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Discovering the Experiences of Supervisors in a Leadership Training Program

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DISCOVERING THE EXPERIENCES OF SUPERVISORS

IN A LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

By

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ABSTRACT

There are over 2.5 million people employed full-time by higher education institutions across the United States, with over 1 million full-time employees at individual Research 1 (R1) higher education institutions. R1 higher education institutions employ thousands of individuals and spend at least \$5 million on research expenditures. R1 higher education institutions could not function or succeed academically without the support of their employees, but unfortunately, employee job satisfaction is often ignored to focus on other immediate items like research. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine a leadership training program already in place at Southeastern University (SU) during the COVID-19 timeframe (January 2020 - current), while discovering the experiences and satisfaction of participants. This leadership training program has had hundreds complete the program, but there is little to nothing known about the participant's experience and satisfaction with the program. A total of fourteen program completers in a leadership position participated in a semi-structured interview lasting from 25-90 minutes. Specific characteristics were needed for the research questions to be answered successfully so participants were chosen using maximum variation purposive sampling. Constant comparative analysis was used inductively to create codes from the data. Elemental coding was used for the first-cycle method, specifically InVivo. InVivo coding allowed the ability to adjust to participant perspectives and actions. The data revealed that overall participants felt like they received the resources and tools needed to lead at SU and were satisfied with the program and their learning experience. However, participants also expressed room for improvement within the program and outside of the program. Outside of the program they saw a lack of leadership skills in leaders across campus and a lack of support for the program.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE, PURPOSE & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Problem Statement

There are over 2.5 million people employed full-time by higher education institutions across the United States, with over 1 million full-time employees at individual Research 1 (R1) higher education institutions (Lederman, 2012; NCES, 2020). The R1 classification as defined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is a doctoral university with very high research activity (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2018). R1 higher education institutions could not function or succeed academically without the support of their employees (Conger, 2004; Connaughton et al., 2003; Stankovska et al., 2017), but unfortunately, things like employee job satisfaction are often ignored to focus on other immediate items like research (Monarth, 2015).

Employee job satisfaction is one of the leading reasons an employee chooses to stay in or leave their position (Cavanagh, 2021; Marshall et al., 2016; Pannapacker, 2021; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). Research shows that supervisors have a direct impact on an employee's job satisfaction level (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Marshall et al., 2016; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994; Stankovska et al., 2017; Tull, 2006; Underwood et al., 2016). Therefore, one can conclude that supervisors play a critical role in the decision of an employee to stay in or leave their position. Research thus far has focused on the relation of supervisor behavior/supervisor leadership style and job satisfaction, employee embeddedness, and staff turnover (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Lok et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al. 2017; Tull, 2006; Underwood et al., 2016). However, there is little research examining staff leadership, leadership training, and employee retention in higher education (Dopson et al., 2016).

Place and Problem of Study

The institution that participated in this study will henceforth be known as Southeastern University (SU). SU created a leadership competency model that provides campus leaders and managers with a framework of skills, behaviors, and knowledge needed to be an excellent leader at SU. To develop this model, they conducted a series of interviews and focus groups with effective managers and campus leaders at SU. From there, they refined the model and vetted it with leadership teams, the faculty senate, and deans across campus to ensure the model and definitions aligned with their perceptions of effective leadership at SU (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Conger, 2004; Connaughton et al., 2003; Fernandez-Araoz et al., 2017; Martineau & Hannum, 2004; Monarth, 2015). The model has four overall quadrants: cultivate talent, build trust, create and communicate vision, and generate alignment. Within each quadrant are specific competencies that are important to achieving that quadrant as an effective leader. This competencies model is the guiding component of SU's leadership training program, which makes this an intentionally designed program (Seemiller, 2013). SU's leadership training program is well attended, but there are no public data on the impact or effectiveness of the program. In addition, there are no public data available on employee satisfaction or employee turnover rates at SU, however, data on turnover can be obtained via a public records request. For fiscal year 2019, the turnover rate for faculty was 8.90%, and the turnover for staff was 12.60% at SU.

This Dissertation in Practice (DiP) will examine the leadership training program already in place at SU, specifically during the COVID-19 timeframe (January 2020 – current). Leadership training programs are programs designed to increase leadership skills, abilities, knowledge, and other components needed for effective leadership (Lacerenza et. al, 2017). SU is

an R1 university, classified by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2018). R1 higher education institutions employ thousands of individuals and spend at least \$5 million on research expenditures (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2018). Because of this, employee satisfaction may be something they are concerned with; however, it is not their primary objective (Dopson et al., 2016). The matter of employee satisfaction should be of more importance because a satisfied employee is more likely to stay in their position than a dissatisfied employee (Cavanagh, 2021; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). This has been especially critical over the last couple of years as higher education employees are realizing they are unhappy in their positions and their well-being has not been prioritized, leading to the great resignation (Cavanagh, 2021; Ellis, 2021; Pannapacker, 2021). The use of effective leadership skills by a supervisor is one factor that can contribute to job contentment (Barling et al., 1996; Fernandes-Araoz et al., 2017; Hassan & Fuwad, 2013; Tafvelin et al., 2019). Also, of equal importance, is the confidence and contentment of the supervisor in their position and their ability to lead (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Lord & Hall, 2005; Rohs, 2004).

Academic Capitalism

The objectives of higher education institutions have changed vastly over the years. These non-profit institutions are now behaving like private enterprises, participating in entrepreneurial activities, and moving towards an academic capitalist environment (Rhoades, 2006; Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997; Rhoades & Slaughter, 2005). Not only are institutions capitalizing on faculty's intellectual products (Rhoades, 2006), but they are also acting as a marketer trying to "sell" their institution and its qualities to students and parents (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2005). The students

start as consumers, then move to captive markets, and become a product or output of the university (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2005). While faculty work is being sold and patented to corporations or businesses that the institution has partnered with (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2005). Generating revenue and establishing recognition as a top university is important, however, the working environment created by the leaders trying to generate revenue and establish recognition is also essential. Most employees work forty plus hours a week, so the work environment of employees directly affects their job satisfaction, and their job satisfaction impacts the outputs of the university (Stankovska et al., 2017), which influences the institution's capital gain.

Job Satisfaction's Impact on Employees Attitude/Behavior

Employee job satisfaction can be determined in a variety of ways, but research has proven one of the leading causes of employee job dissatisfaction is because of their supervisor (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Marshall et al., 2016; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994; Stankovska et al., 2017; Tull, 2006; Underwood et al., 2016). Because a supervisor can directly affect their employee's job satisfaction levels, dissatisfaction could drive an employee to leave their position. Supervisors have a variety of responsibilities that can have an impact on their employees, including their leadership capabilities. But what exactly is leadership? The interpretation of leadership may vary based on the actual definition and the person's view of what leadership is. According to a 2006 survey (Eddy & VanDerLinden), while most respondents viewed themselves as leaders due to their position, there was no other single definition of leadership that ranked close to the number one choice. What this means is supervisors see a broader idea of what leadership is and what it entails. Leadership and management are often interchangeable terms, but they have different connotations. Management is the "efficient and effective maintenance of an organization's current activities, and the implementation of policies," whereas leadership is

the process (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018) and the capability to influence others to achieve the desired purposes (Spendlove, 2007, p. 408). This definition of leadership could be seen as vexing, however, if one considers the act of trying to influence someone, there are two basic techniques to use. The first is using their position as the supervisor, "you will do as I say because I am your authority figure." Or the second, in which the employee happily performs their assigned task, or they take initiative and perform a task without request because they respect and admire you as a leader. Using the former influence may cause an employee to decide to leave their position, especially in addition to other similar incidents. Then there is the term supervisor, which according to Drake (2019) is like a manager, but they fall under the role of manager in hierarchy. These terms are used to describe how someone runs and interacts with a team, but they are also used to directly describe someone's role on a team (Drake, 2019). So, it is easy to see how these terms have been used differently in different situations over time. In this study, supervisor will be used as a general term to describe someone in a position of power, where leader and manager will be used as described above.

Manager Development vs. Leader Development

Likewise, management development and leadership development have similar, but interrelated concepts. Management development focuses on specific types of knowledge, abilities, and skills to improve task performance with managerial training (Day, 2000). Whereas leadership development focuses on expanding the collective organizational competence of utilizing leadership roles, whether they are a formal leader or not (Day, 2000). Having a supervisor that inspires and supports their staff is important not only for employee satisfaction but also for the success of a university.

Impact of Turnover

The cycle of an employee deciding to leave their position, thus the need to fill a vacancy and train a new employee, is known as turnover (Ongori, 2007). The impacts of employee turnover can cause various negative effects for both the department and the organization. The evident effect of turnover on an institution is the financial impact. In a study conducted by Rohs (2004) at an R1 university, they found that turnover costs the university anywhere from \$35,000 to \$50,000 per employee annually (p. 35). This calculation includes the various people involved in the turnover transition process, as well as the time it takes to search for, hire, and train a new employee. Research shows that turnover not only causes financial problems but also influences organizational performance and morale (Butali et al., 2013; Hancock et al., 2013; Staw, 1980). The outcome of an employee leaving an organization can leave current employees with a higher workload, loss of productivity, negative feelings towards their department, loss of skill knowledge (human and social capital), or even additional turnover (Butali et al., 2013; Day et al., 2014; Staw, 1980). After an employee leaves, the remaining employees could have feelings that there is something wrong with the organization, that they have been left behind, or question their motivation for staying (Butali et al., 2013; Staw, 1980). These feelings could eventually lead to additional turnover within the organization, which is why it is so important to have a leader that can inspire and encourage their employees. Most people are not natural-born leaders; however, leadership skills can be taught/improved upon via leadership training programs (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Braun et al., 2009; Conger, 2004; Connaughton et al., 2003; Doh, 2003; Rohs, 2004). Participating in well-designed leadership training programs can provide supervisors an opportunity to build their leadership skills and become more effective, confident leaders (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Braun et al., 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005; Rohs, 2004).

This confidence and effectiveness would create a better working environment and thus increase employee job satisfaction.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this case study was to evaluate a previously implemented leadership training program while discovering the experiences and satisfaction of participants. All forementioned aspects are important to this study because no one aspect is siloed. The experience has an impact on satisfaction, and participant satisfaction impacts the experience. For this study, a leadership training program was defined as a training program designed to provide participants with the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for being an effective leader in a university setting, specifically at SU. The research questions I addressed in this study were:

1. How do staff participants in supervisory roles at SU describe their learning experience in the leadership training program?
2. How do staff participants in supervisory roles at SU describe their satisfaction with the leadership training program?
3. How does the curriculum of the leadership training program contribute to the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to lead at SU for staff participants in supervisory roles at SU?

Study Design Overview

The previously implemented leadership training program in this study has had multiple participants complete the program. However, there is little to nothing known about the participant's experience in the program. Also, there are no data on the effectiveness or the impact that the program has on participants. Because this is a previously established program with no consistent knowledge on the impact of the program on participants, the best DiP model to answer

the stated research questions is an outcomes study. An outcomes study is a design for programs or a policy that have been previously implemented, but little is known about the impact of the program or policy. This study was a qualitative study utilizing participant interviews and program curriculum content. Interviews were semi-structured with general questions about the program to discover the participants' experience, opinions, and feelings on the program and its impact. Data for this study was from completers of the leadership training program and the Human Resources (HR) department. Participants of this study were full-time staff that have completed most of the program during the COVID-19 pandemic (January 2020 – current). Participants from the COVID-19 timeframe were ideal because the pandemic revealed the need for better-designed online teaching and training (Hodges et al., 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020). This study provided an opportunity to see how the program's effectiveness was influenced by the conversion to online workshops. In addition to the previously mentioned participant preferences, most of the participants needed to be in some form of a supervisory role to allow for application of knowledge gained during the trainings.

Study Site Overview

This study was conducted at Southeastern University (SU). SU is a large R1 higher education institution with a leadership training program that has been in place since the fall of 2010. This institution has around 9,500 full-time permanent staff members, and 5,000 full-time faculty members. The HR department at SU redesigned its leadership training program in the late 2000s to align with the leadership competency model they previously created. This training program is an ongoing program with workshops offered throughout each semester. This program is free and open to all employees that are interested in learning more about becoming an effective leader at SU. The program does not need to be completed within a specific timeframe. However,

to complete the program, participants must attend ten required workshops and two elective workshops. All the workshops are designed to meet a specific competency from the competencies model SU created. This leadership training program does not provide any public data on the effectiveness of this program or participants' points of view.

