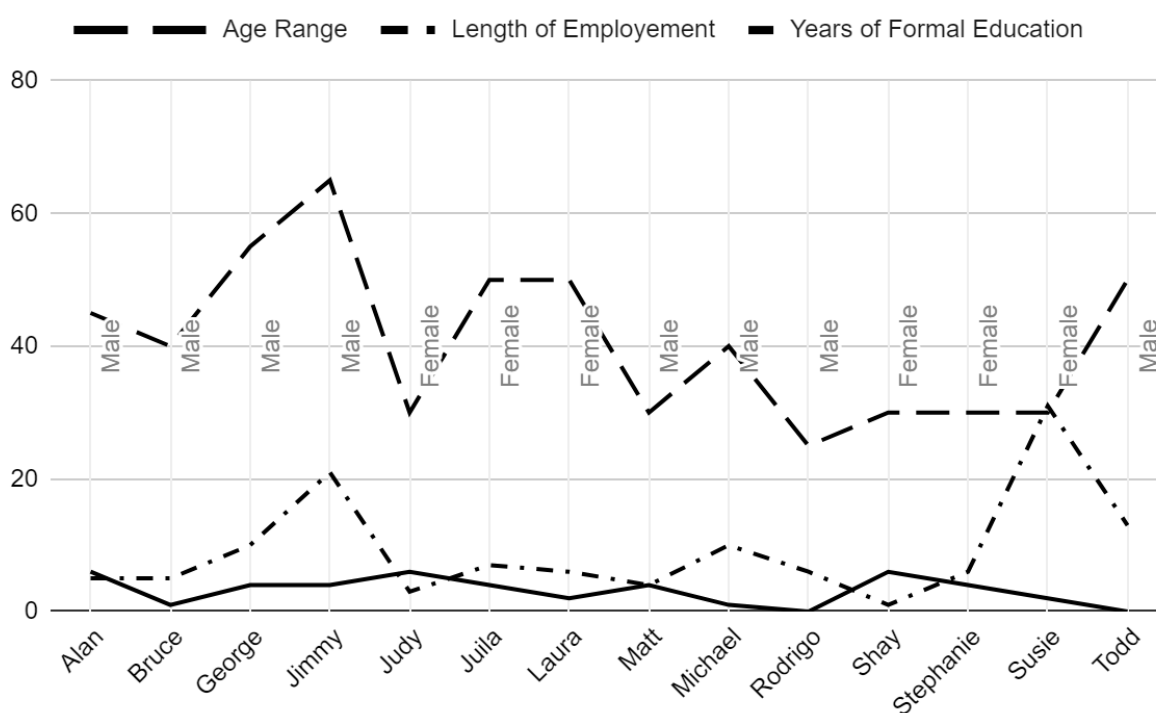
A review of the participants' educational backgrounds reveals that there is an apparent variation in the number of years of formal education they have received over the course of their lives. From no college education to a master's degree, the range indicates a diverse background of education. As a result of the participating participants' formal education, on average, they have completed about 3.07 years of formal education. It is important to note that this average suggests that while some individuals may have gone on to pursue higher education, others may have chosen alternative pathways or gained practical experience through non-formal means, as illustrated by this average.

As shown in Figure 1, the dataset reflected a group of middle managers from a variety of

ages, ethnic groups, lengths of employment, and formal education backgrounds (see Table 2). It is clear from this study's focus that such a diversity of characteristics in both demographics and professional backgrounds contributes to a well-rounded and inclusive participant group whose perspectives and experiences contribute to the well-being of the middle management level as a whole.

Figure 1

Participant Demographics



Alan

Alan is a middle-level manager in the banking industry between the ages of 40 and 45. He brings five years of experience within the organization to his role, which allows him to bring a great deal of expertise and knowledge to the position. Alan holds an MBA, and his journey with the company began after a friend referred him to the company. Alan stated that "It really all started out with a friend of mine." As well as adapting and improving existing strategies, Alan has taken the organization's fundamentals and developed his own, ensuring an effective and

unique approach to business. He maintains a positive attitude and prioritizes personal development, believing every day should be an opportunity to learn something new. Alan asserts, "If you don't learn something new every day, it's kind of a wasted day." His dedication to seeking knowledge beyond his immediate work requirements demonstrates his commitment to personal growth, affirming his belief in "just trying to learn and keep developing yourself."

Bruce

Bruce is an ambitious male middle manager in his late 30s to early 40s who is significantly impacting his company. Bruce's commitment to continuous improvement and personal growth makes him an exceptional employee with five years of experience in the company. Despite having some college education, Bruce became interested in the organization when "a former coworker told me about the company." Bruce firmly believes in the importance that "everyone capable should attempt to learn something outside their existing role." Bruce can effectively lead and coach his team by recognizing the value of this knowledge and by being aware of how it impacts different departments. Throughout his career, Bruce has adhered to a "never stopping learning" philosophy and is constantly seeking new challenges, emphasizing his commitment to professional and personal growth. His passion for seeking knowledge beyond immediate work requirements is a testament to his commitment to self-development, captured in his belief in "just trying to learn and continue to develop yourself."

George

George is an experienced middle manager in his early 50s with a wide range of knowledge and expertise to contribute. George has dedicated ten years of service to the organization, and his commitment to personal and professional growth has resulted in his current position. Following the resignation of the IT leader, George's potential was recognized by the

company, which offered him the position of director. George believes that continuous learning is integral to both career advancement and the acquisition of valuable work experiences. He emphasizes the need to always engage in training, asserting that we should "always do training for your own career and experience." George's passion for self-improvement extends beyond the workplace, as he shares his self-learning experiences, highlighting his determination to learn and improve constantly. His commitment to "learning all the time" and his willingness to study English alone illustrates his desire to expand his knowledge and skills. In addition to his commitment to lifelong learning, his pursuit of knowledge is an asset to his professional and personal development.

Jimmy

Jimmy is a seasoned middle manager in his early 60s, with an impressive 21 years of dedicated service to the organization. His career path took an interesting turn when he "retired from the military and answered an ad in the paper." Jimmy prefers active roles over those "where you sit down behind a computer." Jimmy firmly believes that "nothing can replace...just experience," with on-the-job training. His extensive practical knowledge acquired over the years is a testament to his dedication to continual learning resulting from real-life encounters and workplace challenges. He is an asset to the organization due to his unique combination of experience and customer-centric approach.

Judy

Judy is a young and motivated female middle manager in her late 20s to early 30s who has been with the organization for three years. In addition to possessing a master's degree, Judy has a strong educational background. Judy's enthusiasm for learning and "passion for education" led her to pursue a career in banking. She actively contributes to the organization's culture by

participating in the culture club, organizing fundraisers, and organizing volunteer activities. She recognizes the significance of continuous learning for individuals and departments, emphasizing that "everyone can benefit from education" and acknowledging that "everyone has a hand in education and training." She establishes a culture of organizational learning and commitment to personal development because she believes in continual education.

Julia

Julia is a dedicated and accomplished female middle manager in her late 40s, with seven years of valuable experience within the organization. Julia's career journey within the company has been characterized by a series of promotions achieved through her unwavering commitment to hard work and continuous learning. Reflecting on her progression, she remarks, "started at this organization as an assistant," and shares that her growth has resulted from her relentless dedication and eagerness to learn, stating, "just been a series of promotions through hard work and learning." In her current role, Julia is responsible for reviewing incoming activity requests while strategically planning for the current and subsequent years, focusing on product development. Recognizing the importance of continuous growth, Julia acknowledges that her organization provides various learning opportunities, such as leadership training and a mentorship program. She acknowledges the existence of these resources, stating that "other educational opportunities exist," which highlights her commitment to ongoing professional development. Julia's combination of experience, strategic planning, and dedication to learning makes her an invaluable asset within the organization.

Laura

Laura is a resilient and resourceful female middle manager in her late 40s, with six years of dedicated service within the organization. Demonstrating her commitment to the team's

success, Laura willingly stepped up to assume a managerial role that others were reluctant to take. Reflecting on this decision, she shares how she "took on a managerial role that everybody else there didn't want to do." Drawing from her extensive network experience, Laura leverages her expertise to support and guide new employees, ensuring they are properly onboarded and equipped for success. In applying this approach "to the new people that came into our company," Laura emphasized the importance of setting a solid foundation for all newcomers. Laura's proactive mindset is further demonstrated through her successful compliance with environmental regulations, enabling the company to continue operations while others faced non-compliance issues. She attributes this achievement to her commitment to learning and adapting, highlighting how "learning what those regulations meant helped us... keep working." Laura's dedication, adaptability, and willingness to take on challenges make her a valuable asset to the organization.

Matt

Matt is a successful and capable male middle manager in his mid-20s who belongs to the Black ethnic group. Matt's journey to his current role has been marked by persistence and academic achievement over the course of his four years with the organization. In his words, he "bounced around through a couple of jobs" while completing his college coursework before he "got my first job because I got my bachelor's" Starting as a junior developer, Matt's dedication and growth mindset enabled him to advance to the position of mid-level developer. A hiring manager recognized his potential and selected him as one of the lead developers after an internal interview process. Along with his role as a developer, Matt also assumes responsibility for rotating in production support, which makes him a point of contact for all production-related issues. He has demonstrated an ability to handle a variety of responsibilities with confidence and effectively collaborate with other developers when required. His resilience, continuous growth,

and dependable nature make him a valuable team member.

Michael

Michael is a dedicated and versatile male middle manager in his mid-30s, belonging to the Black ethnic group. With an impressive nine years of experience within the organization, Michael's journey began through a recommendation from a friend, reflecting, "One of my friends got me into the company, and I've been here ever since." Balancing work and personal life is paramount to Michael, as he values spending quality time with his family, enjoying music, and ensuring sufficient rest. The flexibility of remote work has greatly benefited him, providing a healthy work-life balance. Michael's collaborative nature is evident in his approach to seeking assistance and knowledge from his colleagues, emphasizing, "If I don't know something, I could go over to another person to see if they know it." He appreciates the team's collective effort, stating, "we all work together to obviously get the answers and get the work done." Michael's dedication, adaptability, and collaborative spirit contribute to his success as a middle manager within the organization.

Rodrigo

Rodrigo is an energetic and resourceful young Hispanic middle manager in his early 20s. Although Rodrigo does not have a formal educational background, he was introduced to a part-time job opportunity through a connection he made at his sister's elementary school. As he recalls the incident, "she asked me if I was looking for a job," which led to an interview and subsequent employment. Rodrigo was intrigued by the call center, so he volunteered for the position and discussed the move with his former employer. Rodrigo has learned valuable lessons, techniques, and problem-solving techniques from his coworkers throughout his career. Their guidance has enabled him to gain a fresh perspective and equip him with the skills to resolve

challenges effectively. Rodrigo's enthusiasm for personal growth extends beyond himself, as he actively encourages his friends to learn new skills and enhance their careers, stating he "pushed them to further their career" and encouraged them to "learn other skills to help them further their careers." Rodrigo's determination, willingness to learn, and commitment to supporting others make him a valuable asset within the organization.

