

**REDUCTION-IN-FORCE: MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES NEEDED TO SUSTAIN
EMPLOYEES' JOB PERFORMANCE IN THE TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRY**

**A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Management**

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory research study was to gain an understanding of the management strategies needed to sustain job performance when a reduction in force (RIF) event occurs in the transportation industry. The central research question asked: what management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employees' job performance in a reduction-in-force environment? The qualitative exploratory study used semi-structured interviews to gain information from RIF survivors employed in the transportation industry and who had experienced an RIF occurrence within the past 5 years. Data was analyzed for concepts, categories, and interrelationships within content to produce themes. The following themes emerged: (a) actions taken by management, (b) job performance, and (c) communication methods. Additionally, 5 sub-themes were inclusive to this study: (a) view of transparency, fairness and trust (b) action taken to restore transparency, fairness, and trust (c) impact on survivor's view (d) emotional/behavioral impact, and (e) selection process. The key findings suggest transportation managers are not taking appropriate actions to sustain job performance during an RIF. With transportation managers not engaging in the appropriate actions, survivors of RIF occurrences view transparency, fairness, and trust in the workplace negatively. Survivors suffer emotionally, and behavior changes from the traumatic effects of the RIF event. Frequency in communication and a detailed understanding of the selection process can help survivors minimize or eliminate the effects of an RIF occurrence. The findings indicated transportation managers must hone in on the 3 primary themes when developing an implementation strategy during turbulent times to reduce the impact to survivors and sustain job performance.

Keywords: survivor, psychological contract, reduction-in-force, equity theory, job performance

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CHAPTER ONE

The problem addressed in this study was transportation managers lacking the appropriate strategies needed to sustain job performance during a Reduction in Force (RIF) event (Carey, 2012). Managers in the transportation industry are currently challenged with recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees who can effectively meet the demands of the day-to-day operations (Crews & Bhatia, 2012). Hence, there is a need for employees and management to build a relationship on transparency, fairness, and trust. According to Krot and Lewicka (2012), trust begins from two individuals that are willing to allow vulnerabilities within the relationship. The relationship employees have with their manager is built on honesty and trust. When an employee accepts employment from a potential employer, the employee believes this relationship will last until the employee retires or voluntarily leaves the company. In return, the employee gives management loyalty, dedication, and commitment to performing his or her respective job as agreed or according to the approved criteria. When there is a deviation from the established employee and management agreement, in most cases verbal, either party may develop a negative feeling about the other (Buch, Kuvaas, Shore, & Dysvik, 2014). Trust is expected in a relationship to be a mutual benefit between both parties (Krot & Lewicka, 2012).

Smitha (2013) described the importance of employee engagement, and the successful ingredients required for manager and employees to achieve success in the transportation industry. Aforementioned begins with shared values, respect, and a sound management strategy that can be executed in a challenging transportation environment (Smitha, 2013). As explained by Smitha (2013), many times employees are seeking long term careers, and the transportation industry can only provide jobs. As a result of the changes in demand and fluctuation in

workloads in the transportation industry, RIF events are often times the decision by management to reduce cost in the operation (Crews & Bhatia, 2012).

In many instances, the workforce reduction plan does not include a mitigation plan for employees who remain in the workplace (Gandolfi, 2013). As a result of the RIF event, employees feel victimized by the employer. Employees will not endorse their employers to other potential employees should the need arise (Blau, Petrucci, & McClendon, 2012). Elegido (2013) explained there are risks associated with being a loyal employee, however believes the contributions loyalty play in job fulfillment is a worthwhile tradeoff. Guillon and Cezanne (2014) identified participation, commitment, and attachment as loyalty constructs employees feel toward their managers.

When an RIF event happens, employees begin to feel victimized and betrayed by their direct manager and employer (Gandolfi, 2013). The employee and manager relationship change immediately. The employee decreases equity and loyalty toward management. Employees feeling positive about their management is a direct link to job satisfaction (Poulis & Wisker, 2016). Managers are the first point of contact for employees and employees rely on management to provide direction and communication of any changes in the workplace.

When an RIF event happens in the transportation industry, employees expect their managers to influence the outcome. If management is unable to mitigate the decision, employees hold their managers directly responsible for the labor turnover (Cole, 2004). Once reality happens, and their peers exit the company, the remaining employees feel like survivors of the unforeseen event.

The research study explored the impacts an RIF event has on survivors in the transportation industry. Specifically, the study focused on how survivors are affected

emotionally and behaviorally, and the direct link to changes to job performance. Chapter 1 includes the research study topic overview/background, problem, and purpose statement. Additionally, research question, propositions, conceptual framework, assumptions and biases, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, and definitions of terms are presented. Also, Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the research design, summary of Chapter 1, and organization of the dissertation.