In addition, the leadership training program was a face-to-face program until January 2020, when COVID-19 first began to impact the state. Much like every other department, when this happened HR had to quickly shift their content to an online format. While HR did offer asynchronous online courses and a few synchronous webinar style courses, they had not previously offered a fully synchronous online workshop of this capacity. Thus, there was not time for intentionality in the online design of the courses.

However, the creation and support of this type of program signals that an institution values effective leadership (Ruben et al., 2018), and that effective leadership is central to an organization's success (Braun et al., 2009; Day, 2000). Research thus far on higher education leadership training programs has proven that the training programs studied are successful and useful as determined by the participants and their assessment outcomes (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Braun et al., 2009; Rohs, 2004). Other studies have shown that subordinates do notice a positive change in their supervisor's manifestation of new leadership skills, which then impacts employee satisfaction (Barling et al., 1996; Hassan & Fuwad, 2013). Even though research thus far has proven effective, there are very few studies and very little public information on leadership training programs (Day et al., 2014; Dopson et al., 2016). Conducting research and collecting data on the participant experience in a leadership training program can help to make relevant and necessary improvements to the program, plus research states that high-quality training programs should involve regular improvements (Eich, 2008).

Feasibility

Due to my current position, I have already established a working relationship and connection with members of HR at SU. In an initial meeting I discussed my research topic and goals and determined this study was an achievable DiP. They were notably excited about the idea of this study due to the fact it is time for a program evaluation, especially with the unique circumstances surrounding COVID-19. In fact, I received a spreadsheet with the requested data early in the process. The next step was to determine of those included in the data set, who was in a leadership position whilst pursuing the program. This was done by emailing everyone on the data set and requesting their demographic information in brief survey with participant consent. Previously, the only feedback HR received about the program was from voluntary surveys emailed to participants for individual workshops. HR has recently started conducting interviews and collecting data from previous participants, but nothing consistent. After receiving participant demographic information and consent I ensured their anonymity and the university's remained intact throughout the process.

Significance

This study is important because not much research has been conducted on this subject (Day et al., 2014; Dopson et al., 2016; Garavan, 2014; Lord & Hall, 2005). The results can provide important information that is relevant to various stakeholders. The first stakeholder that would benefit is the HR department. The data collected provides information on the participant's view of what is working and what is not working with the current program, as well as the alignment of the curriculum to competency model outcomes. This provides HR with information they can use to make updates and improvements to the program, which will benefit future participants. The second stakeholder that would benefit is future participants. As mentioned

previously, the data would allow HR to make improvements to the program, which would benefit and provide a better experience for these future participants. The third stakeholder that would benefit is the institution. Continually collecting participant data will allow HR to make ongoing improvements to the leadership training program (Eich, 2008), which could lead to recognition for the program's quality. Recognition could lead to funding for the university to create leadership training programs for other institutions or third parties.

Connections between subordinate job satisfaction and their supervisor participating in the training program are another use of this study. Participants in the program improve their leadership skills and competencies, and thus the next assumption is that this creates a better working environment for employees which then raises job satisfaction (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Marshall et al., 2016; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994; Stankovska et al., 2017; Tull, 2006; Underwood et al., 2016). In fact, research has proven a positive impact on employees after their supervisor has completed a leadership training program, which led to higher job satisfaction (Barling et al., 1996; Hassan & Fuwad, 2013). Higher job satisfaction means happier employees and happier, fulfilled employees mean less turnover (Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). This information could then persuade the university to add a policy for all employees in a leadership position to participate in some form of leadership development, which is important for new leaders or those new to a position (Conger, 2004).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this case study sought to examine a previously implemented leadership training program with little to no feedback, at an R1 higher education institution. This evaluative case study investigated the participant's views on their experience in the training program.

Understanding participant satisfaction and learning experience provides the HR department with data they can use to adjust the program that will benefit future participants. Ensuring participants get the most out of their leadership training program is essential because research has proven that supervisors directly impact their employee's job satisfaction level (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Marshall et al., 2016; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994; Stankovska et al., 2017; Tull, 2006; Underwood et al., 2016), and their job satisfaction level determines their embeddedness, which could lead to employee attrition (Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). An unprepared, unconfident leader can marginalize and create unsettlement in their team. By participating in an effective leadership training program, supervisors can obtain the skills and confidence needed to lead and inspire their team.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The result of job dissatisfaction is often turnover, and the origins of job dissatisfaction vary from salary to leadership qualities (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Au & Ahmed, 2016; Jo, 2008; Lok et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). While the origins vary for everyone, research has revealed that supervisors are a central motivation for employee turnover (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Au & Ahmed, 2016; Jo, 2008; Lok et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017). However, a lack of leadership skills may not be the fault of a supervisor. Oftentimes supervisors procure their position because they are good at their job, not because they are good at being a leader (Rohs, 2004; Ruben et al., 2018). Even so, it is still possible for a supervisor to gain the necessary skills to lead their team, and the university, to success (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Braun et al., 2009; Rohs, 2004).

Supervisors can gain necessary leadership skills by participating in a leadership training program (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Braun et al., 2009; Rohs, 2004). These programs have proven to be effective and leave participants feeling more confident in their role as a leader (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Rohs, 2004). Even though participating in leadership training programs has proven effective, there are very few studies on this topic. My study adds to the limited knowledge on leadership training programs by looking into participants learning experiences and satisfaction within a leadership training program.

This chapter will provide readers with a glimpse of the larger educational landscape and the previously conducted research on employee job satisfaction, turnover, leadership training,

and all this combined. This chapter will also provide readers with extended details on the local context, including the Leadership Competency Model and its quadrants.

Orientation within the Larger Educational Landscape

Oftentimes the terms leadership and management are used interchangeably or seen as the same thing. However, leading and managing have very different meanings (Kotter, 2017). Rather than living in the day-to-day routine, like managers, leaders think about what is next. They have visions to take the organization into the future and visions to produce useful change that employees buy into (Bennis, 1991; Hogan et al., 1994; Kotter, 2017). Understanding this difference is important because supervisors attain their position because they are good at their job (managing the day-to-day), not because they are good at being a leader. To be successful in the day-to-day and take their organization into the future, supervisors need to inspire their employees and have a vision.

In addition, supervisors have a direct impact on the job satisfaction of their employees (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Au & Ahmed, 2016; Jo, 2008; Lok et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). A lack of satisfaction can quickly lead to job dissatisfaction and ultimately turnover. While there are a variety of reasons one may choose to leave their job, supervisors are a central cause of employee turnover (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Au & Ahmed, 2016; Jo, 2008; Lok et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017). This section will look at the big picture view for job satisfaction, turnover, and leadership development.

Job Satisfaction

As previously mentioned, job satisfaction has a substantial impact on an employee's decision to stay in or leave a position, but what is job satisfaction? Many factors can be related to

job satisfaction, both intrinsic and extrinsic qualities (Stander & Rothmann, 2009; Stankovska et al., 2017). Ultimately, “job satisfaction is an individual's emotional response to his or her current job condition,” (Stankovska et al., 2017, p.160) their actual outcomes versus their desired outcomes (Stander & Rothmann, 2009). Job satisfaction is important because of the impact it has on the employee, in due time dissatisfaction is a top reason for attrition (Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). Furthermore, the overall job satisfaction of employees can shape the quality of an organization (Marshall et al., 2016; Underwood et al., 2016).

Turnover

In the case of turnover, there is more than just the obvious impact of time and money, turnover also has various harmful effects that can impact the overall capital and employee morale of an organization (Butali et al., 2013; Fernandez-Araoz et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2013; Jo, 2008; Marshall et al., 2016; Staw, 1980; Wynen, 2019). After an employee leaves an organization the administration must recruit, hire, and train a new employee, all of which cost time and money (Marshall et al., 2016; Rohs, 2004; Staw, 1980). Less obvious impacts from turnover include human and social capital, morale, and organizational performance (Butali et al., 2013; Hancock et al., 2013; Staw, 1980).

Hancock et al. (2013) and Wynen et al. (2019) state that the human capital perspective suggests that organizational performance is affected by turnover due to the loss of valuable knowledge, skills, and abilities the departed employee gained over the years. Organizational performance is also impacted through the social capital perspective which suggests that turnover disrupts social ties (the embedded capital and resources built over time) and can harm trust amongst colleagues (Hancock et al., 2013; Wynen et al., 2019). Similarly impacted is the morale

of the remaining employees. Current employees are left with a higher workload and a loss of productivity, which can lead to negative feelings towards their department, feelings of being left behind, or even leave them wondering why they are staying (Butali et al., 2013; Staw, 1980). This negativity can have a significant impact on both small and large organizations.

Higher Education Institutions

Colleges and universities are large-scale organizations with over 2.5 million people employed full-time by institutions across the United States (Lederman, 2012; NECS, 2020). These employees all perform various tasks that keep the institution running, these roles include, but are not limited to instruction, research, public service, librarians, student affairs, academic affairs, management, business and financial operations, healthcare practitioners, and many more (NECS, 2020). Of the 2.5 million people employed full-time by institutions across the United States, over 270,000 are employed at R1 higher education institutions (Lederman, 2012; NECS, 2020). Individual R1 institutions have thousands of employees, and those employees need inspiring and impactful leadership. Not to mention compassion and relief since the start of COVID-19 (Cavanagh, 2021). However, as research is normally the top priority at an R1 institution, oftentimes organizations tend to ignore leadership development to focus on other immediate problems or things (Monarth, 2015).

Leadership Development

Even though leadership development has proven its effectiveness in developing leadership skills, there has been little research into it and its impact, especially in higher education institutions (Braun et al., 2013; Dopson et al., 2016; Ruben et al., 2018). Developing practical skills that facilitate effective leadership is critical to the success of a leader (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Allen & Wergin, 2008; Bennis, 1991; Rohs, 2004;

Ruben et al., 2018) and the institution (Perlmutter, 2021). In several cases on leaders in higher education, supervisors that lacked important leadership skills felt burnt out, disengaged, and overall low quality of life at work (Dopson et al., 2016).

In other words, job satisfaction does not apply to just employees in non-supervisory roles, it also applies to those in leadership roles. Rather than focusing on capital gains, higher education institutions need to invest in their leaders and employees to ensure a pleasurable working environment, thus increasing employee output which impacts the universities gains (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2005; Stankovska et al., 2017). Institutions need to invest in their staff that are leading the different entities of the university and to the staff that decide whom will obtain these leadership positions.

Training Works!

In a study conducted on a leadership training program by Aasen and Stensaker (2007), participants had an overall positive response to the program and recognized the importance of training for leadership positions in academia. Not only did the participants gain skill and knowledge, but they also established a stronger identity as a leader, felt more professional in their tasks, and developed a personal network with other leaders (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007). In another study, focused on the Return on Investment (ROI) of a leadership training program, Rohs (2004) discovered that participants found the program worthwhile and that it gave them the opportunity to improve their weaker competencies. The participants of these programs found them to be helpful and worthwhile, but there is a consensus on the need for (better) leadership development both, formal and informal (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Rohs, 2004; Ruben et al., 2018).

In a literature review conducted by Leskiw and Singh (2007), they found that training can work, but there are six key areas of importance. Based on their review leadership training programs need “a thorough needs assessment, the selection of a suitable audience, the design of an appropriate infrastructure to support the initiative, the design and implementation of an entire learning system, an evaluation system, and corresponding actions to reward success and improve on deficiencies” (Leskiw & Singh, 2007, p. 446). In another literature review conducted by Garavan et al. (2014), they too were able to establish a connection between leadership training and improved leadership, though they could not establish a connection between leadership training and organizational outcomes. In fact, according to Garavan et al. (2014) most of the literature discusses the evidence of knowledge outcomes from participating in leadership training rather than system or organizational outcomes. However, Mabey and Ramirez were able to find “evidence of a clear link between leadership development and organizational performance” in the effect of “employee engagement, product and service quality, increased customer satisfaction, and productivity gains” (2005, as cited in Garavan et al., 2014, p. 360).

Previous Studies on Job Satisfaction and the Path to Leadership Training

As mentioned previously, there has been little to no research conducted on leadership training programs in general, but specifically in higher education institutions (Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). Leadership training is important because research has proven that supervisors have a direct impact on their employees (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Au & Ahmed, 2016; Jo, 2008; Lok et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017). Research has also proven that job satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, is directly connected to an employee’s embeddedness or decision to leave their position (Jo, 2008; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). This section will guide

you through the previously conducted research and help you connect the dots as to how job satisfaction, leaders, turnover, and leadership development are all intertwined.