Shay

Currently in her mid-twenties, Shay is an ambitious and motivated female middle manager of White ethnicity. Shay's journey began through a fortuitous connection as she "came to be employed with the organization I work for through a friend of a friend." Her desire for growth and learning opportunities motivated her to seek more significant roles within her first year after experiencing a previous company that emphasized less learning. Shay firmly believes that where there is learning, there is an opportunity for growth. She places great importance on training, recognizing that "training is key to any role and any organization." Shay encourages independent problem-solving and actively seeks optimal methods, constantly challenging herself to "look for different ways on how to do them." Her determination, focus on growth, and commitment to continuous learning make her a valuable asset within the organization.

Stephanie

Stephanie is a dynamic and accomplished female middle manager in her late 20s who belongs to the Black ethnic group. Stephanie has served within the organization for six years, bringing a diverse background in Health Administration. Her journey to her current position began through networking and word-of-mouth, recounting that she "learned of the role through a friend and colleague of mine." Her workweek is characterized by exciting variety, as "no two weeks ever really look the same." Among her responsibilities are planning events on the back

end and traveling to those events, creating a dynamic and engaging environment. It is clear that Stephanie is committed to continuous learning and emphasizes the importance of keeping an open mind and advancing as a professional. With her versatility, adaptability, and passion for continuous learning, Stephanie is an invaluable asset to the organization. She emphasizes the importance of keeping up with trends in human resources and values learning from others.

Susie

Susie is a dedicated and experienced female middle manager in her mid-50s who belongs to the Black ethnic group. As an accomplished employee of the organization with an impressive 31 years of devoted service, Susie's career path began when she was referred to a job opening by a relative. For Susie, cultivating a growth mindset is vital, as she stated, "I don't want to appear stagnant," and stressed the significance of continuing to learn and retain new information. She advocates interactive activities and teaching methods that accommodate individual preferences and availability to provide more engaging and convenient training. Susie believes that "teaching them at a time that is more convenient for them" and allowing them to choose their preferred training methods promotes personal development. Her career advancement has been closely linked with her ability to adapt, as she acknowledges that she "had to adapt or wasn't moving up." She describes herself as someone comfortable with change. She has developed a keen interest in reading and comprehension over the years, with each book fueling her desire to increase her knowledge, proclaiming, "the more I read, the more I wanted to know." She has also stressed the importance of knowing the information she reads. Susie's commitment, adaptability, and thirst for knowledge make her an invaluable resource within the organization.

Todd

Todd is a Hispanic middle manager in his mid-40s who is dependable and dedicated to

his work. Todd has demonstrated unwavering dedication and loyalty in his eleven years with the organization. Todd began his career at his firm as a result of a referral by a friend. Having been motivated to seek stability, security, and higher compensation, Todd sought out "something more stable, something I could work six days a week, five days a week." Todd has consistently focused on becoming "more skilled" because he is willing to "learn from other people and learn from other people's ways of doing things that may be faster, better." Although Todd does not have a formal education, his commitment to self-improvement is evident informally. As a self-directed learner, he likes to "Read books "to "hone your craft" and learns best by choosing interests "as a hobby and messing around with it." Todd is an integral organization member, highly reliable, committed to skill development, and self-motivated.

Results

The study revealed several key themes related to learning and employment growth, lifelong learning and adaptation, organizational implementation of learning, referrals and career advancement, and personal growth through experience and accomplishment (see Table 2). The study highlighted the importance of continuous learning, adaptation, and personal growth in the context of employment. It also sheds light on the role of referrals, the significance of organizational implementation of learning initiatives, and the factors that motivate individuals in their career paths.

Table 2

Major Themes and Sub-themes

Major Theme	Sub-themes with Concepts
Learning and Employment Growth	1. Motivation for Current Role: Seeking growth opportunities, stability, better pay, and personal fulfillment.

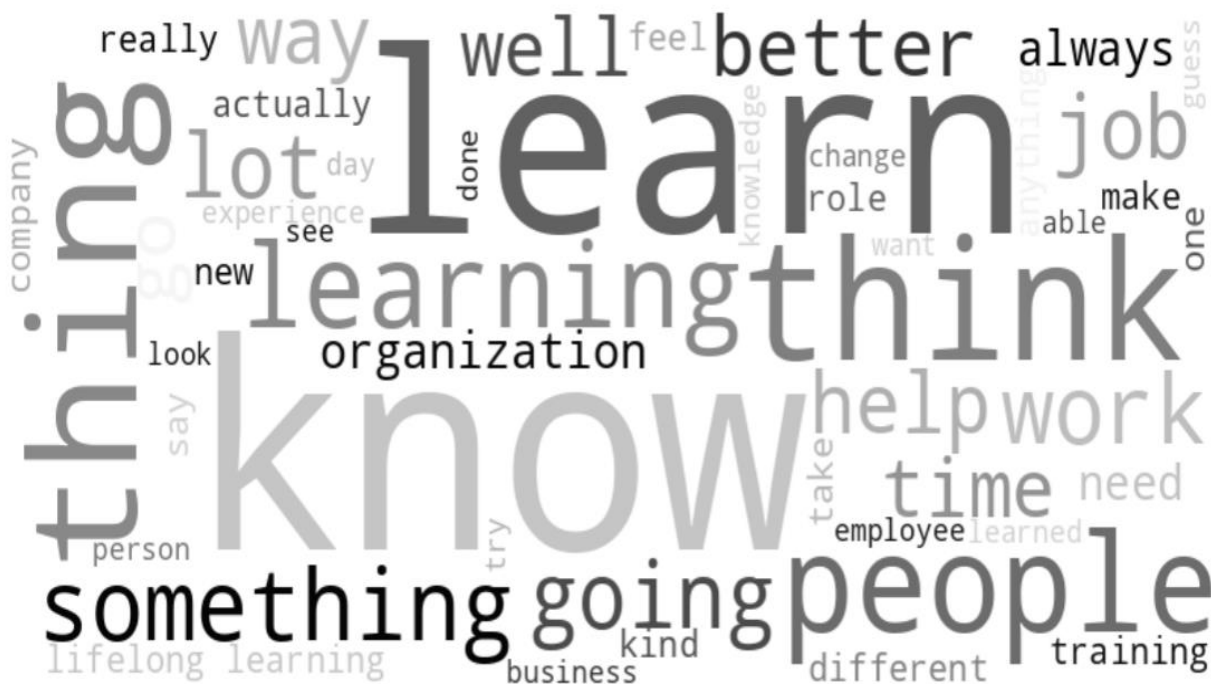
Major Theme	Sub-themes with Concepts
Lifelong Learning and Adaptation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="646 289 1382 405">2. Views on Learning and Training: Recognizing the importance of continuous learning, skill development, and improvement. <li data-bbox="646 415 1414 531">3. Personal Learning for Career Growth: Pursuing learning outside assigned tasks, acquiring new skills, and self-directed learning. <li data-bbox="646 562 1373 678">1. Lifelong Learning Definition and Significance: Embracing continuous learning, staying updated, and personal improvement. <li data-bbox="646 688 1390 804">2. Significance of Lifelong Learning: Encouraging self-improvement, personal drive, and the value of lifelong learning. <li data-bbox="646 814 1414 930">3. Impact of Adaptive Learning on Lifelong Learning: Utilizing adaptive learning methods, adapting to change, and enhancing learning efficiency.
Organizational Implementation of Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="646 974 1430 1089">1. Purpose of Adaptive Learning: Enhancing learning effectiveness, catering to individual needs, and improving learning outcomes. <li data-bbox="646 1100 1365 1215">2. Implementation of Adaptive Learning: Incorporating different learning approaches, addressing individual learning styles, and improving training methods. <li data-bbox="646 1226 1430 1339">3. Need for Improvement: Recognizing the room for improvement in implementing adaptive learning, tailoring training to specific roles, and increasing engagement.
Referrals and Career Advancement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="646 1377 1325 1455">1. Employment Referral: Getting employed through referrals from acquaintances, friends, or relatives. <li data-bbox="646 1465 1422 1543">2. Path to Current Role: Progressing through different departments, on-the-job training, and earning certificates. <li data-bbox="646 1554 1430 1623">3. Motivators for Current Role: Seeking stability, better pay, personal fulfillment, and supporting family.
Personal Growth through Experience and Accomplishment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="646 1661 1390 1759">1. Fostering Personal Growth: Embracing failure as an opportunity to learn and improve, striving for personal growth and self-development. <li data-bbox="646 1770 1430 1871">2. Satisfaction from Accomplishments: Finding fulfillment in personal achievements, feeling a sense of progress, and accomplishing goals.

Major Theme	Sub-themes with Concepts
	3. Continuous Pursuit of Knowledge: Recognizing the importance of continuous learning, curiosity-driven learning, and self-directed research.

A word cloud was generated to visually represent the most frequently occurring words derived from the participants' descriptions (see Figure 2). I utilized the word cloud to explore and comprehend the participant data, and as an initial aid in recognizing crucial terms and themes. This approach was a foundational step for subsequent analysis and synthesis, empowering me to unveil valuable insights and establish a comprehensive understanding of the investigated phenomenon.

Figure 2

Top 50 Words from Participant Responses



Regarding learning and employment growth, participants were motivated by various factors, such as seeking growth opportunities, stability, better pay, and personal fulfillment. They

recognized the importance of continuous learning and skill development for their careers and actively pursued learning beyond their assigned tasks. Lifelong learning was deemed essential for staying updated, adapting to change, and personal improvement. The implementation of adaptive learning in organizations aimed to enhance learning effectiveness and cater to individual needs, but there was room for improvement in tailoring training and increasing engagement.

Referrals played a significant role in career advancement, with participants securing employment opportunities through connections made by acquaintances, friends, or relatives. Career progression often involves progressing through different departments, on-the-job training, and earning certificates. Motivators for their current roles included stability, better pay, personal fulfillment, and supporting their families.

Personal growth through experience and accomplishment was fostered by embracing failure as a learning opportunity, finding satisfaction in personal achievements, and continuously pursuing knowledge. Participants emphasized the importance of a growth mindset, setting meaningful goals, and embracing curiosity-driven learning. The findings emphasized the importance of learning, growth, and adaptability in the workplace at an individual and organizational level.

Learning and Employment Growth

Learning and employment growth are reflected in individuals' experiences and perspectives regarding their journey of continuous learning, personal development, and professional advancement within their organizations. Across various bios, it is evident that individuals recognize the importance of learning, seek growth opportunities, and actively engage in skill development. George emphasizes that we should " share knowledge and information

openly." Motivated by various factors such as seeking stability, better pay, personal fulfillment, and career growth, individuals like Todd and Susie are driven to pursue new roles and opportunities that offer professional development and personal satisfaction. Additionally, continuous learning and training are highlighted as key aspects of individual and organizational success, emphasizing self-directed learning, acquiring new skills, and staying updated with industry trends.