Topic Overview/Background

In the 21st century, RIF events have become standard practice for many employers faced with financial uncertainty (Fountain, 2013). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), over 300 employers announced RIF event related activities involving over 127,821 employees. Although commonly misinterpreted, RIF events remain one of the most traumatic experiences an employee can face in the workplace. Rickey (1992) stated, “During times of job insecurity, employees without job alternative tend to withdraw from their job psychologically” (p. 12). As a result, employees are less committed to their employer and experience changes in job performance and satisfaction (Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012). Psychological impacts to employees are frequently overlooked, creating a barrier to trust between management and employees. Employees begin to experience high levels of stress and anxiety impacting behavioral characteristics that create changes in job performance (Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012).

In recent years, the transportation industry has shown a significant increase in demand for the movement of products and services (Iovan, 2017). The percentage of job openings have risen to high values, yet layoffs and discharges are a contraction to the economic growth in the labor market (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Nonetheless, management in the transportation industry are seeking ways to minimize operational costs leading to decreased labor forecast and

improvements in competitiveness (Iovan, 2017). As a result, employees are being asked to involuntarily leave the company, and those remaining on the job are being tasked to do more with less (Munnich & Iacono, 2016).

Shedder, Contacos-Sawyer, and Thomas (2013) pinpointed the challenge associated with increased demand and fewer employees. The employees are faced with the burden of taking on more work, while management is tasked to ensure the increased workloads are managed. Employees are expected to multi-tasks, balance schedules between varied tasks, and cross train in unfamiliar areas (Shedder et al., 2013). Employees and management are feeling the pressure from the RIF event, and both are trying to thrive with the changes in the workplace. Due to all the competing factors and the workplace changes, employees remaining in the workplace lose momentum affecting job performance (Jenkins, 2013).

Problem Statement

Transportation managers lack the appropriate strategies needed to sustain job performance during an RIF event (Carey, 2012). RIF events often occur when organizations face challenging decisions to cut cost and find creative and innovative strategies to improve processes (Brown, 2013). Many times, choices made to strengthen organizations' financial health do not expeditiously benefit the bottom line. Additionally, funding a new idea can increase cost before providing any financial gains (Brown, 2013). The literature on this topic indicates an RIF event is an old business strategy adopted by governmental agencies in the early 1970s, closely associated to mainstream downsizing, re-engineering, re-sizing, and rightsizing (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2010). Also, RIF events are used to provide immediate benefits to the financial health of an organization. Literature does not substantiate the positive impacts to organization's profits (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2010).

Employees remaining in the workplace after an RIF event have a survivor's disposition (Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012). Survivors often experience emotional consequences, such as guilt, uncertainty, and adverse effects leading to psychosocial and behavioral impacts known as survivor's syndrome (Appelbaum, Delage, Labib, & Gault, 1997). Survivor's syndrome, often called survivor's sickness, categorizes two types of employees: "those who will not lose their jobs and those who may lose their jobs" (Appelbaum et al., 1997, p. 1). Survivors remaining in the newly structured workplace are required to perform at the same levels, despite the emotional and behavioral impacts associated with the RIF event (Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012). McElroy, Morrow, and Rude (2001) concluded from research a direct correlation between RIF and job performance. Appelbaum et al. (1997) explained the psychosocial and behavioral consequences of undergoing such a traumatic circumstance weigh heavily on an employee's ability to perform at optimal levels and decrease the ability to move forward optimistically about the long-term stability of employment.

Existing literature reveals the focus for most business leadership, organization management, human resources, and other personnel is on the financial health of the company and well-being of the employees who are exiting the workplace (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2015). The employees remaining in the workplace are not considered in the RIF event plan. Schanfield (2008) explained the importance for employers to consider and review their obligations to surviving employees of RIF. The psychosocial and behavioral effects associated with surviving employees during an RIF event are being omitted in the strategic planning process for the RIF event (Appelbaum et al., 1997). Transportation industry managers during an RIF event, place the focus on driving effectiveness and efficiencies in the operation, using fewer resources, maximizing flexibility, and making the necessary corrections to drive the organization to achieve