Connecting the Dots: Job Satisfaction, Leadership, and Turnover

Research has proven that the embeddedness of an employee is directly related to their level of job satisfaction (Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016), and that job dissatisfaction will more likely than not lead to employee turnover (Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). Job satisfaction “is an individual's emotional response to his or her current job condition” (Stankovska et al., 2017, p.160). An assortment of items can impact job satisfaction, like pay, promotion, relationships, etc. (Stankovska et al., 2017). Not as commonly thought about, is turnover’s impact on the remaining employee’s job satisfaction. Turnover can directly impact many things including the morale of the employees “left behind,” the social and human capital, and the overall organizational performance (Butali et al., 2013; Fernandez-Araoz et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2013; Marshall et al., 2016; Staw, 1980; Wynen, 2019). While some of the possibilities for job dissatisfaction may be above a supervisor’s head, they can still have a direct impact on the embeddedness of their employees with the right application of leadership skills.

Leadership, What Connects it All

Strong supervision is essential to job satisfaction. When supervisors do not effectively lead, job dissatisfaction, attrition, and overall dissatisfaction with the organization can be a result (Marshall et al., 2016). However, not all supervisors can immediately impact their employee’s job satisfaction because there is a good chance that they are in their position because they are good at their job, not because they are good at being a leader (Rohs, 2004; Ruben et al., 2018). In fact, supervisors are seen as having two separate roles. The first is the role driver, this role

includes making sure outcomes are met and that day-to-day tasks (managing) are being completed (Au & Ahmed, 2016). The second is the support role, this role includes making sure subordinates are doing okay and are satisfied with their job (leading [Au & Ahmed, 2016]). Oftentimes, supervisors lose themselves in the role driver area and the support role is seen as not as important or it can wait. While effective leadership is more of a mix of both, the support role should not be omitted as research has shown that leaders are one of the reasons an employee chooses to leave their position (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Au & Ahmed, 2016; Jo, 2008; Lok et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017). As a reminder, in this study, supervisor is used as a general term to describe someone in a position of power based on hierarchy.

Leadership behaviors and styles. Not directly relevant to this study, but relevant to studying leadership are leadership behaviors and styles. There are many established leadership styles, but commonly used in the impact of effective leadership research are transformational leadership and transactional leadership. Another commonly studied leadership model in higher education leadership research is synergistic supervision (Saunders et al., 2000; Tull, 2006; Underwood et al., 2016). Transformational leaders elevate and inspire employees, think broadly, work with their team, and create a vision (Dopson et al., 2016). Whereas transactional leadership uses a rewards system in which effort is exchanged for a reward (Barling et al., 1996; Dopson et al., 2016). Synergistic supervision is a holistic approach to supervision (Tull, 2006), synergistic supervision is described by Winston and Creamer (1997) as a “(a) discussion of exemplary performance, (b) discussion of long-term career goals, (c) discussion of inadequate performance, (d) frequency of informal performance appraisals, and (e) discussion of personal attitudes” (pp.

42-43). All these styles have a use and a place in leadership, however knowing when to apply what style or skill is an important competence for supervisors to understand.

Job dissatisfaction + poor leadership = turnover. Research has shown that leaders are ultimately one of the reasons an employee chooses to leave their position (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Au & Ahmed, 2016; Jo, 2008; Lok et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017). A lack of leadership training does not mean someone is automatically a bad leader, plus leadership is something they can learn (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Braun et al., 2009; Rohs, 2004). In a study conducted by Marshall et al. (2016) one participant said “my supervisor did not value the work I was doing, nor did she support the student life area. There was incredible strain in our relationship, and I felt as though my hands were tied in trying to do my job. This led to high levels of stress and probably burnout” (p. 155). This is an example of not valuing employees, though it makes one wonder, did the supervisor not value this participant, or did the supervisor not know how to show that she valued her employee? The portion about not supporting the student life area leads one to believe the supervisor in this scenario knew what she was doing and knew her employees were dissatisfied. Had it been the latter, a leadership training program could have given her the ability and skill to show she cares for her employees.

Leadership Development

In this section we will look at the difference between training, education, and development. These terms are often used interchangeably, but they all have their own specific meaning and relatability. This section will also look at the Return on Investment (ROI) of leadership training programs that have been studied and the frames/methods used in leadership literature that are appropriate for this study.

Training vs Education vs Development

Throughout related research one will see a mixture of terms used regarding the advancement of leadership skills. While training, education, and development are similar they each have a slightly different definition or purpose. Leadership training is “activities designed to develop an individual or group’s ability to perform practical skills that facilitate effective leadership” (Allen & Roberts, 2011, p. 2). Leadership education is “a series of training interventions designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals interested in engaging in leadership” (Allen & Roberts, 2011, p. 3). Leadership development is “a continuous, systemic process designed to expand the capacities and awareness of individuals, groups, and organizations in an effort to meet shared goals and objectives” (Allen & Roberts, 2011, p. 3). Allen and Roberts (2011) refer to the result of all three as cultivating leadership, which includes intended experiences and unintended organic experiences. These three terms are like a Russian nesting doll, leadership training is a component of leadership education and leadership education is a component of leadership development. In this study, the leadership training program is cultivating leadership, as all three pieces are incorporated into the program.

Return on Investment

The ROI shows that leadership can be taught and that it is beneficial for leaders to complete a program to increase their leadership skills (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Braun et al., 2009; Rohs, 2004). The impact of leadership development is not just on leaders, but also on their subordinates. Employees can detect when supervisors have developed leadership skills (Tafvelin et al., 2019). Better leadership skills can lead to job embeddedness (Barling et al., 1996; Fernandes-Araoz et al., 2017; Hassan et al., 2013; Tafvelin et al., 2019), and improved organizational performance. “Satisfied subordinates are likely to

perform better and improved transformational leadership can increase organizational effectiveness” (Hassan et al., 2013, p. 828). In these studies, the ROI was high; subordinates noticed the positive change in their leaders, which changed their perception of their supervisors and impacted their performance and commitment (Barling et al., 1996; Hassan et al., 2013; Tafvelin et al., 2019).

Then, of course, is the impact on the leaders completing the programs. Leaders gain a variety of skills and knowledge from participating in leadership development (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Rohs, 2004). In a study conducted by Aasen & Stensaker (2007) the most eminent effect, as stated by the participants in their questionnaire, was that the program provided them with a well-developed personal network of other leaders. Additional effects from the program included a stronger identity as a leader, information on how they function as a leader, a feeling of being more professional as a leader, and a new view on being a leader (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007). In a study conducted by Rohs (2004) the most notable impact from the training program was the identification of strengths and weaknesses when it comes to being a leader. Rohs (2004) also sent a six-month follow-up survey to all participants, in these results participants reiterated that the program helped them identify their weaknesses and increase their leadership skills (Rohs, 2004). The participants also noted that their job satisfaction increased, their organizational commitment increased, and their working relationships with colleagues/subordinates improved (Rohs, 2004).

Methods Used in Related Studies

There are various methods, theories, and frames used in leadership development research. However, none that are specific to this study. This section will discuss the frames and methods

that are most relevant to the current study including the HR Frame, Structural Frame, and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire.

HR Frame. The HR frame focuses on the relationship between people and organizations, organizations need people and people need organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The focus of this frame is on employee needs and combining them with the organization's needs, giving them opportunity and power, while addressing their (work) needs (Bolman & Deal, 2017). A few examples of basic HR principles that an organization could apply are building and implementing an HR strategy, hiring the right people, keeping them, investing in them, empowering them, and promoting diversity (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Structural Frame. The structural frame is task-oriented and examines the social architecture of work to ensure energy and resources are not misdirected (Bolman & Deal, 2017). According to this frame, structures should play to the environment with their strategic design, employee talent, and available resources (Bolman & Deal, 2017). There are two central issues related to structural design, the first is differentiation (how to allocate work) and the second is integration (how to coordinate efforts [Bolman & Deal, 2017]). First, the division of labor for things like function, product, customers, etc. must be decided, then vertical coordination or lateral coordination processes can be used. Vertical coordination is a hierarchy, "higher levels coordinate and control the work of subordinates through authority, rules and policies, and planning and control systems" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p.55). Lateral coordination is less formal and simpler; it includes techniques such as "formal and informal meetings, task forces, coordinating roles, matrix structures, and networks—pop up to fill the gaps" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 58).

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). This questionnaire can identify the characteristics of a transformational leader and measure a broad range of leadership styles (Barling et al., 1996; Hassan & Fuwad, 2013; Tafvelin et al., 2019; Underwood et al., 2016). The MLQ is a well-established tool that allows participants to measure and compare their characteristics with the characteristics of transformational leadership (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008; Mind Garden, n.d.). Over the years a variety of researchers have studied the MLQ to investigate the effectiveness of the tool. Even though there have been doubts, there also have been many praises and the questionnaire is still used, especially in transformational leadership studies, to this day (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008).

Local Context

This study took place at a large R1 institution with a leadership training program already in place. An R1 university is a doctoral university with very high research activity, awards at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees, and has at least \$5 million in research expenditures (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2018). As a reminder, the institution's pseudonym for this study is Southeastern University (SU). SU has 9,500 full-time permanent staff members, and 5,000 full-time faculty members, all of whom could participate in their leadership training program.

Leadership Competencies Model

In the late 2000s, SU created the leadership competencies model which served as the basis for the redesign of their leadership training program. This model provides leaders and managers with a framework of skills, behaviors, and the knowledge needed to be an excellent leader. This section will provide more details on the model and the purpose of each quadrant as well as additional details on the leadership training program.

Creation of the Model

The leadership competency model was developed by SU through a series of steps and refinement. The steps and refinement ensured that the competencies and definitions used in the model aligned with SU's goals (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Fernandez-Araoz et al., 2017; Martineau & Hannum, 2004; Monarth, 2015). The model was developed through a series of focus groups and interviews that consisted of a wide selection of campus leaders and effective managers. During these initial sessions, targeted questions (Fernandez-Araoz et al., 2017) were used to develop characteristics, qualities, and skills important to being a leader at SU. From this list, participants were asked of these, which are most important, and why. Up next was the refinement of the model. Refinement was completed by consulting SU's leadership development team, which was made up of various members of senior leadership and members of the faculty senate. Last, but not least, the model was vetted with deans across campus. This was done for a couple of reasons, to ensure the competencies and definitions aligned with their visions and expectations of what skills a leader should have and that the model aligned with university goals (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Fernandez-Araoz et al., 2017; Martineau & Hannum, 2004; Monarth, 2015). Developing a leader's skills can have an organization-level impact, which is why it is important for the model to align with the goals and culture of SU (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Martineau & Hannum, 2004).

Quadrants

The leadership competency model is broken up into four overall quadrants: cultivate talent, build trust, create, and communicate vision, and generate alignment. Then, within each of these quadrants are specific competencies that are important for leaders to understand and

execute. Also, each individual competency has a demonstrated behavior example for both a manager and a leader.

Cultivate talent. Cultivating talent is a focus on engaging with employees in ways that matter to them and allows them to make unique contributions to a shared goal. The specific competencies found within this quadrant are coaching/mentoring, collaboration, facilitative decision-making, resolve, and talent selection.

Build trust. Building trust is the ability to create an environment that cultivates, uses, and is built on trust to leverage success. The specific competencies found within this quadrant are advocacy, emotional intelligence, humility, integrity, role model, and transparency.

Create and communicate vision. As a leader, having a vision and communicating that vision is critical (Kotter, 2017). A supervisor's vision is one of the ways that employees judge the effectiveness of a leader. Thus, creating a vision and having the ability to communicate and implement that vision are important aspects of being a leader. The specific competencies found within this quadrant are communication, political savvy, problem-solving, and strategic thinking.

Generate alignment. In addition to having a vision, leaders must execute and generate alignment throughout all these quadrants. The specific competencies found within this quadrant are accountability, execution, fair and legal management, financial management, and judgment.

The Leadership Training Program

SU's leadership training program is currently designed to align with the leadership competency model, this redesign occurred in the late 2000s. The training program is free and available to anyone at SU interested in learning more about becoming an effective leader at SU. There are ten required courses, and two elective courses participants must complete to finish the

program. Courses in this program are ongoing and offered every semester, so participants have plenty of opportunities to complete the program.