Motivation for Current Role

An individual's motivation for their current role includes factors such as seeking growth opportunities, stability, better pay, and personal fulfillment. They are motivated by these motivations to learn and improve continuously. Todd's desire for stability and better pay led him to search internally for "something more stable that I knew I could work a full six days, five days a week." This sub-theme emphasizes how personal aspirations and the desire for professional and financial stability can catalyze individuals' pursuit of growth in their employment.

Views on Learning and Training

A sub-theme of learning and training emphasizes the importance of continuous learning, skill development, and career advancement. Stephanie suggests "incorporating different ways of learning," and Rodrigo's emphasis on training as key individuals underscores the significance of ongoing learning for personal and professional growth. They value training programs, mentorship, and collaboration with colleagues as avenues for expanding their knowledge and skills. This sub-theme demonstrates individuals' proactive attitude towards learning and their belief in the correlation between training and success in their roles.

Personal Learning for Career Growth

The sub-theme personal learning for career growth highlights individuals' pursuit of

learning beyond their assigned tasks and roles, embracing self-directed learning, acquiring new skills, and seeking knowledge outside their immediate work requirements. As Matt emphasized, "learning what those regulations meant helped us... keep working," individuals actively engage in self-learning experiences and personal development to enhance their careers. Their curiosity, initiative, and willingness to learn independently contribute to their growth and adaptability. This sub-theme emphasizes the significance of personal learning endeavors in fostering career advancement and enabling individuals to acquire a broader skill set.

Lifelong Learning and Adaptation

The essence of lifelong learning and adaptation recognizes the importance of continuous learning, personal growth, and adaptation to new circumstances. The individuals featured in the previous bio responses highlight the significance of lifelong learning, its value to their personal and professional lives, and their commitment to staying updated and improving themselves. They emphasize the need to embrace new knowledge, seek growth opportunities, and adapt to change to enhance learning efficiency. Lifelong learning drives personal and career development, empowering individuals to navigate challenges and stay relevant in their fields.

Lifelong Learning Defined

Susie opined that you "don't wanna lose your ability to learn and retain new information." Lifelong learning emphasizes the understanding and value of continuous learning throughout one's life. The participants recognize the importance of embracing lifelong learning, staying updated, and continuously improving themselves. They view lifelong learning as a means to personal and professional growth. They see lifelong learning as expanding knowledge, developing new skills, and adapting to changing circumstances.

Significance of Lifelong Learning

The significance of lifelong learning highlights the encouragement for self-improvement, personal drive, and the value of lifelong learning. The individuals featured in this study strongly desire growth and self-development. They believe in the inherent value of lifelong learning and its positive impact on their lives. They recognize that lifelong learning is driven by personal motivation and a commitment to continuous improvement. Shay expressed that it is "critical to stay relevant." Lifelong learning is viewed as an essential aspect of personal and professional success.

Impact of Adaptive Learning on Lifelong Learning

The impact of adaptive learning on lifelong learning underscores the significance of utilizing adaptive learning methods, adapting to change, and enhancing learning efficiency. The participants recognize the need to adapt their learning approaches to meet evolving circumstances and improve learning outcomes. They highlight the importance of being open-minded, seeking different perspectives, and finding optimal methods to enhance their learning experiences. As Todd mentioned, "learn from other people and learn different people's ways of doing things which may be faster, better." Adaptive learning is a way to optimize learning efficiency, solve problems, and successfully navigate change.

Organizational Implementation of Learning

The theme of organizational implementation of learning encompasses the strategies and efforts organizations undertake to integrate learning initiatives within their structures effectively. It highlights the importance of enhancing learning effectiveness, catering to individual needs, and improving learning outcomes. As individuals like Todd emphasize, organizations should adopt adaptive learning approaches and address individual learning styles. Organizations can create a conducive learning environment by incorporating different learning approaches,

addressing individual needs, and improving training methods (Stephanie). However, there is also a recognition of the need for improvement in implementing adaptive learning, tailoring training to specific roles, and increasing engagement (Susie). Organizations should continuously adapt and refine their learning practices to create an environment that fosters growth, development, and optimal learning outcomes.

Purpose of Adaptive Learning

The purpose of adaptive learning is to enhance learning effectiveness, cater to individual needs, and improve learning outcomes. By incorporating adaptive learning strategies, organizations can create a learning environment tailored to individual learners, as Shay stresses "Adaptive learning caters to learning experiences and how individuals learn." The aim is to optimize the learning process, ensure a personalized approach, and facilitate better knowledge acquisition and retention.

Implementation of Adaptive Learning

Implementing adaptive learning involves incorporating different learning approaches, addressing individual learning styles, and improving training methods. Michael remarked, "Organizations should encourage various learning methods and provide training that accommodates individuals' preferences and availability." This sub-theme highlights the importance of adopting diverse instructional strategies, utilizing technology, and customizing training to optimize learning experiences.

Need for Improvement

Despite efforts to implement adaptive learning, there is a recognition of the need for improvement. This includes tailoring training to specific roles, recognizing room for improvement in implementation, and increasing engagement. Laura highlights, "It is important

for people to train for any role in any organization," emphasizing the need for continuous improvement in this area. Organizations need to assess their learning programs, identify areas for enhancement, and foster engagement to create a more effective and impactful learning environment.

Referrals and Career Advancement

Referrals play a significant role in career advancement, with individuals benefiting from employment opportunities through connections with acquaintances, friends, or relatives. This theme highlights how referrals can open doors and provide access to job opportunities. As Alan mentioned, he "started basically through a friend of mine," emphasizing the influence of referrals in initiating career paths. Referrals can serve as a valuable entry point, leading to subsequent organizational promotions and growth.

Employment Referral

Employment referrals can be instrumental in securing job opportunities. Participant Jimmy recounted how referrals from acquaintances, friends, or relatives could lead to employment offers within an organization. These referrals are often based on personal connections and recommendations, creating a level of trust and credibility. He went on to explain "One of my friends got me into the company, and I've been here ever since." This sub-theme emphasizes the power of referrals in gaining access to employment opportunities.

Path to Current Role

The path to a current role involves progressing through different departments, gaining experience through on-the-job training, and earning relevant certifications or degrees. This sub-theme underscores the importance of continuous growth and development. George's journey reflects this sub-theme, as he advanced from a junior to a mid-level developer through hard work

and learning, revealing it has "just been a series of promotions through hard work and learning." Progression within an organization often requires acquiring new skills, expanding knowledge, and adapting to new roles and responsibilities.

Motivators for Current Role

The sub-theme of motivators for the current role explores the factors that drive individuals to pursue specific positions within an organization. Common motivations include stability, better pay, personal fulfillment, and family support. Todd said he was looking for "something that was more stable that I knew I could work a full six days, five days a week." This sub-theme illustrates the significance of personal and financial motivations in shaping an individual's career path.

Personal Growth through Experience and Accomplishment

Motivators for current roles include seeking stability, better pay, personal fulfillment, and supporting family. This sub-theme highlights the factors driving individuals to pursue specific career paths. Stephanie's story exemplifies this. She was motivated to seek further opportunities aligned with her passion for learning, stating, "motivated me to seek further and bigger opportunities." Personal fulfillment, financial stability, and family provision are strong motivators for individuals as they navigate their career paths.

Fostering Personal Growth

This sub-theme emphasizes the value of embracing failure as an opportunity to learn and improve and the importance of striving for personal growth and self-development. Individuals like Alan, Bruce, and George have exhibited a mindset of continuous improvement and a willingness to adapt to new challenges. Alan claims, "if you don't learn something new every day, it's kind of a wasted day." They recognize that personal growth comes from overcoming

obstacles and acquiring new skills.

Satisfaction from Accomplishments

Finding satisfaction from accomplishments is a common thread among these individuals. They derive fulfillment from achieving personal goals and recognizing the value of progress and achievement. As Judy affirms, "everyone can benefit from education," indicating a sense of accomplishment from acquiring new knowledge. They set high standards for themselves and take pride in their work. By celebrating their accomplishments, they build confidence and motivation for further growth.

Continuous Pursuit of Knowledge

The individuals acknowledge the importance of continuous learning and the pursuit of knowledge. They exhibit curiosity-driven learning and actively seek opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills. Julia feels the need "to learn and continue to develop yourself," demonstrating her thirst for knowledge beyond her immediate work requirements. They engage in self-directed research, embrace training opportunities, and stay updated on industry trends. Their commitment to lifelong learning empowers them to adapt to new challenges, stay relevant, and continually grow-personally and professionally.

Research Question Responses

A significant theme that emerged across all research questions was referrals and their impact on career advancement. A referral is the act of recommending or suggesting individuals for employment opportunities within or outside an organization based on personal connections or professional relationships. There is a strong connection between heutagogical learning behaviors, adaptive learning systems, and perceptions of lifelong learning in the banking industry in this theme, which emphasizes the importance of networking and personal relationships in the career

trajectory of middle managers.

As a starting point, referrals play an important role in influencing the heutagogical learning behavior of middle managers in the banking industry. Referrals expose managers to learning opportunities and resources that might not be available through formal channels. Professional networks often enable middle managers to access specialized knowledge, mentorship, and guidance, enhancing their ability to engage in self-directed learning and take ownership of their professional development. Referrals have been shown to influence heutagogical learning behaviors, suggesting that the relationships built through referrals contribute to creating an ecosystem of knowledge exchange and learning in the banking industry.

As a second benefit, referrals contribute to the adaptive learning systems adopted by middle managers to pursue lifelong learning. Referrals allow managers to gain perspectives, experiences, and expertise that may not be readily available within their immediate work environment. This practice enables them to adapt their learning strategies and approaches, thus enabling them to acquire new skills and knowledge in an ever-changing banking environment. Referrals help facilitate the development of adaptive learning systems by providing access to external learning opportunities such as workshops, conferences, or collaborative projects.

The theme of referrals and career advancement emerges as a critical aspect of understanding the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry who practice heutagogy. Referrals shape perceptions of lifelong learning and influence heutagogical learning behaviors. Understanding the importance of referrals provides valuable insight into the interplay between personal relationships, learning strategies, and career advancement in the banking industry.

Jimmy mentioned transitioning to different roles within the company, indicating

movement and growth within the organization. He reminisced about doing "different moves throughout the company, different parts of it." This response suggested that referrals and internal opportunities played a role in his career advancement and allowed him to explore various roles and responsibilities within the banking industry.

Rodrigo's response further supported the theme of referrals and career advancement. He discussed transitioning to his current role through personal interest and volunteering, indicating that his proactive efforts and networking led to opportunities. He shared that he "volunteered for my current position" and "talked to my old boss" before making a permanent move. These statements highlight the significance of personal interest, volunteer work, and leveraging professional relationships to secure career advancements within the banking industry.