positive gains in the short term (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012). Survivors' job performance changes as a consequence to the RIF event. Transportation managers must consider examining strategies and volatility in workforce planning before an RIF event is executed to minimize or eliminate the associated consequences to survivors (Fadairo, Williams, & Maggio, 2013). As explained by Fraher and Gabriel (2016), when survivors experience changes from an RIF event the workplace as they see it has come crashing down, and reality is filled with insecurity and uncertainty. The appropriate management strategies to sustain survivors' job performance following an RIF event must be implemented throughout the lifecycle (Parzefall, 2012). Demand is high in the transportation industry; however, managers are not taking in consideration the market volatility in workforce planning to maximize employee performance during times of fluctuation (Fadairo et al., 2013).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory research study was to gain an understanding of the management strategies needed to sustain job performance when an RIF event occurs in the transportation industry. The RIF phenomenon used as a common practice in the 70's by government agencies is being practiced in the transportation industry today (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2010). This study aids in understanding the essence of the lived experiences of 10 transportation industry employees residing in the Puget Sound Region of Washington State who have experienced an RIF event in the past 5 years. The focus of this study was to understand the experiences of RIF event survivors and the impacts to job performance. This study intended to gain a better understanding for organizational managers to pro-actively minimize or eliminate the adverse effects an RIF occurrence has on job performance. Managers that better understand the

emotional and behavioral impacts of an RIF event can help survivors rebuild equity in the workplace and improve job performance.

Research Question

The qualitative exploratory study focused on the central research question: What management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employees' job performance in a reduction-in-force environment?

Propositions

Three central propositions were the focus for this study. The first was management strategies may eliminate the negative consequences that impact survivors emotionally and behaviorally, avoiding changes in job performance. Management strategies that promote communication and transparency are relevant (Solove, Fisher, & Kraiger, 2015). Communication is an area that may have a direct impact to the RIF event outcome. Additionally, the inclusion of employees in the workplace in decision-making or encouragement in speaking up should be considered within the communication plan (Karkoulian, Mukaddam, McCarthy, & Messarra, 2013). Transparency in the selection process and how decisions are weighted were additional elements to potentially consider. The possibility of removing the perception of subjectivity or preferences in the RIF selection process, if present, should be considered. Many strategies exist in various industries; however, this phenomenon has not been studied in the transportation industry. In addition, Solove et al. (2015) have indicated the need for further development in management strategies necessary to manage RIF events.

The second proposition was management may fall short in understanding the consequences of an RIF event, and therefore management strategies needed to sustain employees' job performance have not been identified. Jenkins (2013) supported the need for

management strategies to sustain employees' job performance when undergoing an RIF event. The third proposition were managers in the transportation industry that better understand the emotional and behavioral impacts of an RIF event may help survivors rebuild equity in the workplace and begin to restore job performance back to optimal levels through appropriate management strategies. This proposition was supported by the work of Munnich and Iacono (2016).

Conceptual Framework

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a research method used for exploration and understanding a social or human problem. Data was gathered from a sample of individuals employed in the transportation industry who had experienced an RIF event. AN RIF deployment strategy was implemented due to inconsistencies in demand for products and services; uncertainty in a global marketplace resulting in changes in workforce planning strategies, and minimizing operational costs to maximize profits, which have all been shown to lead to RIF events in the transportation industry (Fadairo et al., 2013). Survivors shared experiences specifically related to RIF impacts to changes in job performance and loss of equity in the organization, beginning from the initial RIF communication by management to the affected employees, followed by the departure of peers, and ending with the survivors eventually thriving in the newly structured organization (Adams, 1963). The employees' left behind feel emotional effects such as guilt, uncertainty, and consequences (Snell et al., 2015). The conceptual framework encompassed the complete lifecycle of the RIF event and the effects to the survivor during the course of the process. Management strategies were developed through an understanding of this process.

Assumptions/Biases

Several assumptions were identified for this study. The first assumption was the researcher observed RIF events and can assume from behavioral characteristics survivors' work performance is impacted. Survivors of RIF events are negatively impacted from the disruption in the workplace and changes in job responsibilities. Additionally, survivors begin to lose equity in management and motivation to perform normal work functions. Job satisfaction declines as loyalty and dedication begins to diminish. The second assumption was managers do not possess the skills and abilities to sustain transportation employees' performance in an RIF event environment. In observing the RIF event environment over many years, management seem to focus more on sustaining the expected job performance levels rather than the appropriate management strategies to improve job performance of survivors. The third assumption was when appropriate management strategies are executed early on in the RIF event environment, survivors are better able to recover from changes in the workplace and performance levels are restored to optimal levels much sooner. As a result, survivors are able to begin trusting management and restore equity to the workplace. The fourth assumption was the emotional and behavioral effects survivors suffer from as a result of the RIF event are more detrimental than what has been experienced in the workplace and to job performance when a financial burden is placed on family and co-workers who have left the company involuntarily. The fourth assumption was survivors feelings of uncertainty, guilt, and anxiety is greater when workforce planning strategies for the future are not shared after an RIF event. Survivors want to know if the organization is planning any additional RIF activity after the first wave of employees have departed.