As mentioned previously, all the courses in this leadership training program align with the leadership competency model. For the ten required courses, each quadrant is covered at least twice, but cultivating talent, and generating alignment have one extra, there are three required courses for each of these quadrants. For the final two elective courses, participants can choose any two workshops from a list of options. All these options cover a specific quadrant of the model, so participants could choose a course that focuses on an area they need further development in. Up until January 2020, the courses offered for this program were fully face-to-face. Due to the impact of COVID-19, HR had to quickly switch these courses to the online format with no change to the method of facilitation, the content or intention behind the design of the courses. However, the previously used pair-share methods in person were easily transferable to the online format through the video conferencing platform.

Even though SU's HR department has worked very hard to develop this model and this training program, there is not much marketing or encouragement for employees to participate in this program. Some departments encourage their employees to take advantage of these free courses, where other departments do not. However, HR does market the leadership competency model within the leadership training program. In each of the required and elective courses, the model is discussed, and an explanation is given as to where the specific course you are in fits into the model. As of now, HR evaluates individual courses, but not the overall leadership training program. This means, there is no feedback or official commentary on the training program itself, only the individual workshops.

Improvements

Since the leadership training program was redesigned about ten years ago, when the leadership competency model was created, it is about time for reevaluation and improvements. Over the last ten years, a lot has changed, especially recently with COVID-19. This training program is ready for some updates to better fit the needs of current and future leaders at SU.

Summary and Contributions of this DiP

In conclusion, supervisors can gain effective leadership skills, improve their working relationships (both with colleagues and subordinates), and improve the organization by completing a leadership training program. The lack of proper leadership skills can harm many organizational factors including employee job satisfaction, embeddedness, attrition, outcomes, and the overall functionality of an organization (Butali et al., 2013; Fernandez-Araoz et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2013; Jo, 2008; Lok et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2016; Staw, 1980; Underwood et al., 2016; Wynen, 2019). These negative impacts can be seen across the larger organizational landscape and in previous studies. In addition to understanding the negative impacts a lack of leadership skills can produce, it is also important to understand the difference between a leader and a manager. As described by Bennis and Nanus (1985, p. 21, as cited by Bolman & Deal, 2017) “managers do things right, and leaders do the right thing.” This essentially means, managers focus on execution and leaders focus on purpose and values (Bolman & Deal, 2017). While both are equally important, if leadership is non-existent the organization may not last long, or it may undergo high turnover.

Therefore, understanding the participant experience in previously implemented leadership training programs is the focus of this study. The results will contribute to an area that has yet to be studied. Data gathered from this study will provide relevant, current information on participant needs for leadership development. Even though the data from this study will only

provide information on the participant experience, this information could then be used by other institutions with similar leadership training programs to enhance their current program curriculum or to create a new leadership training program.

CHAPTER 3

INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH

Introduction

The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice (DiP) was to discover the participant experience in a previously implemented leadership training program. Since this leadership training program is a previously implemented program with little to nothing known about the impact of the program, the DiP model used is the outcomes model. The outcomes model is designed for programs that have been previously implemented, but little is known about the impact of the program or policy. This leadership training program had not collected data, and little is known about how participants experience the training, especially since the transition to the online environment due to COVID-19.

The questions this study aims to answer are:

1. How do staff participants in supervisory roles at SU describe their learning experience in the leadership training program?
2. How do staff participants in supervisory roles at SU describe their satisfaction with the leadership training program?
3. How does the curriculum of the leadership training program contribute to the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to lead at SU for staff participants in supervisory roles at SU?

This chapter covers the research design of the study, the sampling process, the sources of data, how the data was collected, the analytic approaches, and any limitations of the study.

Research Design

Overview

This study is a qualitative evaluative case study. The case at hand was a leadership training program that had never been evaluated and had no data on the impact or effect of the program. In addition, the leadership training program had to abruptly switch to the online environment due to the impacts of COVID-19. The courses that make up the training program had only been offered face-to-face prior to this time. Thus, this study was bounded to participants that completed most of the program from January 2020 (when COVID-19 first impacted SU) to the current date.

To begin, a qualitative approach was appropriate for my study for various reasons. However, one of the best explanations is from Merriam and Tisdell (2016) “the overall purpose of qualitative research is to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 15). The reason for my study was to understand how participants experience the leadership training program and interpret their responses into transferable data (Malterud, 2001; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In other words, qualitative research studies phenomena and how that phenomenon is experienced by individuals and is then interpreted by the researcher who is the primary instrument, as I did in my study (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Malterud, 2001; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A qualitative case study was appropriate for this DiP because my study was bounded by the timeframe of COVID-19 (January 2020 - current). The defining characteristic of a case study is that it is bounded by a specific thing, time, or context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Harrison et al., 2017; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers describe the idea of bounding differently, like the object of study or the unit of analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To further define my case study, it is descriptive in nature (Baxter &

Jack, 2008; Merriam, 1998). A descriptive case study gives readers a rich, thick description describing the phenomenon in its real-life context and shares the variety of data collected (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 1998), which is what I accomplished in this study.

Conceptual Framework

There are many pieces to the conceptual framework that this study was built upon (Collins & Stockton, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While there is plenty of literature on leadership style theories (Barling et al., 1996; Dopson et al., Saunders et al., 2000; Tull, 2006; Underwood et al., 2016), there is little data or theory on the impact and effectiveness of leadership training programs in higher education (Day et al., 2014; Dopson et al., 2016; Garavan, 2014; Lord & Hall, 2005). By connecting the dots with the theory that does exist one can see how this study is building upon what has been done. These previous studies have consisted of quantitative data, qualitative data, as well as mixed methods data. Because of the various studies that make up this history their subjects have ranged from job satisfaction, turnover, leadership style, leadership training programs, etc. as well as various researchers have conducted the research, so it makes sense that not one methodology worked best in every situation.

Thus, I created my own conceptual framework that was informed by research thus far on leadership, training, job satisfaction, and turnover. Figure 1 shows how these different aspects overlap; a leader impacts the job satisfaction of employees, which can result in turnover. Leadership training can improve the confidence and skills of a leader (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Rohs, 2004), then impact job satisfaction and turnover rates.

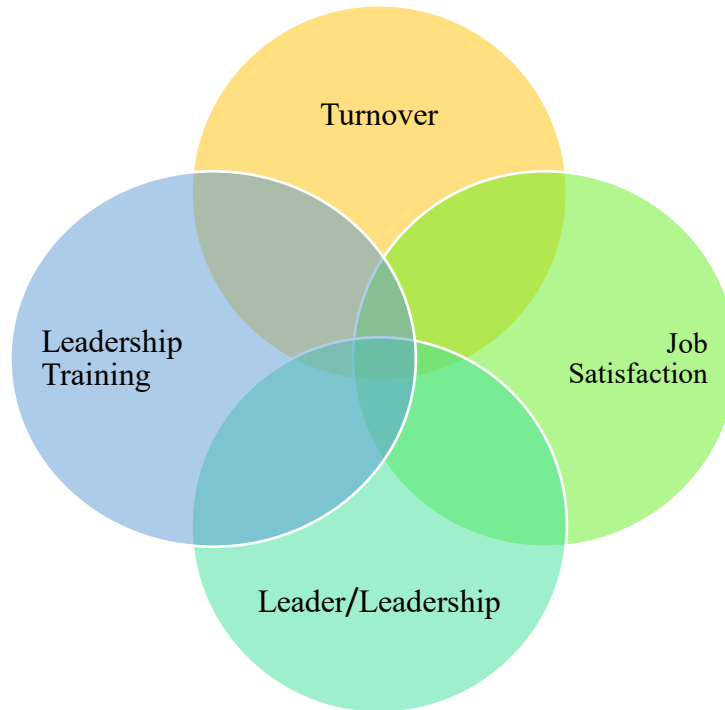


Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

Since I was trying to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant experience in a leadership training program, a qualitative study was the best choice. A qualitative study allowed for rich and descriptive narratives by utilizing participant interviews and program curriculum to inform the data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Malterud, 2001; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Sample/Participants and Recruitment Activities

The purpose of this study was to determine how participants experienced the leadership training program, specifically those in a supervisory role. Therefore, the participants in this study were full-time staff members that had completed much of the training program since January 2020. This program is self-paced with ten required courses and a choice of two elective courses. The eligibility of participants for this study was determined by reviewing participant demographic information provided by potential participants in a survey. Potential participants

were obtained through a report provided by HR of completers, program completion date, and identifying information (i.e. email address). It was requested that the participants completed most of their program during the COVID-19 timeframe because the pandemic revealed the need for better-designed online teaching and training (Hodges et al., 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020). Since this is a self-paced program and participants can complete it at their own speed, ideally 80% of the courses would be taken since January 2020.

In qualitative research the number of participants is not normally decided upon ahead of time and the sample ends up being small (Gentles et al., 2015; Seidman, 2019). To begin, I reached out to all participants from the list of completers, there was no way to easily determine those in a supervisory position. I was aiming for around twenty participants because I believed this was a small enough number to manage, but also large enough to obtain meaningful data, especially since attrition will most likely occur (Gentles et al., 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Seidman, 2019). I received sixteen responses to the introductory survey with scheduled interviews. Out of these sixteen, fourteen followed through with the interview. By the end of the fourteenth interview, I determined I had reached saturation and redundancy, thus I chose to not seek additional participants (Gentles et al., 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The sampling method that was used in this study is purposive sampling, specifically maximum variation sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Maximum variation sampling was the ideal sampling method since this type of purposeful sampling seeks out those that represent the unique characteristics ideal for the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participants of this study needed to fit the specific guidelines of full-time staff in a leadership position that have completed most of the leadership training program during the

COVID-19 pandemic for the research questions to be answered successfully. Someone who had not completed the training program could not evaluate the quality of the overall program, they could only provide commentary on how much of the program they experienced thus far. Also, of importance is the participant being in a supervisory role during the completion of the program or upon completion of the program. The skills obtained through the training program could only be tested and applied if the participant was in a position that allows them to apply what they have learned. In addition, I hoped for participants from different departments across campus and in different types of supervisory positions, which I did obtain. This level of diversity helped ensure the results were applicable to all or the majority of SU and allows for better transferability to other institutions. Other purposive sampling methods that were in consideration were convenience and snowball sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These would have been used in the case of low response from contacted participants.

Participants for this study were recruited via email. I emailed potential participants via my official SU email account in hopes of swaying any concerns. If this had not proven successful, I would have reached out to HR to see if I could work with them to reach out to potential participants via their official SU HR email. Table 1 provides a list of participants that completed the study with their demographics.

Table 1. Participant Information

Name	Gender	Race	Age Range	Position	Years Employed at SU	College/ Department
Abigail Sidney	F	Asian	20-29	Academic Assistant	0-5	College of Veterinary Medicine
Atwater Massy	M	Hispanic or Latino	50-59	Academic Administrator	6-10	College of the Arts
Diana Chapman	F	White	50-59	Administrative Specialist	11-15	College of Agriculture
Grayson Spencer	M	White	50-59	Facilities Manager	0-5	Facilities
Justin Craig	M	White	30-39	Manager	0-5	Enrollment Management
Kate Salazar	F	White	20-29	Administrative Assistant	0-5	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Kendall Stanley	F	Black or African American	50-59	Senior Contractor	6-10	Office of Research
Laurel Dean	F	White	50-59	Business Administrator	6-10	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Melissa Harper	F	Choose not to respond	40-49	Coordinator III	6-10	Enrollment Management
Mike McGee	M	Hispanic or Latino	30-39	Research Administrator	0-5	College of Medicine
Milton Cummings	M	White	50-59	Team Lead	21+	Information Technology
Robin Pearson	F	White	30-39	Administrative Specialist	0-5	Finance and Accounting
Renee Robinson	F	White	20-29	Coordinator III	0-5	Enrollment Management
Trista Newton	F	Hispanic or Latino	30-39	Project Manager	6-10	College of Medicine

Data Sources, Instruments, and Collection Procedures

The data for this study was collected from interviews with participants fitting the previously mentioned demographic and from documents involved in the leadership training program as mentioned by participants.

Interviews

The main source of data was from the interviews with leadership training program completers. As a reminder, the demographic of these participants were full-time staff in a leadership position that have completed most of the program during the COVID-19 pandemic (January 2020 - current). The participants were ideally from the COVID-19 timeframe because the pandemic revealed the need for better-designed online training (Hodges et al., 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020). The participants needed to be in a leadership position, so they had the opportunity to implement what they learned from the training program.