The responses from Jimmy and Rodrigo demonstrated the influence of referrals and career advancement on the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry. Both participants highlighted the importance of internal mobility, transitioning between roles, and leveraging personal interests and networking to secure new organizational opportunities. These experiences showcased the value of referrals, personal connections, and a proactive approach to career growth and advancement in the banking industry.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills? The major theme of lifelong learning and adaptation was evident in the responses provided by Bruce and Matt, two middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy. Bruce's response of "challenge yourself and learn something new" highlights the importance of continuously seeking new knowledge and experiences. This question aligns with the concept of lifelong learning, emphasizing the need for

middle managers to engage in personal and professional development throughout their careers actively. Bruce's quote reflects his belief in the value of self-challenge and continuous learning as a means of growth and advancement within the banking industry.

Matt's response added another dimension to the theme of lifelong learning by emphasizing the importance of embracing failure as an opportunity for self-improvement. He advised, "Don't be afraid of failure; use it to better yourself." This perspective demonstrates the adaptive nature of lifelong learning, acknowledging that setbacks and failures are inevitable but can serve as valuable learning experiences. By viewing failure as a chance for growth and self-improvement, middle managers can foster resilience, agility, and the willingness to take calculated risks in pursuing personal and professional development.

Bruce and Matt's responses underscored the significance of lifelong learning and adaptation in the banking industry. Their perspectives emphasized the need for middle managers to proactively seek new challenges, expand their knowledge base, and embrace failure as a catalyst for growth. By embodying these principles, middle managers can cultivate a mindset of continuous improvement, enabling them to effectively navigate the dynamic and ever-evolving landscape of the banking industry.

Sub-Question One

What factors have influenced the heutagogical learning behaviors of middle managers in a banking environment? The major theme of learning and employment growth was evident in the responses provided by Judy and Laura regarding the factors that have influenced the heutagogical learning behaviors of middle managers in a banking environment. Judy's responses highlighted the importance of exploring different departments and finding passions in the workplace as key influences. She asserts, "I would emphasize learning about different

departments" and "encouraging employees to find their passions in the workplace and personally to grow." These statements emphasize the significance of continuous learning and growth within the banking industry. By encouraging middle managers to explore different areas of the organization and discover their passions, they can expand their knowledge base, enhance their skills, and contribute more effectively to their roles.

Laura's responses further exemplified the theme of learning and employment growth. She emphasized the need to stay motivated to learn and the value of going at one's own pace. Her quote stated, "I would emphasize staying motivated to learn" and "going at your own pace." These statements highlight the importance of intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning in fostering continuous growth and development among middle managers. By maintaining high motivation and personalizing their learning journey, middle managers can take ownership of their professional development, adapt to new challenges, and acquire the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their roles.

Judy's and Laura's responses emphasized the significance of continuous learning and growth in the banking industry. Their perspectives underscored the importance of exploring different areas of the organization, discovering passions, staying motivated, and taking control of one's learning journey. By embracing these factors, middle managers can foster a culture of heutagogical learning, where they actively pursue knowledge, adapt to changing environments, and contribute to their professional growth and the success of their organizations.

Sub-Question Two

How do middle managers in a banking environment describe adaptive learning systems in their own lives as part of their pursuit of lifelong learning?

The major theme of personal growth through experience and accomplishment was

evident in the responses provided by Shay and Michael regarding the factors that have influenced the heutagogical learning behaviors of middle managers in a banking environment. Shay's responses emphasized building confidence in learning and growth and catering to individual learning experiences. She is quoted as "giving them more confidence to learn and grow" and "Adaptive learning caters to learning experiences and how individuals learn." These statements highlight the importance of creating a supportive learning environment that boosts middle managers' confidence and acknowledges their unique learning styles. By addressing individual needs and preferences, middle managers are more likely to engage in heutagogical learning, fostering personal growth through experience and accomplishment.

Michael's responses further exemplified the theme of personal growth through experience and accomplishment. He emphasized the benefits of personalized learning, allowing employees to learn at their own pace and maximizing efficiency and effectiveness. He said, "Employees can learn at their own pace using a personalized approach, maximizing efficiency and effectiveness." Additionally, he highlighted the significance of real-time feedback and assessment for aligning individual growth with company goals. These statements underscore the value of tailoring learning experiences to individual needs and providing timely feedback, which can fuel personal growth and enhance middle managers' ability to contribute to the organization's objectives.

Shay's and Michael's responses underscore the importance of personal growth through experience and accomplishment in a banking environment. Their perspectives highlight the need to build confidence and cater to individual learning experiences and personalized learning approaches. By embracing these factors, organizations can create an environment that fosters heutagogical learning among middle managers, empowering them to grow, achieve their goals, and make meaningful contributions to their professional development and the organization's

success.

Sub-Question Three

What are the perceptions of middle managers in a banking environment on the relationships between heutagogy and lifelong learning? The recurring theme of organizational implementation of learning was evident in the responses provided by Todd and Susie regarding the perceptions of middle managers in a banking environment on the relationships between heutagogy and lifelong learning. Todd's responses highlighted the impact of heutagogical learning on career prospects, personal well-being, mental stimulation, growth, and making a difference in society. His quote stated, "better my career prospects and the better I feel" and "preventing complacency and fostering growth," and "solve societal problems, drive innovation, and promote positive change." These statements reflect the belief that heutagogical learning contributes to personal and professional development, enabling middle managers to advance in their careers, experience fulfillment, and positively impact society.

Susie's response further emphasized the theme of organizational implementation of learning. She discusses how heutagogical learning increases her value to the organization and the time commitment it requires. Her quote stated, "desire and ability to learn and perform the duties of my peers and superiors increase my value to the organization" and "proven to make me indispensable, which requires more of my time." This perspective highlighted that heutagogical learning enhances one's value within the organization by equipping middle managers with the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their responsibilities and contribute to organizational success. It also acknowledges the time commitment required to implement heutagogical learning practices effectively.

Todd's and Susie's responses demonstrated the organizational perspective on heutagogy

and lifelong learning. They highlighted the belief that implementing heutagogical learning approaches in the banking industry can lead to career advancement, personal fulfillment, mental stimulation, growth, and making a positive impact on society. The responses also acknowledged that heutagogical learning requires a time commitment but is essential for increasing value and indispensability within the organization. These perceptions reflected the significance of organizational support and the integration of lifelong learning principles to foster a culture of continuous learning and professional development among middle managers.

Summary

The responses to the central research question and its sub-questions shed light on the lived experiences and perceptions of middle managers in the banking industry who practice heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills. Five major themes were used to prove positive responses to the study's central research question and three sub-questions.

The lifelong learning and adaptation theme explored the factors influencing heutagogical learning behaviors. Participants emphasized the importance of exploring different departments, finding personal passions, staying motivated, learning at one's own pace, and pursuing areas of interest. These factors demonstrate the need for continuous learning and adaptability to foster personal and professional growth.

Regarding the factors influencing heutagogical learning behaviors, the theme of personal growth through experience and accomplishment emerged. Participants highlighted the significance of building confidence, catering to individual learning experiences, personalizing learning approaches, and receiving timely feedback. These factors emphasized the role of personal growth, self-directed learning, and individualized approaches to learning within the banking industry.

When exploring the perceptions of middle managers on the relationships between heutagogy and lifelong learning, the theme of organizational implementation of learning became evident. Participants expressed perceptions of better career prospects, personal well-being, making a difference, increasing value to the organization, and the time commitment involved. These perceptions confirmed the importance of organizational support, heutagogical practices, and lifelong learning in enhancing middle managers' careers, personal development, and organizational contributions.

The responses highlighted the significance of lifelong learning, personal growth, adaptation, individualized learning approaches, and organizational support in the experiences and perceptions of middle managers practicing heutagogy in the banking industry. These themes collectively contributed to a deeper understanding of the role of heutagogical practices in fostering continuous learning, personal development, and career advancement among middle managers in the banking sector.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

Chapter Five of this study provides a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the findings obtained from the transcendental phenomenological study on the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy to develop lifelong learning skills. The chapter is organized into five discussion subsections, each focusing on a specific aspect of the research findings. This chapter serves as a crucial synthesis of the study's findings, offering an interpretative lens through which the reader can gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of middle managers in the banking industry practicing heutagogy. The subsections within this chapter provide a comprehensive analysis of the research findings, explore their practical and theoretical implications, address the study's limitations, and offer recommendations for future research in this field.

This transcendental phenomenological study focused on understanding middle managers' lived experiences and self-determination in the banking industry. The study involved eight men and six women aged 20 to 65. Individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts were utilized to gather data. Analyzing these data sources led to identifying themes that guided the exploration of the research questions. The study drew upon Deci and Ryan's (1985a) components of SDT (autonomy, competency, and relatedness) to frame the research questions and analyze the findings.

Discussion

The participant responses provide valuable insights into the relationship between confidence, competence, self-determination theory, lifelong learning, and heutagogy among middle managers in the banking industry. Confidence is a crucial component of self-

determination theory, emphasizing the importance of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and competence in driving individuals' engagement and satisfaction in their learning and work experiences. The major themes that emerged from the responses, namely learning and growth in employment, lifelong learning and adaptation, organizational implementation of learning, referrals and career advancement, and personal growth through experience and accomplishment, all contribute to fostering confidence and competence in middle managers.

Participant responses indicate that the five major themes align with the principles of self-determination theory and heutagogy. By embracing lifelong learning, middle managers can foster confidence and competence, which, in turn, contribute to their motivation, engagement, and overall satisfaction in their learning and work experiences. These findings underscore the importance of cultivating a learning culture and providing support mechanisms that empower middle managers to take ownership of their learning journey, enhance their confidence and competence, and ultimately contribute to their professional success and their organizations' growth.

Interpretation of Findings

Chapter Four presents a comprehensive summary of the thematic findings, capturing the essence of the participants' narratives. A thorough analysis of the themes, patterns, and meanings provides a rich understanding of the middle managers' lived experiences as self-determined and lifelong learners. The findings offer insights into their individual journeys and highlight the broader implications for understanding the dynamics of self-determination and lifelong learning within the banking industry. The synthesis of these findings contributes to the existing literature by providing a nuanced portrayal of middle managers' experiences and their pursuit of self-directed growth and development throughout their careers.

Summary of Thematic Findings

In interpreting the study's findings, it was crucial to consider how the identified themes and subthemes align with self-determination theory (SDT) principles. The analysis examined both extrinsic motivators derived from external systems and intrinsic motivators inherent to individuals. Additionally, the relationship between personal satisfaction and the motivational strategies employed to engage in certain behaviors played a significant role (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Understanding this relationship is essential when considering the various influences on motivation. Among the emerging themes, referrals and career advancement were the most prevalent, indicating their strong impact on participants' motivations.

The Peter Principle. The participants seemed to seek out areas where they felt inadequate, working diligently to overcome those perceived incompetencies and moving on to the next level of challenge (Brennan, 2020). This continual pursuit of growth and development resonated with the biblical expectation of Christians seeking perfection, knowing that it is unattainable but striving for improvement nonetheless (English Standard Version Bible, 2016, Philippians 3:12-15; James 1:4). I observed a fascinating pattern among the participants in my study. Many displayed characteristics of being jacks of all trades, possessing a wide range of knowledge and skills in various fields, topics, and hobbies. However, I noticed that none of them would label themselves experts in any specific area of knowledge. Instead, they emphasized specialization in different areas based on their individual interests and curiosities.