As explained by Creswell (2014), researchers are obligated to provide clarification of biases brought to the study and to prepare and develop a strategy to eliminate them from the study. Several biases were identified for this study. The first bias was the researcher has been employed in the transportation industry for the past 17 years and has observed the consequences of RIF events and the negative impacts survivors suffer from the process. The second bias was the researcher's observation of managers failing to execute management strategies in the RIF event communication plan. Many times, managers are instructed by executive leaders to take specific action leading up to the RIF event that is not transparent to the manager or employee affected.

Significance of the Study

As changes occur in the transportation industry from advancements in technology and globalization, the industry is experiencing increased demands for product and services. Yet, management in the transportation industry continues to strategically use RIF events for mitigation of financial risk (Marchet, Perotti, & Mangiaracina, 2012) and to implement cost saving initiatives, despite consequences to employees who are involuntarily asked to leave the company and survivors job performance (Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012). Appelbaum et al. (1997) research validated RIF event survivors' experience with similarity to many of the same feelings as survivors of major accidents, such as airplane crashes and natural disasters. Furthermore, survivors are being asked to do more with less people and in many situations less pay. Yet, direct managers expect no changes to job performance of survivors (Munnich & Iacono, 2016). Additionally, managers of affected employees are unskilled and lack the ability to support survivors by using the appropriate management strategies to guide behaviors and actions throughout the RIF event lifecycle (Jenkins, 2013).

The information from the study is important to individuals in management, organizational leaders, human resources, and training professionals with knowledge to better plan management strategies for sustaining employees' job performance in an RIF environment. Additionally, the importance of managers receiving the appropriate training to support the emotional and behavioral changes survivors face in the newly structured workplace may become apparent through this study. Most importantly, strategies may emerge that focus on how to minimize or eliminate changes in job performance and impacts to survivors' equity in the workplace. The findings from this study may contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of management and bring awareness to the detrimental effects an event of this nature can cause. This awareness can lead management in the transportation industry to understand the consequences associated to RIF events and job performance while providing useful strategies for managing an RIF event.

Delimitations

The study focused on the RIF survivors in the transportation industry that remain on the job after the RIF event and experienced change in job performance. The sample size for this study was limited to 10 participants. A study delimitation was the designated study population residing in the Puget Sound region in Washington State, as prescribed. The participants must have experienced an RIF event within the past 5 years. The researcher has outlined the limitations in RIF event survivors' participation aforementioned. All participants met the criteria of this study, as just described, in order to participate. A pre-screen questionnaire was used to ensure the interview participants met the study criterion.

Limitations

The exploratory study was based on the lived experiences of the participants impacted by an RIF event. As explained by Creswell (2014), qualitative generalization is used in a limited capacity. Therefore, potential limitations of this study were included in the research design. The study findings were the direct responses from the participants. Ring, Jepson, and Ritchie (2011) believed the qualitative researcher is limited by the complexities of interpretation and appropriateness of the findings due to the methods of synthesizing the data. The data collection and synthesis was from a voice recording with minimal written documentation. Participants responses were verbatim and in the voice of the survivor. Participant responses were recorded to ensure the validity of the transcript. The study was limited to the survivor's recollection, interpretation, and truthfulness of the RIF event through the participant's individual perspective. Purposeful sampling was used for participant selection, which narrowed the scope of the study. Recognizing limitations in data collection and synthesis add validity to the study methodology.

Definition of Terms

The list includes terms used throughout the paper:

Equity Theory: A representation of an individual motivated by fairness, suggesting the higher an individual's perception of equity, the more motivated he or she will be and vice versa. If equity is perceived as unfair, the individual becomes demotivated (Adams, 1963).

Labor turnover: The rate at which employees move in and out of employment with the organization (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

Psychological contract: The perceptions of an employee regarding the reciprocal obligation between the manager of the employing organization (Henderson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2012).

Reduction-in-Force (RIF): A procedure used to terminate occupied employment positions caused by lost funding, change of work requirements, or the reorganization of a department or business operation (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2010).

Survivors: Employees remaining on the job after the RIF event (Armstrong-Stassen, 1994).

Survivor's syndrome: A characteristic group of symptoms such as guilt, uncertainty, anxiety, depression, emotional numbness, and consequences following a traumatic event (Appelbaum et al., 1997).