The data contained information on how participants experienced the program, their knowledge on and integration of the leadership competency model, and whether the program provided them with skills and knowledge necessary to lead at SU. Prior to interviews participants consented to the study via a Qualtrics survey. Included in the participant consent was information on the study, a statement of no potential risks, and a request for general demographic information (like gender, race, etc.). Interviews were 25 to 90 minutes long and semi-structured with questions on the overall program, the applicability of the program content, the competency model, the curriculum, and the online environment. The use of a semi-structured interview allowed for most questions to be predetermined but with the flexibility to add follow-up questions or go more in-depth based on a response (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2019).

In addition, the researcher allowed the participant to choose whether their interview was face-to-face or online. This provided more flexibility and the opportunity for the participant to feel more comfortable during the interview. Per the interview protocol, participant identities have been kept confidential, and pseudonyms are used to further protect participant identities. Whether in person or virtual the researcher asked the participant if they are okay with the interview being recorded for the purposes of accuracy. Participants were also informed that their interviews and personal information will be kept on a personal password protected drive.

Data Analysis

The goal of the data analysis process in this study was to collect and analyze data simultaneously to allow for the acknowledgement of repetition, to keep the data focused, and manageable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This goal was not met, most of the analysis occurred after the interviews had concluded. However, transcript coding and accuracy was completed throughout the interview process, allowing ideas and thoughts to remain current. The data was analyzed using coding and constant comparison analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data was organized and managed using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo, this allowed for an inventory of the entirety of data. A codebook was created to allow for easy navigation of codes and categories (Saldana, 2021). As described by Elliot (2018, p. 2850) “coding is the process of analyzing qualitative text data.” Coding is the first step in the data analysis process and was conducted multiple times (first-cycle, second-cycle methods) to ensure all important ideas are captured and to consolidate data. The codes were then sorted, categorized, themed, and turned into the answers for the study’s research questions.

Constant comparative analysis is one of the most used types of analysis for qualitative data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This method of analysis was

appropriate for this study because constant comparative analysis is used for identifying themes by utilizing an entire dataset (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007), and I used all the data collected to answer my research questions. Constant comparative analysis can be deductive, inductive, or abductive; for this study I inductively created codes from the data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Since these codes were inductive, I could not accurately predict what they would be, however I used elemental coding for the first-cycle method. Within elemental coding I used InVivo coding to allow me the ability to attune myself to participant perspectives and actions (Saldana, 2021).

Word count was loosely used in the analysis of this study. Word count was used for counting themes, identifying patterns, and to maintaining integrity (Henderson & Segal, 2013; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Word count through initial codes allowed for a different insight into understanding the perspective of participants based on how often certain words are used. Like word count, focused coding was loosely used as a second-cycle method in which codes, words, and categories were counted to create new insight (Saldana, 2016). Additionally, within each category new categories were created based on the overall picture that was formed from first round coding. These categories were used to create the final themes.

Credibility & Transferability

In this study the biggest concern was researcher bias, though I do not believe that it was a threat to the trustworthiness or credibility of the study. However, to ensure the reliability and transferability of this study various methods were used including triangulation, member checking, maximum variation, researcher reflexivity, and the use of thick, rich descriptions (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton,

2004). Using these various methods also created credibility and transferability using multiple lenses (i.e., research lens, participant lens, and the reader lens [Creswell & Miller, 2000]).

Credibility

As mentioned by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) a commonly used method to ensure validity in a constant comparison analysis is member checking. In this study, transcripts, and potential interpretations were given to the participants to provide them with a chance to review and correct/provide feedback for anything they do not agree with or have additional thoughts on. Member checking helps to assure readers that there is internal validity by using the participant lens to clarify accuracy.

Triangulation was also used in a small way to determine the internal validity of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Data for this study came from interviews and documents mentioned by participants that were used in the training program. The documents mentioned by participants were the provided handouts for each session. Originally these documents were going to be used to find common themes, additional details, and to confirm findings and/or discredit findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, these documents were only considered as they were mentioned by participants rather than an in-depth analysis on those documents. Triangulation allows for the use of another lens, the researcher lens.

Finally, researcher reflexivity was used in this study and provides additional validity through the researcher lens (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Included in this study was the critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding any potential biases, relationship to the study, or assumptions that may be held. This self-reflection has been discussed throughout the DiP with an explicit section later in this chapter. In addition, the researcher kept

memos throughout the analysis process and returned to them at a later point to reflect and make an actionable determination on these thoughts.

Transferability

As is common in qualitative research, thick, rich descriptions are used throughout this study to establish reliability and transferability (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Hearty quotes and descriptions of documents are used throughout the study to give readers the feeling of self-experience. This helps to add another layer to ensure the credibility and reliability of this study. In addition, by providing full descriptions of the data, results, and study design this would allow other researchers to recreate the study in their own setting thus creating external validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thick, rich descriptions add another lens to the study, the external or reader lens (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Finally, maximum variation is the act of purposefully seeking a diverse sample selection to allow for a greater variation in the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study was seeking specific participants in a leadership training program, but with diversity in the participant's position and department, across the selection. Participants were selected based on their demographic information to ensure a breadth of diversity with different areas of campus being represented. Due to the diversity of the participants, this study could be used by other researchers interested in studying the experience of participants in a leadership training program, therefore creating transferability of the study.

Positionality Statement

As a person that has completed the leadership training program myself, I may or may not share some traits, experiences, and backgrounds with the participants. To begin, my interest in this topic started with first-hand and second-hand experiences with leadership at SU. Some of

these experiences were amazing and a lot of them were not. Unfortunately, the bad experiences outweigh the good experiences, and it made me begin to wonder if there was a way to fix this issue and what is the root cause of this issue. I dove into the research and discovered a variety of literature around the subjects of leadership, turnover, employee satisfaction, and similar areas. However, I could not identify much literature that connected all the dots and proposed a solution to the problem. Research found that supervisors are a root cause of employee job dissatisfaction and turnover, that some leadership styles are more impactful than others, but very few investigated trainings as a solution. The few studies that have researched leadership training found it useful and successful for the participants.

After much review of the literature and discussion of applicability to SU, I came to the decision to focus on the leadership training program already available at SU. This program has been around for several years and has not been evaluated, especially since the transition to the online environment due to COVID-19. This program is known across the university and many beginning supervisors are encouraged to take the training, but the question is, is it really useful? In fact, when I became the supervisor of a large team my supervisor encouraged me to begin taking courses in the leadership training program. I did complete the program and because of this I have personal experience with it and how the courses/overall program function. However, I completed the program over four years ago and some changes have been made since then to the requirements.

Due to my personal experiences with both leadership at SU and the leadership training program I needed to ensure I remained impartial during the data collection process and the data analysis process. I attempted to remove potential impact for bias by focusing on the leadership training program at SU rather than focusing on the leadership at SU, which I have very strong

beliefs and feelings about. In addition, I used member checking with participants throughout the data analysis process to ensure accuracy and understanding of their opinions. As for the training program, I used a semi-structured interview format to keep my questions focused on the study, but still allow the ability to deep-dive into a participant's response.

While my participation in the leadership training program could seem like an opportunity for bias, I saw it as an asset. Having the background knowledge provided me with an understanding of the culture of the program, the history, and nuances of the program. Having familiarity with the program allowed me to easily dig deeper into items that stick out based on my personal experience with the program. Not to mention that the program has changed since I participated in it, so I did not have a full understanding of the current program which also allowed for additional questions and curiosity as the researcher.

Limitations

Though this study investigated an established program with no prior evaluation, there is still room for growth and limitations to the study. The first limitation of this study could have been researcher bias. Since the researcher believes that leadership training has the potential to improve leadership performance, there is the chance that data matching this view would be emphasized in the results. The next possible limitation of the study is sample size. While the sample did reach saturation, there could be additional participants with a different set of opinions. The ideal sample was limited to participants that are full-time staff members in leadership roles that have completed or mostly completed the leadership training program during the timeframe of COVID-19 (January 2020 - current). There were one to two participants that finished the program in 2020 so their memory on their experience was not the clearest. A lot of their answers were “I am sorry, but I do not remember.” The final possible limitation was the

actual responses of participants. I do feel that participants gave whole-hearted, honest, accurate responses reflective of their experiences, however some participants could have given richer responses. Also, some of their responses were contradictory, they mention that engagement with the trainings was not as good online, but then they also say how good the breakout sessions within the online trainings were.

Summary

In conclusion, this DiP was a qualitative case study on the participant experience in the leadership training program at SU bounded by the COVID-19 timeframe. Purposeful sampling was used to select a diverse group of participants that met the ideal participant description. These participants were interviewed with semi-structured questions and data being analyzed throughout the process. Constant comparative analysis was the main form of data analysis, with the data being organized and coded multiple times to ensure accuracy. Various methods were used to ensure validity and reliability of the study including triangulation, member checking, researcher reflexivity, thick, rich descriptions, and maximum variation. Based on the actions taken in the design of this study there is the opportunity for transferability to other researchers to apply it to their own study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & DISSEMINATION PLAN

Study Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the participant experience and satisfaction in a previously implemented leadership training program at Southeastern University (SU). Participant experience and participant satisfaction were separate entities analyzed during this study. The experience focuses on whether participant needs were met, and satisfaction focuses on if participant expectations were met. SU's leadership training program is a previously implemented program with little to nothing known about the impact of the program, thus the DiP model used was the outcomes model. The outcomes model is designed for programs that have been previously implemented, but little is known about the impact of the program or policy. Additionally, the program had to abruptly shift to the online environment when COVID-19 made its impact in America. The courses that make up the training program had only been offered face-to-face prior to this time. Thus, this study is bounded to participants that completed most of the program from January 2020 (when COVID-19 first impacted SU) to current.

Participants for this study were selected using maximum variation sampling. Participants needed to fit the specific guidelines for this study: full-time employee in a leadership position that completed most of the leadership training program since January 2020 (when COVID-19 first caused an impact to the university). The main source of data were from interviews with completers that fit the specific guidelines for maximum variation sampling. The COVID-19 timeframe was important because the pandemic revealed the need for better-designed online training (Hodges et al., 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020).

A list of potential participants was provided by Human Resources (HR). These potential participants received an email with a link to a Qualtrics survey. This survey included participant consent, information on the study, a statement of no potential risks, and a request for general demographic information (like gender, race, etc.), upon completion of this survey participants scheduled an interview. Interviews were 25 - 90 minutes long with semi-structured questions that covered the overall program, the applicability of the program content, the training model, the curriculum, and the online environment. Data was collected from fourteen participants ranging in race, age, ethnicity, position, and leadership experience. First-cycle analysis was done using elemental coding, specifically InVivo coding. Word count and focused coding were partially used as a second-cycle analysis along with a second round of InVivo coding. Codes were categorized into large groups, then the large groups were reviewed and put into subcategories, sort of a reverse form of coding. After this, categories were created and then themes formed from those categories. Overall, participant needs, and expectations were met and there was an overall sense of being better prepared to be in a position of leadership.

Findings

The data revealed that overall participants felt like they received the resources and tools needed to lead at SU and were satisfied with the program and their learning experience. However, participants also expressed room for improvement in many areas. These improvements were not limited to the leadership training program. Outside of the program, they saw a lack of leadership skills in leaders across campus and a lack of support for the program. This chapter will share the learning experiences of participants, the satisfaction of participants, and the participant's perception of the curriculum's ability to provide necessary leadership skills. In each finding the results are listed in order of importance, the first finding being the most important for

that research question. Finally, implications for future studies and program updates will also be discussed. In this study the learner experience refers to if the participant needs were met and learner satisfaction refers to if participant expectations were met. The participant's experience with a program impacts the satisfaction a participant has with the program.

Findings - Research Question 1

How do staff participants in supervisory roles at SU describe their learning experience in the leadership training program? The response from participants about their learning experience is majority positive, but there were some negatives comments about the training program that could use improvement.

Positives

The overarching themes that emerged from the data were personal goals, working together, online convenience, and referral. While most participants could not remember their goals or did not have preset goals when beginning the program, two categories were revealed: (1) personal gain and (2) improved leadership skills. Personal gain meaning participants enrolled in this program to gain additional credentials, career booster, to achieve other goals, and even to have a reason to get up. Laurel (50s, business administrator) who was diagnosed with cancer and was going through chemo whilst pursuing the leadership training program said this, "I will say that working from home this program, having that goal, was the reason for me to get up while I was experiencing chemo." The secondary personal goal was to improve their leadership skills, to quote Diana (50s, administrative specialist) regarding her personal goal entering the program as a supervisor, "to be a good manager...to not screw up because it's important, I mean you can really screw up."