What stood out to me was that their pursuit of career advancement did not revolve around the traditional motives of money, power, or influence. Rather, their primary motivation for advancing their careers appeared to be the desire to take on more responsibilities, face new challenges, and seize opportunities for learning and personal growth in new roles to obtain

happiness (Deci & Ryan, 2006, 2013). They saw career progression as serving in a different capacity and expanding their knowledge and skills (Deci & Ryan, 2014a, 2014b).

George's quotes align perfectly with the pattern I noticed among the participants. George stated, "They asked me if I wanted to grow in this position," emphasizing his willingness and eagerness to take on new challenges and responsibilities. This quote demonstrates his active pursuit of personal growth and development rather than seeking monetary or influential gains. It reflects the participants' motivation to seize opportunities for learning and career advancement.

Furthermore, George mentioned, "I try to motivate people...to change." This assertion highlights his focus on inspiring and influencing others to embrace change and strive for improvement. It showcases the participants' inclination to seek personal growth and support and uplift those around them. By emphasizing motivation and facilitating change, George exemplifies the participants' aspiration to serve in different capacities and contribute to the development of others, reinforcing their belief that career progression is a means of expanding knowledge and skills.

Confidence Builds Competence. A noteworthy observation was the prevalence of confidence as a precursor to competence in the participants' responses. The participants gained confidence through trial and error experiences, a willingness to embrace failure, and the support they received from others in their learning and growth processes. Additionally, the data revealed that while the participants acknowledged the importance of obtaining degrees and certifications to advance their careers, they recognized the value of on-the-job training and pursuing hobbies outside the workplace as effective ways to acquire new knowledge and skills. These examples highlight intrinsic motivation, as the participants' desire for personal growth and accomplishment drove their pursuit of learning beyond what is deemed necessary by the banking industry.

Matt's quotes strongly align with the observation of confidence as a precursor to competence. He stated, "I wanted to do it at the next level," reflecting his ambition and confidence in taking on more challenging roles. This statement demonstrates his belief in his own abilities and the desire to push himself beyond his current limitations. It resonates with the participants' pattern of seeking personal growth and accomplishment as a driving force in their pursuit of learning.

Moreover, Matt mentioned, "I never want to be at a point where you know everything." This quote showcases his understanding that competence is a continuous journey rather than a destination. It reflects his willingness to embrace and learn from failure, highlighting his commitment to personal and professional development. By acknowledging the need for ongoing learning and improvement, Matt exemplifies the participants' recognition of the value of trial-and-error experiences and the pursuit of knowledge beyond formal education.

Matt's beliefs align perfectly with the observation of confidence as a precursor to competence. His desire to take on more challenging roles, embrace continuous learning, and apply knowledge to future projects showcases his intrinsic motivation for personal growth and development. These quotes exemplify the participants' pattern of gaining confidence through trial and error experiences, emphasizing the significance of intrinsic motivation in their pursuit of competence.

Servant Leadership. Participants demonstrated behaviors that are consistent with the principles of servant leadership. They actively engage in mutual support and collaboration with their peers, demonstrating supportive attitudes toward their peers. They are willing to share knowledge, provide mentorship, and assist their subordinates in developing their careers. These middle managers also establish strong relationships with their superiors, fostering a sense of

respect and understanding. The supportive behaviors of middle managers in the banking industry encourage their teams to become autonomous, competent, and related to one another. In addition to sharing knowledge and providing mentorship to subordinates, they enable individuals to enhance their skills and abilities by enhancing competence. A sense of trust and openness within the hierarchy is established by connecting well with superiors personally.

Shay's mindset strongly aligns with the participant observation of servant leadership behaviors among the participants. Shay stated, "helping them find something that they're interested in learning." This statement reflects Shay's commitment to supporting and empowering her subordinates by facilitating their interests and learning journeys. It highlights her willingness to invest in the growth and development of others, which is a characteristic of servant leadership (Eva et al., 2019). Shay's emphasis on the relationship between learning and growth further reinforces her belief in creating opportunities for others to enhance their competence and expand their capabilities.

Furthermore, Shay mentioned, "training is key to any role and any organization." This quote emphasizes the importance of knowledge-sharing and mentorship, which are fundamental aspects of servant leadership (Eva et al., 2019). Shay recognizes the value of training and its impact on personal and organizational success. Her emphasis on staying relevant and continuously learning, regardless of age, showcases her commitment to ongoing development and encourages others to do the same. Shay's focus on proving the benefits of learning to others highlights her intent to serve and support the growth of all employees, fostering a culture of mutual support and collaboration.

Implications for Policy or Practice

The practical implications of the study's findings are significant for policymakers and

banking industry practitioners. An organization can encourage middle managers to learn lifelong by adopting heutagogical approaches. This study provides insights into how organizations can facilitate a culture of continuous learning among middle managers by creating supportive systems and structures. These practical implications can help policymakers and banking industry practitioners design strategies and initiatives that promote professional development, enhance competence, and drive innovation within the banking sector.

Implications for Policy

Promotion of Lifelong Learning Initiatives. The findings of this study may be useful for policymakers in the banking industry in advocating for policies that promote lifelong learning among middle managers. Researchers can use this research to highlight the importance of continuous learning in developing middle managers' skills, knowledge, and competencies, contributing to the overall growth and competitiveness of the banking industry. Lifelong learning initiatives can be integrated into industry policies to foster a culture of continuous learning that benefits employees and the industry at large.

Policymakers can promote lifelong learning by providing tax benefits or grants to companies that invest in creating a supportive learning environment to incentivize organizations to adopt heutagogical approaches. Middle managers may benefit from these incentives by allocating resources to training programs, learning platforms, and mentoring opportunities that facilitate self-directed learning and career advancement. As a result of financial incentives, policymakers can encourage organizations to prioritize continuous learning as a strategic investment, recognizing the long-term benefits it brings to individual employees and the industry.

The banking industry can collaborate with industry associations and educational

institutions to develop certification programs and training opportunities focusing on continuous learning and professional development for middle managers. Programs such as these can be tailored to the needs of the industry and incorporate heutagogical strategies that empower middle managers to take charge of their learning. Providing lifelong learning opportunities for middle managers can be enhanced through partnerships between industry stakeholders and educational institutions. As policymakers foster collaboration and develop targeted learning initiatives, they can facilitate the integration of lifelong learning into the banking profession's professional development landscape.

Supportive Systems for Knowledge Sharing. A key finding of this study is that organizations should prioritize establishing systems and structures that facilitate knowledge sharing among middle managers. Policies that promote collaboration and knowledge exchange can play a critical role in promoting these practices. An alternative approach would be to create platforms or forums where middle managers can share best practices, lessons learned, and innovative ideas. Middle managers may use these platforms to connect, collaborate, and exchange knowledge, thereby learning from one another's experiences and leveraging collective wisdom. Providing guidelines and resources to support the effective implementation of these platforms is one way policymakers can advocate for their integration into organizational practices.

Policymakers may also encourage organizations to establish mentoring programs for middle managers in addition to knowledge-sharing platforms. As part of these programs, experienced middle managers can provide guidance, support, and opportunities for learning and growth to younger colleagues. By cultivating a mentorship culture within organizations, policymakers can facilitate the transfer of tacit knowledge, professional development, and career

advancement among middle managers. Mentorship programs are useful tools for fostering continuous learning, enhancing professional relationships, and facilitating the acquiring of skills and insights necessary for success in the banking sector. These programs can be promoted by offering incentives, such as tax benefits and grants, to organizations committed to establishing and maintaining effective mentoring programs.

Recognition of Competence Beyond Formal Education. A key finding of the study is that on-the-job training and pursuing hobbies outside the workplace are effective avenues for acquiring knowledge and skills. Advocates of policies recognizing competence in the banking industry beyond formal education can play a pivotal role in advocating for these policies. An example would be the establishment of competency-based assessments or alternative career progression pathways that consider practical experience and self-directed learning.

Acknowledging and rewarding competence gained through various means can contribute to developing a more diverse and inclusive workforce and encourage continuous learning and professional development.

Policymakers can advocate for the recognition of on-the-job training by encouraging financial institutions to invest in robust training and development programs. These programs can provide hands-on experience, mentorship opportunities, and skill-building initiatives that go beyond traditional classroom training. On-the-job training can provide organizations with valuable knowledge and skills by emphasizing the value of practical learning. The government may also collaborate with industry associations and educational institutions to develop frameworks for competency-based assessments to measure a person's practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and real-life application of knowledge. Individuals and organizations may be motivated to prioritize continuous learning and professional development if recognition and

rewards are given for on-the-job training.

Policymakers can also advocate for recognizing hobbies as a source of learning and skill development outside the workplace. Pursuing hobbies outside the workplace often involves engaging in activities that require problem-solving, creativity, and acquiring new skills. A policymaker may be able to encourage organizations to value and support employees' hobbies by fostering a culture that recognizes the transferrable skills gained through them. Flexibility in work schedules can be provided to accommodate hobbies, a healthy work-life balance can be promoted, and employee resources can be provided to explore and develop their interests. Collaboration between policymakers and organizations can also foster a culture of learning and appreciation for various skills and hobbies within an organization.

Implications for Practice

Partnership with Institutions of Higher Education. Organizations within the banking industry may explore partnerships with local community colleges and online universities that are accredited. By collaborating with these educational institutions, practitioners may provide middle managers with opportunities for further education and professional development. Organizations may offer tuition assistance programs or discounts to encourage employees to pursue relevant courses or degree programs. This partnership may help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, ensuring that middle managers acquire the necessary competencies to excel in their roles within the banking industry.

It is important to note that the transferability of this implication may vary depending on the specific context and the availability of accredited educational institutions in the region. The feasibility of partnering with local community colleges and online universities would depend on the geographical location and the alignment of educational offerings with the banking industry's

needs. Organizations should carefully evaluate the resources and opportunities available in their respective areas to determine the viability and effectiveness of such partnerships in facilitating the professional development of their middle managers.

Foster a Learning Culture. Banking organizations could use the study's findings to promote a learning culture encouraging middle managers to engage in lifelong learning. Organizations can achieve this by establishing systems that facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration among middle managers. Middle managers can share best practices, insights, and lessons learned through knowledge-sharing platforms, both online and offline. A platform like this provides a forum for middle managers to connect, collaborate, and learn from one another's experiences, which promotes a sense of community and continuous learning within the organization.

The organization may also establish mentorship programs that pair junior colleagues with experienced middle managers. These mentorship initiatives create knowledge transfer, guidance, and professional development opportunities. Mentorship relationships enable organizations to facilitate the exchange of expertise, support the development of middle managers, and foster a culture of learning and development. A mentoring program provides a structured framework for sharing knowledge and developing personal skills while fostering positive relationships and enhancing career prospects.

Establishing supportive systems, such as knowledge-sharing platforms and mentoring programs, can facilitate competence enhancement and innovation and foster a positive working environment in the banking industry. Embracing a learning culture promotes a growth mindset, promotes continuous learning, and emphasizes acquiring and applying new knowledge and skills. This program empowers middle managers to embrace change, adapt to industry trends,

and contribute to the organization's success. It is also important to note that a learning culture enhances employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention, as individuals feel supported and empowered.

Embrace Heutagogical Approaches. Those within the banking industry can use the findings of this study as a guide to implementing heutagogical approaches within their organizations to promote self-directed learning among middle managers. The heutagogy approach encourages individuals to take responsibility for their learning journeys, explore diverse topics and areas of interest, and engage in ongoing professional development. Organizations can foster competence and adaptability in an ever-evolving banking industry by implementing heutagogical approaches to empower middle managers to become lifelong learners.

Practitioners can establish a supportive learning environment that encourages self-directed learning. Various learning resources, such as online courses, webinars, and industry publications, can be provided to enable middle managers to explore topics aligned with their interests and professional objectives. Organizations can also encourage middle managers to develop personalized learning plans catering to their needs and aspirations. A sense of ownership and autonomy is promoted through this approach, enabling middle managers to take responsibility for their learning and development.

Moreover, practitioners can promote a culture of continuous learning by recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments and growth that result from self-directed learning. Middle managers' learning accomplishments and success stories may be shared through internal communication channels, such as newsletters or recognition programs. Organizations can motivate and inspire middle managers to embark on their lifelong learning journeys by

emphasizing the value of self-directed learning and demonstrating its positive outcomes.

Promote Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration. Banking practitioners can encourage a culture of knowledge sharing and collaboration among middle managers by providing platforms and opportunities to exchange best practices, lessons learned, and innovative ideas. Middle managers can contribute to and access valuable insights from peers through knowledge-sharing platforms, both digital and physical. Middle managers benefit from using these platforms by exchanging knowledge, discussing challenges, and sharing successes, fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous learning.

Practitioners may also organize workshops, conferences, or internal events to facilitate cross-functional collaboration and learning in addition to knowledge-sharing platforms. These events allow middle managers from different departments and areas of expertise to get together, share their experiences, and participate in discussions and workshops on relevant topics.

Practitioners can encourage the exchange of diverse viewpoints, foster creativity, and strengthen relationships among middle managers by creating opportunities for collaboration. Moreover, these events can serve as a platform for showcasing innovative ideas and initiatives, inspiring others, and boosting the growth of an organization.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The discussion in this section delves into the broader implications of the research findings, specifically their impact on existing theories and methodologies in the field. By exploring the contributions of the study's outcomes, the section sheds light on how the findings enhance our understanding of heutagogy, lifelong learning, and related concepts. Additionally, the section identifies potential avenues for further theoretical development, suggesting areas where the research can expand existing frameworks and theories. Moreover, the discussion

touches on the importance of methodological refinement, emphasizing the need to continue refining research methods to capture the complex and dynamic nature of heutagogical learning and lifelong learning experiences in the banking industry.

The theoretical implications of this qualitative study on SDT are significant. By employing SDT as the theoretical framework, the study contributes to our understanding of motivation and personal growth within the context of middle managers in the banking industry. SDT provides a comprehensive lens to examine the participants' pursuit of lifelong learning, emphasizing the importance of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and competence in driving human behavior. The findings of this study demonstrate the applicability and relevance of SDT in the banking industry, extending the theoretical underpinnings of the theory into a new domain.

One theoretical implication of this study is the potential relationship between confidence and competence. While previous research has predominantly focused on developing competence as a precursor to confidence, this study sheds new light by suggesting that confidence may play a crucial role in driving competence. The participants in this study actively sought out areas where they felt inadequate and worked diligently to overcome those perceived incompetencies. Their confidence grew through trial and error experiences, embracing failure, and receiving support from others. This finding highlights the need to explore further the relationship between confidence and competence within the framework of SDT, suggesting that confidence may be a significant factor in driving lifelong learning and personal growth.

Moreover, the study's focus on middle managers in the banking industry within Northeast Florida provides empirical implications for future research. Previous studies in the context of SDT have primarily examined industries such as medicine and education, often outside the United States. By exploring the experiences of middle managers in the banking industry in

Northeast Florida, this study offers a novel perspective within the field of SDT. It highlights the importance of considering the specific context and industry when examining motivation, personal growth, and lifelong learning. Future research can build upon this foundation by exploring the applicability of SDT in different industries and geographical regions, expanding our understanding of motivation and personal growth in various contexts.

Furthermore, the study reveals a potential connection between SDT, lifelong learning, and servant leadership. The participants in this study demonstrated behaviors consistent with the principles of servant leadership, actively engaging in mutual support, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. They embraced a culture of continuous learning and sought to empower and develop their subordinates. This finding suggests that SDT and pursuing lifelong learning may predict servant leadership behavior. Future research can explore this relationship further, examining how the motivation and growth-oriented mindset inherent in SDT may influence leadership styles and behaviors, particularly in servant leadership.

Another theoretical implication lies in the gap regarding the study of confidence within existing research on SDT and self-efficacy. While self-efficacy theory could be an alternative theoretical framework, this study uncovers a slight novelty by emphasizing the role of confidence in pursuing lifelong learning. Confidence is often overlooked or assumed in the research on motivation and personal growth. The findings of this study highlight the significance of confidence as a precursor to competence, suggesting that fostering confidence may be essential in promoting lifelong learning and continuous personal development. Future research can further investigate the interplay between confidence, motivation, and competence within the framework of SDT, contributing to a deeper understanding of these constructs and their relationships.

The focus on lifelong learning within the context of SDT opens avenues for exploring the predictors and outcomes of this process. Lifelong learning is an essential aspect of personal and professional growth, and this study suggests that SDT may be a valuable predictor of individuals' inclination toward lifelong learning. Future research can investigate the factors that influence the motivation for lifelong learning and how SDT can contribute to its facilitation. Additionally, exploring the outcomes of lifelong learning, such as increased competence, job satisfaction, and career advancement, within the framework of SDT can provide further insights into the benefits and impacts of a growth-oriented mindset.

This qualitative study on SDT in the banking industry in Northeast Florida carries several theoretical implications. It extends the understanding of SDT by emphasizing the role of confidence as a precursor to competence, shedding new light on the relationship between these constructs. The study's focus on a unique context and industry highlights the need to consider contextual factors when examining motivation and personal growth. Furthermore, the potential connection between SDT, lifelong learning, and servant leadership paves the way for future research exploring the influence of motivation and growth-oriented mindsets on leadership behaviors. Lastly, the study brings attention to the understudied area of confidence within the context of SDT and self-efficacy, emphasizing the need for further research on the role of confidence in promoting lifelong learning and personal development.

Limitations and Delimitations

Careful attention is given to acknowledging the inherent limitations and boundaries that affected the study. A critical examination is conducted, assessing constraints encountered throughout the research process. These limitations include the sample size, potential biases, and contextual factors that may have influenced the outcomes. The section provides an insightful

reflection on how these limitations impact the generalizability and validity of the findings, recognizing the need for future studies to address these constraints and expand upon the knowledge generated by this research.

Sample Size Limitation. One limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size of 14 middle manager participants. While qualitative research focuses on in-depth exploration rather than generalizability, a larger sample size could have provided a broader range of perspectives and potentially enhanced the transferability of the findings. With only 14 participants, the study may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives among middle managers in the banking industry. The limited sample size restricts the extent to which the study's findings can be applied to the broader population of middle managers, as the participants' characteristics, motivations, and learning preferences may not represent the entire population.

Larger sample sizes would have allowed for greater variation in participant demographics, such as age, gender, educational background, and years of experience, which could influence their approach to lifelong learning. Including a larger sample would have also allowed the identification of potential subgroup differences or patterns within the middle management population. A broader range of participants would have allowed a broader examination of heutagogical strategies across different contexts and settings within the banking industry, providing a broader insight into their effectiveness.

The study results might have been more transferable outside the banking industry if the sample size had been more significant. Middle managers' characteristics, challenges, and learning requirements in other professional contexts may differ from those in the banking industry. Considering the small sample size, it is difficult to determine whether the findings are

specific to the banking industry or can be applied to other professional contexts. Consequently, future research with a larger, more diverse sample of middle managers will enable a better understanding of the effectiveness of heutagogical strategies in fostering lifelong learning.

Potential Biases Limitation. Another limitation of this study is the potential biases that may have influenced the data collection and analysis processes. Despite my best conscious intentions to remove biases, it is important to acknowledge that personal biases and preconceived notions could have unconsciously influenced various study aspects. These biases could have influenced participant selection, data interpretation, and the overall findings. For instance, my personal beliefs, prior experiences, and theoretical framework could have subtly shaped the selection of participants, leading to a sample that may not fully represent the diverse range of perspectives within the population of middle managers.

The participants' responses may also have been influenced by social desirability bias, which occurs when individuals give answers that align with what the researcher is seeking. The study participants may have felt compelled to present themselves positively or conform to perceived expectations regarding the effectiveness of heutagogical strategies. It is possible that this bias could lead to a distorted understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions, thus distorting the accuracy and authenticity of their responses. Even though efforts were made to create a safe and non-judgmental environment for participants to express their views, social desirability bias remains a concern.

Although rigorous data collection and analysis procedures were implemented to mitigate biases, it is important to acknowledge that it is difficult to eliminate bias completely. I strived to be aware of my biases and take steps to minimize their impact. I used reflexive journaling to help increase the objectivity and reliability of the study. However, despite the inherent subjectivity in

qualitative research and the complex nature of biases necessitates caution when interpreting the findings. Future research should continue to explore ways to minimize biases and enhance the validity and reliability of the data collection and analysis processes to obtain a more accurate understanding of the effectiveness of heutagogical strategies.

Specific Context Limitation. The study focused specifically on middle managers in the banking industry in Northeast Florida. While this narrow focus allowed for a deep and detailed exploration of the experiences and perspectives of middle managers within this particular context, it also limits the generalizability of the findings to other industries or geographical locations. The banking industry has unique characteristics, organizational structures, and professional dynamics that may influence how heutagogical strategies are perceived and implemented. Additionally, the regional context of Northeast Florida, with its specific cultural, economic, and social factors, may further shape middle managers' experiences in this industry. Therefore, caution should be exercised when applying the study's findings to other industries or different geographical locations, as the findings may not fully capture the nuances and complexities of those contexts.

Future research should consider including participants from diverse industries and geographical locations to enhance the generalizability and applicability of the findings. This would allow for a broader understanding of how heutagogical strategies operate in different organizational and cultural contexts. By examining middle managers' experiences in various industries, such as healthcare, technology, or manufacturing, researchers can identify commonalities and differences in the effectiveness of heutagogical strategies across sectors. Similarly, incorporating participants from different geographical locations would enable the exploration of potential regional variations in implementing and impacting these strategies. This

broader approach to sampling would enhance the transferability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of heutagogical strategies in promoting lifelong learning across various professional contexts.