The next theme to emerge was working together which consists of: (1) leading growth and (2) teamwork. Leading growth is the supervisor working with and for their employees individually to develop them professionally. This consisted of discussing progression plans, holding them accountable, reclassifying positions, weekly huddles, support, sharing knowledge, etc. Teamwork as a supervisor means working as a group (with their team) to improve the working environment, to make sure goals are aligned, to ensure success, etc. When discussing workload and employees' ability to attend training as long as they are not completely underwater with work, and if the person is, they talked about it as a team “so we can all pitch in and row the boat together.”

Online convenience was another theme that appeared in the data. There was some significant negative feedback from participants in this area, but those will be discussed in a later section. Due to the switch to online training participants found that it was easier to schedule workshops, to find time in their schedule for a workshop, and the ability to be flexible due to a working environment change. One of the largest areas commented on was travel/parking. At SU parking is a major inconvenience, so having to leave your parking spot to go to a training can be stressful. The leadership training program face-to-face workshops took place in the HR building which is about a mile down the road. In fact, a surprising factor that a few participants mentioned was they did not realize how stressed they were when it came to attending a face-to-face training. Kate (20s, Administrative Assistant) shared her experience with face-to-face courses versus online courses:

If I am going to go to the HR building, that is half of my day consumed...15 minutes out there (to the parking lot), get in my car, drive to HR, park, I am stuck in a building all day... it would sometimes feel very, unnecessarily difficult to get there and stay there.

So, I do enjoy that. Oh, okay, like when we're in our zoom training, okay, we have a five- or six-minute break, cool, I can lock the screen, turn off my camera, go use my own bathroom, get my own snacks at my own fridge, let the dogs out real quick, come back and still be home. So, it has eliminated stress that I did not realize existed previously. So, it was nice to reclaim some of that time ... So, I think that was another strength that maybe is not talked about a lot in online formatting, you do have the ability to reclaim a little bit of time, and that adds up, even emotionally that adds up.

As you can see from Kate's experience, it is not an easy task to attend a face-to-face workshop in the leadership training program. As previously mentioned, one of the top comments about face-to-face training was parking. So, if you were attending a one-hour workshop it could turn into a two-hour (or more) ordeal. Thus, by having the ability to attend online participants were able to attend more workshops than previously because they did not have to add in additional travel time.

The final theme to come from the data for question one is referral, meaning would you suggest another employee participate in this leadership training program. In fact, Renee (20s, Coordinator III) discusses how in her employees' probationary evaluation she highly encourages that employee to take the course on interviewing and hiring due to its applicability and how the content is presented. Kate recommends the program no matter what, "I recommend it to everyone who asks, and even if they don't ask." This type of response was common among all the participants, even if they see the training program as lacking.

Room for improvement

There are three overall themes that did not meet participant's needs, they are program improvements, generalizability, and limitations. There are various areas in the program that

could use improvement. They have been categorized as outreach (marketing of the program), name (of the program), accountability (of participants), courses (being offered), content (being offered), and then other. Other is a mix of data where ideas were not as common amongst participants, the focus of this section will be on the other five categories. Up first, according to participants, this program is not as well-known as it should be. They see an opportunity for more and better marketing of the program. This also includes reaching out to those that have participated in parts of the program but have not finished or the course has been updated significantly since they last took it. While one-third of participants mentioned the name of the program without being asked, the majority of the remaining two-thirds agreed with the one third. This agreement being that the name of the program should be changed depending upon the intent of the program. This bleeds into the theme of generalizability, the content presented was good, but it was very generalizable. Or the name could be harmful due to the fact the word “supervisor” is used in the title. Suggestions included taking the terminology out of it, using a more general name, something more all-encompassing, etc. The reason for this is the program is not just limited to leaders, or those in a supervisory position, it is welcoming to those in leadership positions and those who aspire to be in leadership positions. The latter portion is where it gets tricky. Trista (30s, project manager) shared an experience her colleague had, She asked her supervisors, like, hey, I would really like to go through and take these trainings. And they were like, why? ... employee did not supervise anybody except she was like, well, I do supervise the interns when the interns come through. And that was true. And that was the one reason they said yes to her for going through, but it was like they had their mindsets. Like I do not understand why you would want to take that.

This specific example also fits into the limitations theme, unfortunately a commonality across the university is a lack of support for employees to take the leadership training program. Also included in limitations is the category number of course offerings. Prior to COVID when all training was face-to-face, each workshop was offered twice per semester with a space limitation due to room size. Post COVID training was still offered twice per semester, but participants felt it was easier to register for courses. The reason for this is the online environment can hold more participants than the face-to-face environment, thus more “seats” were available in these sessions. Participants commented on having to wait six months to a year if they missed a course, hoping you could get in if you are waitlisted, and training only holding so many people. Going back to lack of support, participants stated the following: “there’s no buy-in,” “restrict how frequently...take training,” “internal stipulation,” and even feeling “penalized for trying to make the workplace better.” In a nutshell there appears to be certain departments on campus that limit their staff’s ability to participate or do not support it at all.

Moving back to generalizability, with a focus on the everyday fundamentals category, participants felt that their needs would not have been met if they came into the training with no background on leadership. Justin (30s, manager) stated the content was just “the basic level stuff.” Kendall (50s, senior contractor) when discussing the building trust quadrant of the model stated, “a lot of that’s common sense.”

Findings - Research Question 2

How do staff participants in supervisory roles at SU describe their satisfaction with the leadership training program? Participant’s overall satisfaction with the leadership training program was positive, however like their experience, there are areas that could use further improvement.

Positives

The themes that arose for participant satisfaction were online environment, overall program, online convenience, university leadership, self-improvement, and face-to-face (F2F) OR Online. The online environment produced equally positive and negative impacts when it comes to the two categories: engagement and community. Participants were split when it came to these aspects of being online. Even in their own individual interviews some participants shared both positives and negatives of engagement and/or community. In the community aspect participants were surprised they made connections and networked like they normally did in the face-to-face environment. For engagement, some people found the online environment to be less intimidating and thus felt more comfortable to participate. Or in the case of Kendall, since she is more of an introvert she thinks “I got more out of the classes taking them online than I did in person.”

In the overall program theme, there seemed to be a little surprise amongst participants that they were as satisfied with the program as they were. The categories that were revealed were top courses, great trainers, provides tools, knowledge, and participant experience. Kate shared how her experience was with presenters,

the people that they have teaching these courses is amazing. I and I have had so many trainers that when I am in the training, I am like, am I at SU right now, like, this feels like I went to like a TED talk off the clock somewhere else.

Many other participants also commented on how amazing the trainers were and how they actively sought additional courses from those trainers. When discussing how she would recommend the program to a colleague Robin (30s, administrative specialist) started naming specific trainings. “And I know keep going back to emotional intelligence. But that is the one I

am hanging on at the moment. Accountability. I can pick any of these and tell you how good they are,” Robin had to stop listing courses because she thought so many are worthwhile.

Atwater had quite a few comments to share about his experience with the program:

There is nothing comparable to it outside of it. And so, I think it would be it should be, it should be everyone entering SU and everyone, as a career employee here should be reminded that the program exists and encouraged to take it and mechanisms being placed to encourage them to, to take the program, or at least the components of the program. The fact that SU has programs like this, to me, it means that they care for me. And that is a that is a differentiator that keeps me here at SU, as opposed to going somewhere else.

When discussing the overall program Laurel stated, “I thought the experience was really good. In fact, I thought the experience was so good. That it helped me. ... Well, I do not know if you can see it, but I got the superior accomplishment award last year.” One of her goals when beginning the program was to receive this award and she feels as though this program helped her reach that point.

The third theme was online convenience and the overall satisfaction with participants was positive. This is because previously all the trainings were face-to-face and there were no other options. The online courses opened a bunch of new doors and opportunities for participants, their satisfaction was beyond what they were expecting. As briefly discussed in the previous research questions, satisfaction was also positive in the following categories for online convenience: scheduling, travel, environment, and unrealized stress. Kate mentioned with online training you get to reclaim time, “So I think that was another strength that maybe isn't talked about a lot of online formatting, you do have the ability to reclaim a little bit of time, and that adds up, even emotionally that adds up.” The ability to reclaim time has an impact on their scheduling, travel,

environment, and unrealized stress. With the move to online, unrealized stress with face-to-face programs was revealed, and met a need that participants did not know they needed. Having this realization and need met greatly impacted their overall satisfaction with the program.

An unexpected theme that arose from the findings was university leadership, the specific category being expectations for university leadership. Majority of participants upon completion of the leadership training program now view the content provided in the program as the expectations for leaders at SU. For example, Renee stated that “it's nice to know that they have expectations for leadership.” Atwater (50s, academic administrator) was slightly different, he entered the program thinking it would provide him with concepts and expectations as laid out by the university, “to be exposed to leadership concepts that are defined by the university. So, what does SU believe a SU leader looks like and should behave?” Either way the competency model used in the leadership training program is viewed as the model for leadership.

The overarching theme F2F OR Online, when comparing the content of face-to-face and online courses the two categories that arose were equally useful and just different. When discussing the strengths and weaknesses Justin said that he found “it was just a different, different avenue on the, the different means of transportation on the same path.” He also stated “I do not perceive one as being inherently better than the other. They just, they are, they are different. And I enjoyed both, I do not really see a huge downside, or huge upside, either one or the other.” Commentary from other participants was along the same lines, “is just as good,” “it was the same,” “truly no different,” and “stuff is still basically the same.”

The final theme that arose for participant satisfaction was self-improvement. Two categories were formed in self-improvement, professional development, and soft skills. Justin knew there were areas he still needed improvement in,

I had a pretty developed leadership skill set, coaching and mentoring skill set. But I knew there were things I was lacking. I knew I knew it was not a complete, still is not. So, I knew that there were things I could gain and that I could garner from it.

Or in the case of Trista (30s, project manager) she felt as though she would not have been able to handle terminating an employee had she not had these training sessions,

I do not know that I would have been able to do that, because we ended up having to terminate an employee in the middle of all of this. And I do not know that I would have been able to do that without some of these, these tips and guidance, especially that final bullet.

Professional development in this program gave participants a credential to put on their resume and a “toolbox” of tools they could use in life. All participants felt as though they left with some piece of knowledge and/or skill that they will be able to apply to their position.

Room for improvement

Even though participants had lots of raving comments to share about their satisfaction with the program, they had a lot of thoughts as to how the program can be improved. The overall themes that came from the data were online environment, limitations, generalizability, overall program, and university leadership. Being in an online environment brings its own issues no matter the program, in this training program the distractions of the workplace and multitasking were two of the front runners within the engagement category. Some of the feedback from participants included “better accountability when you’re in a classroom setting,” “cameras were off and mics were muted,” “different kind of distraction,” “folks that do not want to participate,” “let me multitask,” and many more. Abigail (20s, academic assistant) made the comparison of online training to online learning,

just like with online learning, I felt that some participants were not as engaged in the online classes, just because they were in their own work environment. And you know, emails may pop up, they may check their emails, people may pop up, etc.

In the next theme, limitations, there were two categories: lack of support and the number of course offerings. Both were touched on in question one about their impact on the learner experience. However, these also impact learner satisfaction quite a bit. Lack of support would come from the department holding them back rather than the program itself, but the name of the program could be a cause for this lack of support. Thus, participants may blame HR for the name of the program, impacting their satisfaction. Number of offerings does have an impact on the participants satisfaction with the program. If participants have a tough time getting into courses their satisfaction will go down. As previously mentioned, some feedback from participants included “only one offering of this class,” “were not enough seats available,” “missed the window for this course,” “hope you could get in,” etc.

In the next theme, generalizability, the category that was revealed was that the content is for anyone, and it is not specific to SU. The majority, if not all, participants discussed how the skills learned in this program are “just good people skills.” The things learned in this program apply not only to your professional life, but to your personal life. So, while the content was good some participants were left less than satisfied because it was more general knowledge. The competency model the leadership training program is based on, a few participants commented on how it could be used anywhere, not just SU. Or they related it back to their previous leadership training experiences. This did not impact their expectations for the program; it does bring more awareness that the model was created by SU for SU leadership.