Scope of Participants Limitation. The study deliberately focused on middle managers within the banking industry in Northeast Florida. This deliberate delimitation allowed for an in-depth exploration of a specific group within a specific context. By narrowing the scope to middle managers in the banking industry, the study aimed to capture this particular group's unique experiences, challenges, and learning needs. This focused approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the specific dynamics, organizational structures, and industry-specific factors that influence lifelong learning among middle managers in the banking sector.

As a result of narrowing the geographical focus to Northeast Florida, the study sought to capture the regional nuances and contextual factors that shape middle managers' experiences in the area. A region's economic conditions, cultural values, and local industry practices may influence how middle managers perceive, implement, and value heutagogical strategies. This study sought to generate insights grounded in the local context and applicable to practices and policies within the Northeast Florida banking industry through a deeper investigation of this region.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that this narrow focus on middle managers in the banking industry in Northeast Florida limits the generalization of the findings to other contexts. Middle managers' experiences and perspectives may vary significantly across industries or regions depending on organizational structures, industry norms, and regional cultures. Consequently, caution should be exercised when applying the study's findings to other contexts, and further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of heutagogical strategies among

middle managers in diverse industries and geographical locales.

Emphasis on Lifelong Learning Limitation. This study focused specifically on lifelong learning within the context of SDT. This study was limited to this specific construct to gain a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and behaviors of middle managers regarding their pursuit of continuous learning and personal growth. Lifelong learning is characterized by the intrinsic motivation to acquire new knowledge and skills and the fulfillment of psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This study investigated how heutagogical strategies could support and enhance these motivations and needs among middle managers by adopting this specific lens.

Focusing on lifelong learning within the SDT framework allowed a detailed examination of the factors affecting middle managers' engagement in continuous learning. A culture of lifelong learning is nurtured by autonomy-supportive learning environments, intrinsic motivation, and satisfying psychological needs. Through this focus, the study examined in depth the psychological processes and motivational dynamics that motivate middle managers to maintain and enhance their professional development.

However, an emphasis on lifelong learning within the framework of SDT may limit the exploration of other aspects and dimensions of learning in the context of heutagogical strategies. Lifelong learning is just one aspect of a broader learning landscape, including skills development, performance improvement, and knowledge acquisition. Due to its focus on lifelong learning, the study may not have fully captured the potential benefits of heutagogical strategies on other professional growth and development aspects. The scope of future research could be broadened to explore the multifaceted nature of learning within heutagogical approaches and examine how they contribute to various dimensions of individual and organizational

development.

Qualitative Approach Limitation. An in-depth interview, focus group, and journal prompts were used in the study to examine the experiences and perspectives of middle managers. The study was deliberately delimited to gain a rich and nuanced understanding of the participants' motivations, behaviors, and subjective experiences. The study adopted a qualitative approach to capture the complexity and depth of the participants' lived experiences, allowing an in-depth understanding of the phenomena investigated.

Through the qualitative approach, participants were allowed to share their unique experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of their lifelong learning journeys. The in-depth interviews allowed participants to express their thoughts, emotions, and personal insights in their own words. Middle managers participated in focus groups that allowed for interactive discussions and the exploration of shared experiences, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of the social and collaborative aspects of lifelong learning. Participants were provided with journal prompts during an extended period of time in which they could reflect and document their thoughts and reflections, providing valuable longitudinal data on their learning experiences.

Despite its advantages, the qualitative approach is not without limitations. This method permits rich and detailed exploration but may not be easily generalizable to a larger population. There may be unique characteristics of the sample of middle managers and the study context that restrict the applicability of the findings in other settings or to other individuals. It should also be noted that qualitative research is subjective since it is based on the researchers' interpretation and analysis of the data. Despite efforts to minimize bias and enhance rigor, my preconceptions and perspectives may have influenced the interpretation of participants' responses and qualitative

data analysis. Caution should be exercised when applying qualitative research findings more broadly, and future studies could consider incorporating quantitative methods to complement and validate the qualitative findings.

Recommendations for Future Research

This section outlines suggestions for future studies based on the insights gained from this research. It identifies areas that warrant further exploration, such as the effectiveness of specific heutagogical strategies, the role of technology in supporting lifelong learning, and the experiences of other professional groups in different industries. Investigating how developing lifelong learning skills through heutagogical practices impacts middle managers' ability to navigate and thrive in an ever-evolving professional landscape would provide valuable knowledge for individuals and organizations.

Effectiveness of Heutagogical Strategies

Future research should prioritize investigating the effectiveness of specific heutagogical strategies in promoting lifelong learning among middle managers. This research could involve studies that delve into the impact of different approaches, such as self-directed projects, collaborative learning, or personalized learning plans, on key factors like motivation, competence, and personal growth. By examining the outcomes and experiences associated with these strategies, researchers can gain insights into their effectiveness in fostering a culture of continuous learning among middle managers.

To assess the effectiveness of heutagogical strategies, comparative studies can be conducted to determine which approaches yield the most favorable outcomes within specific professional contexts, such as the banking industry or other relevant fields. These comparative studies can explore variations in outcomes when different strategies are employed, enabling

researchers to identify the most effective strategies for promoting lifelong learning. Such investigations can offer valuable insights into the specific elements or combinations of strategies that optimize motivation, enhance competence, and contribute to personal growth.

Heutagogical strategies have the potential to impact middle managers' lifelong learning through a variety of mechanisms and processes. Future research can explore these mechanisms and processes. Researchers may gain a deeper understanding of how heutagogical approaches facilitate continuous learning by investigating the psychological factors and contextual influences that influence their effectiveness. Middle managers can benefit from this understanding by developing targeted interventions and making practical recommendations for implementing heutagogical strategies that promote lifelong learning.

Comparative Studies

Comparative studies can be conducted to understand the effectiveness of heutagogical strategies in fostering a culture of continuous learning, specifically considering the influence of self-esteem and self-efficacy. These studies would enable researchers to compare and analyze the outcomes and experiences associated with different heutagogical approaches, such as self-directed projects, collaborative learning, or personalized learning plans, within the banking industry or other professional contexts. It would be valuable to examine how heutagogical strategies can foster a sense of accomplishment, autonomy, and mastery, enhancing individuals' self-esteem and overall well-being.

The influence of self-esteem and self-efficacy on the effectiveness of heutagogical strategies is an important consideration in these comparative studies. Individuals' self-esteem can be examined through research on self-directed learning, collaborative learning, or personalized learning plans. Researchers may gain insights into how heutagogical strategies enhance self-

esteem and well-being by examining how they foster a sense of accomplishment, autonomy, and mastery. The interaction between heutagogical strategies and self-esteem may contribute to developing evidence-based practices that enhance positive self-perceptions and personal development.

The relationship between heutagogical strategies and self-efficacy can also be investigated through comparative studies. Researchers can investigate how different approaches affect individuals' beliefs about their ability to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills. Researchers can contribute to developing effective interventions that enhance individuals' confidence and motivation to pursue lifelong learning by investigating how heutagogical strategies increase their self-efficacy. The results of these studies can provide insight into how heutagogical strategies influence self-efficacy and the factors that influence self-perceived competence and learning outcomes.

Examining the interplay between heutagogical strategies, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, researchers can gain insights into how these factors contribute to the effectiveness of lifelong learning initiatives. Understanding how heutagogical strategies impact individuals' self-esteem can inform the development of practices promoting positive self-perception and well-being. Exploring the relationship between heutagogical strategies and self-efficacy can enhance individuals' confidence and belief in their abilities to engage in lifelong learning. Identifying strategies that optimize self-esteem and self-efficacy in comparative studies and ultimately support individuals' ongoing learning and growth by considering their influence is possible.

Role of Technology in Supporting Lifelong Learning

Future research should explore the role of technology in supporting lifelong learning among middle managers. This can be done by investigating the effectiveness of online platforms,

e-learning modules, and mobile applications as tools for knowledge acquisition, skill development, and collaborative learning. Understanding how technology enhances self-directed learning, provides access to diverse learning resources, and facilitates virtual collaboration and mentorship can inform the development of digital learning environments that effectively support lifelong learning among middle managers. Such research can enhance access, engagement, and collaboration, empowering middle managers to thrive and continuously develop their skills in today's rapidly changing work environment.

Researchers may gain insight into how technology can enhance self-directed learning among middle managers by examining the effectiveness of technology-based learning approaches. Online platforms and e-learning modules can provide resources, interactive activities, and assessments that empower individuals to control their learning journeys. Understanding how technology facilitates self-directed learning can inform the design and implementation of digital learning environments that foster autonomy and ownership over professional development.

The role that technology can play in providing access to diverse learning resources should also be explored. Digital platforms allow middle managers to access educational content, including online courses, virtual libraries, and expert webinars. Researchers can identify ways to bridge knowledge gaps, provide up-to-date information, and enable continuous learning in a rapidly evolving professional landscape by investigating how technology supports access to diverse resources.

Further research can be conducted on how technology can facilitate virtual collaboration and mentorship among middle managers. Thanks to the advancements in communication technology, virtual collaboration tools, and online communities, middle managers can now

connect, collaborate, and learn from peers and mentors across geographical boundaries. Virtual collaboration and mentorship can be improved by understanding how they function and how they support meaningful connections, knowledge exchange, and professional development.

Experiences of Other Professional Groups

This study focused specifically on middle managers in the banking industry; however, future research should expand the scope and explore middle managers in other industries. Thus, researchers can better understand lifelong learning and personal development across various professional contexts. Comparing and contrasting motivational factors, barriers, and facilitators of lifelong learning can provide valuable insights into the generalizability of the findings and aid in identifying industry-specific strategies for promoting continuous learning.

Every industry has its dynamics, challenges, and learning needs, which can significantly impact middle managers' lifelong learning experiences. The healthcare industry, for instance, may have specific regulations and evolving medical knowledge that require continuous learning, while the technology industry may require rapid upskilling to remain competitive. Researchers can identify commonalities and differences between middle managers' motivations, learning preferences, and barriers to continuous learning by exploring middle managers' experiences in various industries. A broader approach to sampling may facilitate the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence lifelong learning and personal growth across professional settings.

A study of middle managers in different industries may also shed light on industry-specific strategies for promoting continuous learning. Depending on their practices, resources, and organizational cultures, lifelong learning can be facilitated or hindered in different industries. Identifying effective strategies employed in specific industries allows researchers to develop

industry-specific recommendations and interventions that address middle managers' specific needs and challenges. This targeted approach may result in more tailored and impactful initiatives supporting lifelong learning and professional development.

Longitudinal Studies

To gain a deeper understanding of the long-term impact of lifelong learning on the career trajectories of middle managers, it is essential to conduct longitudinal studies. Tracking participants over an extended period can provide valuable insights into the sustainability of their motivation, competence development, and personal growth. By observing and analyzing participants' experiences and outcomes over time, researchers can uncover patterns, trends, and changes resulting from lifelong learning practices.