The one negative category that formed from the overall program theme was completion timeframe. Participants appreciate the flexibility of being able to complete the program at their own pace, but they can also see it as a hindrance. Renee felt like “Oh, I’m never gonna get this thing done,” as it took her multiple years to complete it. While there was not a consensus on how to fix that some suggestions were to make it clearer on the website that this program is a time commitment and can be a haul, or to provide a “suggested” timeframe. This last idea the participant was saying to give a required timeframe, but still make it reasonable so it is flexible like two to three years.

Moving into the final theme, university leadership, even though participants positively viewed this program as a form of expectations for leaders, it also revealed the lack of skills in current leadership. For example, Justin found that:

As surprising takeaway is just how basic some of the concepts were. And just that, to me that highlighted, like maybe we have some really underdeveloped leadership across the university, if we're having to start coaching at this level. And they're not even coming in with like, a basic understanding of what like the ones like you have to respect the person to lead them when I was like, Well, yeah, who doesn't understand that, like, you have to treat them like a human being and realize that they're a person just like you and you have to treat them as such. And again, I have experienced from other departments on campus that that is not always the case. So, it was I am aware of that reality and also saddened by that reality. That is that is the starting point for a lot of it.

In other participant’s experiences this realization even though it is not a good one, it is working in their favor. For example, Melissa (40s, Coordinator III) learned that “a lot of supervisors that are in those leadership roles have never taken the leadership training program. It

is like yes; I definitely want to take it because I want to stand out from them.” So, she is using this program to show that she A. cares about her skillset, B. actively works to improve her skill set, and C. she has already taken steps to do this and is potentially better prepared than other candidates. While this is not related to improvements that can be made to the leadership training program it is an important fact about SU. Employees are realizing that “we have some really underdeveloped leadership across the university,” (Justin). This is reinforcing the issue at hand that those in supervisory positions are not prepared to lead.

Findings - Research Question 3

How does the curriculum of the leadership training program contribute to the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to lead at SU for staff participants in supervisory roles at SU? The findings for this question have mostly been answered as an outcome of the results for question one and two. This question falls into multiple themes: online engagement, university leadership, overall program, referral, limitations, working together, personal goals, and self-improvements. From online engagement participants made connections with other leaders across campus that they could reach out to if they needed anything. All the participants left the training program with new knowledge, tools, and skills that they could use in their positions. These came from various theme areas: working together, self-improvements, overall program, and university leadership.

Leading growth is one of the categories from the overall theme working together. This category is under working together because it is important for leaders to help their employees grow and drive their career forward. Part of the way they can do this is by sharing knowledge gained from the leadership training program. For example, Grayson (50s, Facilities Manager) said “I would take the knowledge that I learned and share it with my subordinates.” The program

also helped in the self-improvement category by building participants confidence in their ability to lead. For example, Mike (30s, Research Administrator):

I felt like it, it helped me be more, more confident in my actions, in regard to like what I do on a day-to-day basis. And it is definitely improved the way that I see myself. You know, I am not just like as a cog in the machine, I feel like I am, I am something more and, you know, I contribute, you know, all that I can in terms of leadership.

In the theme of overall program knowledge not only refers to new information regarding course content, but also to awareness of other opportunities. In the case of Milton (50s, team lead) he discovered HR has other programs to help him continue to grow:

But from this, I've, you know, started looking more and then continuing to take other training that I hadn't really looked at before because you just do your job, right? It is like wow, you know, there's things that can help me do a better job at doing my job. So why do not I look and see what is available. So, I think by taking this I realized that there are things out there to keep looking for.

Overall, each research question produced positive and negative feedback. Even though the results revealed some serious areas for improvement, the overall reaction to the program was positive. Every single participant mentioned how good the program was and how they have already recommended it to many others. The general response was an above satisfactory learning experience and were very satisfied with the program. Whereas most participants were not as confident in the leadership training programs' ability to prepare a supervisor to lead. The program is introductory and provides basic knowledge on different leadership competencies.

Implications

The findings of this study have a number of implications for current and future leadership training programs at SU and campuses similar to SU. The results from this study revealed an overall satisfaction from participants about the program and their involvement in the program. The unprovoked response from most participants was positive and constructive criticism came from interview question responses. No matter the negative to positive ratio from each individual participant, they all recognized the importance of the training and have recommended it to peers (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007). Similarly, is the knowledge and skills gained from the program. Participants found that they improved their leadership skills and even felt more confident in their role as a leader. These findings are the same as previous studies on leadership development (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Garavan, 2014; Rohs, 2004). There was also the acknowledgement from participants that they needed to improve upon their leadership skills. Diana knew she was not ready to lead her employees and had that conversation with her supervisor. Once she finished the leadership training program, she felt as though her competencies had improved (Rohs, 2004) and that she had a “toolbox” she could refer to.

One area for confusion and/or a negative impact is the title of the program. SU uses both manage and supervise in the title of the program, but then discusses leadership as well. Not only does the name of the program potentially cause issues for staff interested in taking the program, but there is also an issue with the terminology used. As previously discussed, for the latter, each of those terms have a very different meaning and connotation. They cannot be successfully used interchangeably as they are in this program. Management is the "efficient and effective maintenance of an organization's current activities, and the implementation of policies," leadership is the process (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018). Leadership is the capability to influence others to achieve the organization's vision (Bennis, 1991; Hogan et al., 1994; Kotter, 2017;

Spendlove, 2007, p. 408), and a supervisor is like a manager, but they fall under the role of manager in hierarchy (Drake 2019). For staff interested in participating in the program but are not in a designated supervisory or leadership role, the name of the program could also be cause for concern. As seen in the results, staff are denied the ability to participate in the program because their superiors see it as a program for supervisors/leaders only.

The study shows that one of the most important, and potentially unexpected, aspects of the leadership training program for the participants was the networks they developed (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007). Participants were concerned about the loss of community with other participants due to the transition to the online environment. Participants found they were still able to create connections and network with other leaders throughout the program in the online format. They also found a strong connection with the trainers, reaching out to them for personal issues or resources.

Whereas one of the most important findings for me was the consensus on the need for leadership development (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Allen & Roberts, 2011; Rohs, 2004). One participant was very vocal about his experiences at SU and with the program. His plus the other participant feedback should prompt university leaders to see the need to develop leaders across the university. If an employee is going to be promoted to a supervisor because they are good at their job, there should be some level of leadership training required for those people. The research is clear that bad supervisors can lead to employee dissatisfaction (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Au & Ahmed, 2016; Jo, 2008; Lok et al., 2019; Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017).

Finally, the leadership style of synergistic supervision snuck its way into the results also. This came in the form of an overall theme, leading growth and in the idea of organizational

commitment. Synergistic supervision as described by Winston and Creamer (1997) includes the discussion of exemplary performance, career goals, inadequate performance, evaluations, and attitudes. Basically, investing in your employees and continuing their growth, this was both given and received by participants in the program (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Rohs, 2004). Atwater discussed how SU offering this program shows they care about their employees and their growth, and that this is a differentiator that keeps him at SU. While there does not need to be a defined leadership type, it goes without saying that everyone in a leadership role could and can use continual leadership development.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study there are some recommendations for the local context and the higher education leadership landscape. The first recommendation is, training can work, ensure your leaders have the knowledge they need to lead their team successfully and supportively. Participants from this study found they could identify leaders across campus that were lacking in quite a few competencies. Even though some found the leadership training program at SU to be a very beginner level of leadership, they still gained something useful from the training. The recommendation here is if you are creating a training program, make sure the mission and goals of the training program align with the university's expectations for leadership. As long as the alignment is there and goals are clear, everyone should come out of the program with at least one new skill.

Similarly, creating some sort of competency and survey measurement for employees to take when they step into a new supervisory role is another recommendation. Previous research and this study show that leaders' confidence improved upon completion of the programs. By creating this evaluation type survey for employees in new supervisory positions it will show

them and their superior where they could use further improvement. From this a targeted training program could be created for that employee or used for a comparison to other new supervisors to see if there is a shared area that needs to be targeted for improvement within leadership.

Another recommendation, for Southeastern University (SU) is to evaluate the name and/or content of the training program based off the name. The terminology used throughout the program should be consistent and defined so there is a clear understanding as to what this program aims to accomplish and for whom. The study revealed most participants found that the name could be intimidating or misleading. Some expected the basics of HR competencies to be shared and others had higher expectations for the content in the program. If this training program is really going to be the expectation and model for leaders at SU, there should be more structure and rigor to the program. If this is intended to be an entry level introduction to leadership at SU, create a multi-tier training that participants can work towards. Additionally, the competency model was created over ten years ago, it is time to evaluate the competencies and determine what is important now to the university. Especially now where the virtual environment is prominent, and most participants request that this option continue. What it boils down to is update the leadership competency model and define terms for that model. Then, decide how you want the leadership training program to look. What are the requirements, who is this for, are there multiple levels, what are the goals, the delivery, etc. If the training program is going to be built to align with the competency model, make the updates and determine how those fit with the model all while keeping terminology consistent.

Furthermore, the local context should also look to improve their outreach regarding the program. Outreach includes marketing of the program itself, following up with participants that started taking workshops but never finished, encouraging departments to share the program, and

sharing refresher courses when content is updated. Since some departments do not support the idea of professional development those employees could leave the university without knowing SU offers these free courses. If there is still pushback, then create a fill in the blank statement employees can send to their supervisor. This should include why professional development is important and any university regulations regarding the ability of employees to participate in professional development offered by the university. Employees should then add in the workshop they want to attend and how this would help them improve their performance.

Continuing with outreach, many of the participants mentioned that HR should use their records to reach out to people. One area encouraged was if a workshop you previously took has been updated you should receive an email informing you of such. The email should state which training and a summary of how the content has been updated, then staff can decide whether they want to sign up for the course. Additionally, previous participants' lists should be used to market updated content. For example, someone took a workshop a couple of years ago and has not taken one since. Send this participant an email with some new upcoming workshops and/or encouragement to finish any certifications for which they are eligible.

For future research, this study could be replicated by other higher education institutions with leadership training programs already in place. It would be of value to understand if the same findings apply to other leadership training programs. In addition to those results, a comparison of the models or theories used to create the training programs would also be of value to analyze. Both aspects would contribute to the improvement and potential requirements of leadership development. Another area future studies should look at is the impact leadership has on employees. This should include general employees whose leadership has not gone through any sort of leadership training program recently and employees whose leadership has gone through a

training program within the last one to two years. Additionally, researchers should look at the employee satisfaction with their leader before and after participating in a leadership training program. All these aspects will give a fuller picture on the impact that a supervisors' leadership has on employees.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study could have great impacts on the leadership training program at SU and in the higher educational leadership landscape. Since not much research has been done on this area (Day et al., 2014; Dopson et al., 2016; Garavan, 2014; Lord & Hall, 2005), this study is just the beginning. The data shows that people are excited about training and improving their skills and that they are willing to do this! Additionally, the data shows that participants see the lack of leadership skills across the university. Which could be contributing to employee job satisfaction and turnover at SU. While this was not the specific focus of this study, it all connects.

The connection being supervisors impact their employee's job satisfaction level (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Marshall et al., 2016; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994; Stankovska et al., 2017; Tull, 2006; Underwood et al., 2016), and their job satisfaction level determines their embeddedness, which could lead to employee turnover (Marshall et al., 2016; Stankovska et al., 2017; Underwood et al., 2016). Furthermore, research shows that training can and does improve leadership skills (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Rohs, 2004; Ruben et al., 2018) and that the impact was positive for employees whose supervisor completed a leadership training program, thus leading to higher job satisfaction (Barling et al., 1996; Hassan & Fuwad, 2013).

The idea of a leadership training program is just a starting point. First universities need to acknowledge people are not born with natural leadership competencies. This is something that

everyone can and needs to work on. So, if universities continue to promote based on employees being good at their job, they cannot expect a productive working environment. Yes, it is possible, but not common. Training is one answer, but if it is not required, embraced, and continual it will be seen as a time waster. This topic should be continued to be explored and expanded upon.

Dissemination Plan

The main stakeholder I will share the results of this study with is Human Resources (HR) as they are both the creators and hosts of the leadership training program. Additionally, I recently spoke to HR, they are currently reevaluating the competency model and thus the leadership training program. This is an ideal time to share the findings of this study with them. One of the key areas I will share with HR is the findings that arose from the theme of Program Improvements. I will share this with them either via excel file or a visually pleasing table. The table would group items together, for example all feedback on the name of the program would be in one location, and all feedback on doing more outreach would be in one location, etc. Similarly, I want to share the feedback about the generalizability of the content. I envision this being a simple statement about the content not being specific to SU and it being for anyone.