Longitudinal studies allow researchers to explore the interplay between lifelong learning, career progression, job satisfaction, and leadership development. Researchers can assess the long-term benefits of embracing a growth-oriented mindset by examining how middle managers' engagement in lifelong learning activities influences their career trajectories. This research can show how continuous learning contributes to career advancement, skill acquisition, and leadership capabilities over time. Longitudinal studies can help identify whether there are cumulative effects of lifelong learning, such as increased job satisfaction, improved performance, and enhanced leadership skills, that emerge over an extended period.

A longitudinal study can also provide researchers with insight into how lifelong learning practices evolve and adapt to different career stages of middle managers. As individuals progress in their professional careers, they can explore the challenges and facilitators of maintaining motivation and engagement in learning activities. Understanding how lifelong learning practices evolve to develop targeted interventions and strategies to support middle managers' continuous

growth and development throughout their careers is essential.

Cross-Cultural Studies

Lifelong learning should be explored cross-culturally in future research. As cultural influences may influence motivation, personal growth, and learning practices, comparative studies across different cultural contexts can provide valuable insights into how cultural values, beliefs, and practices influence motivation for continuous learning and personal development. It is possible to develop a greater understanding of the complex interplay between culture and learning among middle managers if researchers examine the impact of culture on lifelong learning experiences and practices.

Performing comparative studies across cultures can provide insight into the motivations, barriers, and facilitators of lifelong learning among middle managers. Understanding how cultural values and norms influence individuals' perceptions and expectations of lifelong learning may contribute to developing culturally sensitive approaches that encourage motivation and competence. Researchers can design interventions and strategies that align with the cultural values and practices prevalent in different contexts by understanding the context in which middle managers operate to improve the effectiveness and relevance of lifelong learning programs.

Cross-cultural studies can also show how cultural diversity impacts middle managers' collaboration, knowledge sharing, and learning. Middle managers' cultural perspectives, communication styles, and approaches to problem-solving can significantly affect how they engage in collaborative learning and transfer knowledge within their teams or organizations. Culture plays an important role in collaborative learning, and researchers can develop insights and strategies that promote effective cross-cultural collaboration and facilitate the exchange of diverse perspectives and knowledge by exploring the interaction between the two.

Impact of Lifelong Learning on Organizational Outcomes

Lifelong learning can significantly impact various organizational outcomes, including employee engagement, organizational innovation, and overall performance. Researchers can enhance middle managers' ability to navigate and thrive in an ever-evolving professional landscape by investigating how developing lifelong learning skills through heutagogical practices impacts their ability to develop lifelong learning skills. Identifying the relationship between lifelong learning, individual performance, and organizational success can assist organizations in comprehending the value of fostering a culture of continuous learning.

The importance of exploring the impact of lifelong learning on employee engagement cannot be overstated. An employee's sense of fulfillment, growth, and commitment to their work can be enhanced by lifelong learning practices that foster autonomy, mastery, and purpose. By examining the relationship between lifelong learning and employee engagement, researchers may shed light on ways organizations can create a supportive learning environment that positively impacts employee motivation, job satisfaction, and general well-being. The relationship between lifelong learning and employee engagement can be used to develop strategies and interventions to enhance employee experience, resulting in higher commitment, productivity, and retention levels.

The impact of lifelong learning on organizational innovation should also be investigated. Learning through lifelong practices can enhance individuals' ability to acquire and apply new knowledge, explore novel ideas, and embrace change. Researchers can learn how continuous learning contributes to generating and implementing innovative ideas, practices, and solutions within organizations by exploring the relationship between lifelong learning and organizational innovation. Lifelong learning can assist organizations in fostering a culture of continuous

learning that will lead to increased adaptability, competitiveness, and growth, fostering a culture that values and supports continuous learning.

Conclusion

This qualitative study on lifelong learning, SDT, and heutagogy in the context of middle managers in the banking industry sheds light on the significance of confidence as a foundational element in pursuing continuous personal and professional growth. The implications of this study highlight the importance of confidence as a precursor to competence, emphasizing the need to foster confidence in individuals to enable them to engage in lifelong learning effectively.

This research contributes valuable insights into middle managers' motivational factors and behaviors in pursuing lifelong learning. The study adds to the existing literature by highlighting the role of confidence in driving competence development and the significance of SDT in understanding motivation and personal growth. By adopting heutagogical approaches, organizations may create an environment that encourages middle managers to engage in lifelong learning, where confidence catalyzes their motivation and engagement in the learning process.

A significant part of the study's implications is recognizing and nurturing confidence as an essential factor in promoting lifelong learning by policymakers, practitioners, and organizations in the banking industry. Policies and initiatives can be developed to encourage a culture of continuous learning by supporting the development of confidence and competence. Middle managers may benefit from implementing heutagogical strategies and using technology to enhance their confidence and motivation, thereby supporting their participation in lifelong learning. There may be opportunities for organizations to establish supportive systems and structures that promote the development of confidence and create opportunities for professional and personal growth.

Confidence serves as a foundation for success in lifelong learning, SDT, and heutagogy. A culture of continuous learning requires individuals, organizations, and policymakers to recognize the role confidence plays in driving motivation, competence, and personal growth. Banking stakeholders may create a culture that nurtures confidence, empowers middle managers, and enhances their lifelong learning journey by addressing the implications of this research, ultimately leading to individual and organizational success in an ever-evolving professional environment.

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Appendix A

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 6, 2023

Daniel Ray
Sharon Farrell

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-1660 A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MIDDLE MANAGERS: SELF-DETERMINED LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE BANKING INDUSTRY

Dear Daniel Ray, Sharon Farrell,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether

possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand why middle managers in a banking organization practice self-determined lifelong learning. The purpose of my research is to examine the influential factors, the role of adaptive learning systems, and the perceptions of middle managers on the relationship between self-determination and lifelong learning, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and currently classified as a middle manager at a banking institution in Northeast Florida. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview (45 minutes), one focus group session (60 minutes), and to provide responses to four journal questions (60 minutes). Participants will be asked to review transcripts from their interview and focus group session for accuracy. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please complete the attached survey and return it by contacting me at [[REMOVED FOR ARCHIVAL PURPOSES]]

Participants will receive a one-time Amazon gift card of \$25 upon confirming the accuracy of transcripts and journals specific to their participation.

Sincerely,

Daniel Ray
Ph.D. Candidate Liberty University
[[REMOVED FOR ARCHIVAL PURPOSES]]

Appendix C

Consent

Title of the Project: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study of The Lived Experiences Of Middle Managers: Self-Determined Lifelong Learning In The Banking Industry

Principal Investigator: Daniel Kyle Ray/Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and currently classified as a middle manager. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of middle managers in the banking industry who develop lifelong learning skills.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in one audio recorded face-to-face interview (45 minutes).
2. Participate in one audio recorded focus group session (60 minutes).
3. Provide responses to four journal questions (60 minutes).
4. Participants will be asked to review transcripts from their interview and focus group session for accuracy.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a greater awareness of lifelong learning to achieve personal and professional goals.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then deleted. The researcher and members of his doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. At the conclusion of the data collection process participants will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card. Any participant who chooses to withdraw from the study after beginning but before completing all study procedures will not receive compensation.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Daniel Kyle Ray. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [[REMOVED FOR ARCHIVAL PURPOSES]].

. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Sharon Farrell at [[REMOVED FOR ARCHIVAL PURPOSES]].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix D
Individual Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself and how you came to be employed with this organization. CRQ
2. How did you become employed in your current role? CRQ
3. Thinking about your previous and current work experience, describe the factors or motivators that led you to accept your current role. SQ1
4. Considering only the requirements of your role, describe what a typical workday or week looks like for you. SQ3
5. Considering what you do for the organization outside your current role, describe how you spend the rest of your workday or week. SQ3
6. What are your views, opinions, or beliefs on learning and training within the organization? SQ3
7. How would you describe the purpose of adaptive learning in the workplace to others? SQ2
8. Describe how well this organization implements adaptive learning in the workplace and what it can do to improve it. SQ2
9. Outside of the required training the organization provides, describe the types of learning you pursue as part of growing your career. SQ1
10. As a lifelong learner, describe what lifelong learning is and what it means to you as an adult. SQ1
11. Reflecting on your experiences with lifelong learning, how would you promote it amongst your adult friends? SQ1
12. Reflecting on your experiences with lifelong learning, how would you convince members of this organization to adopt lifelong learning as an organizational standard? SQ3

13. Thinking about adaptive learning, describe how it has affected your pursuit of lifelong learning at and away from work. SQ2
14. Aside from the opportunities this organization provides, describe the other forms of adaptive learning you seek in pursuing lifelong learning. SQ2
15. Please share anything else regarding your pursuit of lifelong learning you feel we did not adequately cover in our interview today. CRQ

Appendix E

Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to the group and tell us how long you have considered yourself a lifelong learner. CRQ
2. How do you think other adults view lifelong learning? SQ1
3. What experiences about lifelong learning empower you to continue its practice as an adult? SQ1
4. How has lifelong learning impacted you and those around you since becoming a lifelong learner as an adult? SQ3
5. How has adaptive learning in this organization affected you? SQ2
6. What advice would you give someone who isn't a lifelong learner to help them in their adult career and personal life? SQ3
7. Considering those adults outside the organization, what resources would you recommend for pursuing heutagogy and lifelong learning and why? CRQ

Appendix F

Journal Prompts Questions

1. What factors of lifelong learning would you emphasize the most as your organization's CEO? SQ1
2. What effect will adaptive learning have on organizations' perception of lifelong learning in the workplace as society becomes more dependent on technology? SQ2
3. What influences you the most to pursue lifelong learning, and what effect does it have on your career, well-being, or society as an adult? SQ3
4. What would you share with the world regarding heutagogy and lifelong learning if you were given the opportunity? CRQ

Appendix G

Word Cloud Generation

```

import re
import nltk
from nltk.corpus import stopwords
from nltk.tokenize import word_tokenize
from wordcloud import WordCloud
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt

def process_text_file():
    # Read the text file
    with open('wordclouddata.txt', 'r') as file:
        text = file.read()

    # Add spaces after punctuation
    text = re.sub(r'([^\w\s])', r' ', text)

    # Lowercase all text
    text = text.lower()

    # Remove special characters
    text = re.sub(r'^[a-zA-Z0-9\s]', '', text)

    # Remove non-alphabetic and non-numeric words
    text = ' '.join(word for word in text.split() if word.isalpha() or word.isnumeric())

    # Remove stopwords
    stop_words = set(stopwords.words('english'))
    text = ' '.join(word for word in text.split() if word not in stop_words)

    return text

tokenized_text = word_tokenize(process_text_file())

# Create wordcloud
wordcloud = WordCloud(width=800, height=400, background_color='white', colormap='gray', max_words=50).generate(' '.join(tokenized_text))

# Plot the wordcloud
plt.figure(figsize=(10, 5))
plt.imshow(wordcloud, interpolation='bilinear')
plt.axis('off')
plt.show()

```