As I continue to think about this, I will produce a report that is just a few pages long divided by constructive feedback and positive feedback. That way I can delve into all the themes that arose from the data and HR can read as much or as little as they want in the report. Going back to program improvements there were a sizable number of specific comments that do not “match” into a category. I will list these as bullet points with details under a heading that reads “other feedback.”

In addition, I will also provide HR with a copy of my implications section and a link to my final manuscript once it is available. They can use these two resources as they wish. Finally, I

will also make myself available to HR for any additional questions they may have as to my findings.

The other stakeholder previously mentioned is other universities. I will disseminate this information indirectly to them. Upon completion of the Ed.D. program I will determine which academic journal is most relevant and submit an edited version of my manuscript for review. This will allow it to be reached by a larger population and for other universities with leadership training programs to view it and adjust their program based on my results.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY & INFORMED CONSENT

This questionnaire has two parts. Part A asks demographical information while Part B asks questions related to your experience in the Leadership Training Program.

Part A.

1. Name: _____
2. Email: _____
3. College or Office: _____
4. Department: _____
5. What gender do you identify with?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-Binary
6. Which best describes your race?

American Indian

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Hispanic or Latino

White

Choose not to respond
7. Your position and title: _____

8. Select your age range:

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79

9. Please explain any leadership responsibilities you have including the number of employees you are responsible for and any areas of the department or committees you lead.

Part B.

1. What year did you begin the training?

- 2018
- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022

2. When did you complete the training?

- 2020
- 2021
- 2022

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Confirmation of Consent & Reminder

- a. *“Before we begin, do you have any questions or concerns about this study?”*
- b. *“To confirm, you understand and are consenting to being a participant in this study? Please verbally state your consent.”*
- c. *“As a reminder, if you don’t feel comfortable answering a question that is fine, just let me know. This interview is not a test of your knowledge. Please answer each question honestly and to the best of your knowledge. Finally, your answers will remain anonymous, and pseudonyms will be used in place of your name.”*

2. Overall Program

- a. *“Alright, let’s go ahead and get started. Can you tell me about your current position and how you came into it?”*
- b. *“What was your reason for choosing to participate in the leadership training program?”*
- c. *“What are your top three takeaways from this program?”*
- d. *“Did you enter the program with any personal goals? If so, what were they?”*
 - i. Do you feel as though this program helped you accomplish those goals?
- e. *“How has the training program changed your leadership style?”*
- f. *“Can you give me one example of how you implemented any of the knowledge gained from the program into your daily routine?”*

- g. *“The leadership training program allows participants to complete the program at their own pace and in their own timeframe. Is the flexibility of this program helpful or hindering for participants and why?”*
- h. *“Would you recommend this program to a colleague? Why or why not?”*

3. Curriculum

- a. *“Do you feel as though the workshops gave you an understanding of how to lead at SU? Why or why not?”*
 - i. Is there room for improvement in these workshops? In terms of their appropriateness to prepare you to lead at SU.
- b. *“Did you feel the instructor was knowledgeable? How did that show up for you?”*
- c. *“For the majority of workshops, how would you rate the instructor’s organization and preparation? Were they organized and prepared for a session?”*
- d. *“What worked about the formatting of the workshops? How did the discussions help you to understand the content?”*
 - i. What was your favorite activity and why?
 - ii. Can you describe the level of engagement during these workshops?
- e. *“Overall, for these courses, where do you see room for improvement?”*
 - i. Or what are the top positives of this program if you do not see room for improvement?
- f. *“How is the Leadership Competency Model being implemented into the workshops?”*
 - i. Do you recall what this is? Share the image of the wheel.

- ii. The competency model and where the workshop fits into the model are discussed at the beginning of every applicable workshop. Based on your experience, did this brief mention mean anything to you at the time?
- iii. Since the leadership training program is based on this model, how could it be better intertwined into the program?

4. The Timing and Formatting

- a. *“During your course in the program, did you experience any face-to-face courses, or was it entirely online?”*
 - i. If face-to-face was experienced, how did the online format compare to the face-to-face format?
 - b. *“Describe how the online environment hindered and/or helped your progress?”*
 - c. *“Can you describe the strengths and weaknesses of the online format?”*
 - i. Can you describe a specific moment during your time in the program when you thought there was room for improvement in the online format?
 - d. *“Is there anything else, perhaps something we didn’t discuss already, that you want to be sure I know about this topic?”*
-

Note. Italicized items are primary questions read aloud nearly verbatim; small roman numerals indicate potential probes/follow-ups

APPENDIX C

EMAIL TO EMPLOYEES REQUESTING THEIR PARTICIPATION

Hello there,

My name is Zaina Sheets, and I am a doctoral candidate at Florida State University in Tallahassee, but my heart still belongs *redacted for privacy*. I am reaching out to you today to request your participation in my study on the *redacted*. The purpose of this study is to discover the participant experience in a previously implemented leadership training program (the leadership training program). This research will provide critical knowledge on the participant experience in a leadership training program and will contribute the currently limited literature surrounding this topic.

Training and Organizational Development within Human Resources at the Southeastern University (SU) has provided me with a list of people who have completed the Leadership Training Program since January 2020, which is how I obtained your contact information. Like you, *redacted* that has completed the *redacted* program, but I completed it a few years ago and pre-COVID-19, so your input and experiences are critical to this study.

Your participation in this program would only require two items on your part, the first, a very short survey with the participant consent information, and the second, a 60–90-minute interview with myself. The data collected in these steps will remain confidential and I will use a pseudonym for your name.

I know your time is limited and I thank you for taking the time to read this and I do hope you will consider participating in this study. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

With much thanks,

Zaina Sheets

(Future) Ed.D. Candidate, FSU

APPENDIX D
IRB APPROVALS

Behavioral/NonMedical Institutional Review Board

FWA00005790

DATE: 7/15/2022
TO: Zaina Sheets

TITLE: Discovering the Experiences of Supervisors in a Leadership Training Program

Approved as Exempt

You have received IRB approval to conduct the above-listed research project. Approval of this project was granted on 7/15/2022 by IRB-02. This study is approved as exempt because it poses minimal risk and is approved under the following exempt category/categories:

(2) 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: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) 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 (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

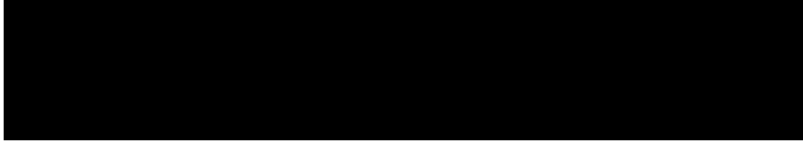
Special notes to Investigator (if applicable):

In the myIRB system, exempt approved studies will not have an approval stamp on the consents, fliers, emails, etc. However, the documents reviewed are the ones to be used.

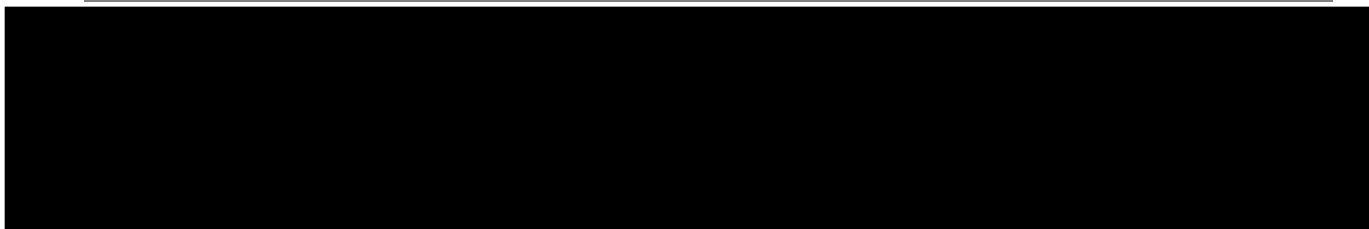
If you need to modify the document(s) in any manner, then you'd need to submit to our office for review and approval prior to implementation

Principal Investigator Responsibilities:

The PI is responsible for the conduct of the study. Please review these responsibilities described at:



- Renewing your study before expiration
- Obtaining approval for revisions before implementation
- Reporting Adverse Events
- Retention of Research Records
- Obtaining approval to conduct research at the VA
- Notifying other parties about this project's approval status



IRB APPROVALS CONT.

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE of the VICE PRESIDENT for RESEARCH



EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

June 3, 2022

Dear Zaina Sheets:

On 6/3/2022, the IRB staff reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Exempt (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk)
Title:	Discovering the Experiences of Supervisors in a Leadership Training Program
Investigator:	Zaina Sheets
Submission ID:	STUDY00003269
Study ID:	STUDY00003269
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sheets Interview Protocol , Category: Protocol;• Sheets Participant Consent, Category: Consent Form;• Sheets Participant Survey/Questionnaire, Category: Survey/Questionnaire;• Sheets Protocol , Category: IRB Protocol;• Sheets Recruitment Email, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB staff determined the protocol qualifies for exemption, and where applicable the IRB has determined that the protocol qualifies for approval in accordance with federal regulatory requirements for Limited IRB review, effective on 6/3/2022. **Further** IRB review and approval by this organization is not required.

COVID-19 Information for Research Involving Human Subjects: Note that the U.S. is operating under the national emergency [Proclamation 9994](#) concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and that this national emergency remains in effect until rescinded or terminated by the President of the U.S. (go [here](#) for the Proclamation letter). Conditions are dynamic and related policies or guidance evolve accordingly; as applicable, refer to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [website](#) specific for universities or refer to our COVID-19 and Human Research Studies [web page](#) to learn more about how you should or may protect persons (whether vaccinated or unvaccinated)

involved in any of your in-person research activities.

Other Information: You are advised that any modification(s) to the protocol for this project that may alter this exemption determination must be reviewed and approved prior to implementation of the proposed modification(s).

Modifications to the research may invalidate the exemption determination (because the research no longer meets the exemption criteria described in HRP-312 – WORKSHEET – Exemption Determination).

Examples of minor changes to exempt research that would *not* alter the exemption determination and should therefore not be submitted to the IRB for further review include the following:

- Making administrative (formatting, grammar, spelling) revisions to the protocol, consent or recruitment materials or other study documents
- Adding or revising non-sensitive questions or non-identifiable response options to a survey, interview, focus group or other data collection instrument
- Increasing or decreasing the number of study subjects—*unless* adding a new study sample such as children or prisoners or adding a new source of data or records
- Making study team/personnel changes—*except* (1) a change in Principal Investigator (PI) or (2) a change in other study personnel for whom regulatory approval of involvement in the study must be documented for purposes of institutional policy, sponsorship or funding, or other administrative purposes (e.g., graduation or manuscript clearance; addition of non-FSU study personnel).

Examples of changes to exempt research that do require prospectively submitting a modification to the IRB before implementing changes include the following:

- Making substantive revisions or additions (e.g., change in PI; funding source; sample; source of study subjects or their data; study sites or settings; procedures, interventions or interactions with study subjects; use of any drug, device, supplement or biologic; study subjects' time or duration spent performing or participating in study activities) to the protocol, consent or recruitment materials or other study documents
- Adding or revising sensitive questions or identifiable response options to a survey, interview, focus group or other data collection instrument
- Adding a new study sample such as children or prisoners or adding a new source of data or records
- Obtaining, using, studying, analyzing, generating, storing or maintaining identifiable information or identifiable biospecimens in addition to or in lieu of de-identified or anonymous information or specimens
- Change in study risks (e.g., impact upon study subjects; impact upon students' opportunity to learn educational content or assessment of educators who provide instruction; any disclosure of study subjects' responses outside of the research may place study subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement or reputation)
- Change in Principal Investigator (PI) or (for students) faculty advisor
- Any involvement of a non-FSU institution or organization
- New or change in financial interest

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the applicable requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the Library within the RAMP IRB system.

Sincerely,

Office for Human Subjects Protection (OHSP) Florida
State University Office of Research 2010 Levy
Avenue, Building B Suite 276 Tallahassee, FL
32306-2742
Phone: 850-644-7900
Email: humansubjects@fsu.edu OHSP
Web: <https://ohsp.fsu.edu>

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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