Transportation industry: A system connecting producers to consumers locally, regionally, nationally, and globally (Toth, 2015).

Workforce planning: A technique used to secure and improve an organization's human resources to meet present and future needs (Fadairo et al., 2013).

General Overview of the Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory study was to examine and gain an understanding of the management strategies needed to sustain job performance when an RIF event occurs in the transportation industry. Creswell (2014) explained qualitative exploratory methodology is an approach used for “exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or a group ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). Bevan (2014) recognized an exploratory qualitative study as a useful methodology for researchers seeking to disclose themes from data analysis using the voice of the study participants. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted using 10 open-ended questions to understand the RIF event experiences and the direct link to changes to job performance so that management strategies for managing an RIF event could be elicited from the study.

Creswell (2014) stated researchers seek ways to establish the meaning of an exploratory study from the views of the participants. The researcher identifies a social or human group problem, collects data, and analyzes data to interpret patterns and themes. One of the key elements of collecting data is interviewing participants and collecting data from experiences relating to the problem identified.

The study population came directly from the transportation industry in the Pacific Northwest region and included individuals who have experienced an RIF event. The data was collected from study participants using one-on-one semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and was voice recorded. Data collected from the interviews was transcribed, analyzed, and coded for developing patterns and themes to answer the central research question. The data provided a clear, concise voice of participants experience during the RIF event. As explained by Bevan (2014), qualitative exploratory studies are necessary to address questions relating to the experiences of individuals.

Summary of Chapter One

Chapter 1 presented the focus and overview for the RIF event topic and the impacts to job performance. Additionally, Chapter 1 provided the problem statement, purpose statement, and the central research question. The problem addressed by this study was transportation managers lacking the appropriate strategies needed to sustain job performance during an RIF event (Carey, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and gain an understanding of the strategies managers need to sustain job performance when an RIF event occurs in the transportation industry. The qualitative exploratory study focused on the central research question: what management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employees' job performance in a reduction-in-force environment? Chapter 1 also included the conceptual

framework, assumptions and biases, significance of the study, delimitations, and limitations. As outlined, the significance of the study was to provide managers and organizational professionals with knowledge to better plan management strategies for sustaining employee performance in RIF environment. Chapter 1 concluded with definition of terms and general overview of the research design. Chapter 1 provided the outline for the study, stated the importance of the study, and encapsulated how the study was executed.

Organization of Dissertation

Chapter 1 encompassed the background of the study, research problem, purpose statement, research question, propositions, conceptual framework, assumptions and biases, the significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, definition of terms, and an overview of the research design. Chapter 1 outlined the organization of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature, examines concepts, and summarizes the research literature. Chapter 3 consists of research traditions, research question, propositions, research design, sampling procedure, instrumentation, validity, reliability, data collection, data analysis, ethical consideration, and summary of the chapter. Chapter 4 includes participant demographics, presentation of the data, presentation and discussion of findings, and concludes with a summary of the chapter. The study concludes with Chapter 5, presenting the findings and conclusions, limitations of the study, implications for practice, implications of the study and recommendations for future research, and study conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory research study was to gain an understanding of the management strategies needed to sustain job performance when an RIF event occurs in the transportation industry. RIF phenomenon became a common practice in the early 1970s by governmental agencies (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2010).

The literature review begins with management justifications for implementing an RIF event, impacts to job performance, and behavior changes in employee's job performance. Employees' stages of grief and impacts of the RIF event are included in the review of literature. Additionally, survivor empowerment and psychological contract between employee and managers is examined. Survivors' needs and equity theory are explored related to the newly structured organization. Chapter 2 includes literature on the transportation industry and gaps in the body of knowledge. The conceptual framework and summary of literature concludes the chapter.

The literature review search strategy consisted of standard practices. The techniques used included database searches using reduction-in-force, downsizing, surplus, re-structuring, and other commonly used keywords relating to layoffs. The investigator used journal articles, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and other similar databases to retrieve literature. Books and similar qualitative studies were included in the search strategy.

The Literature Review

In the 21st century, RIF events continue to be standard practice for many employers faced with financial uncertainty (Fountain, 2013). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013) reported, over 300 employers announced RIFs related activities involving over 127,821 employees. Although commonly misinterpreted, RIF remains one of the most traumatic

experiences an employee can face in the workplace. According to Greenberg (2013), employers reverting to RIF events are “rampant” in the business world today. The immediate impact of RIF events is the minimization of operational expense and direct gains to profitability. The organization’s financial health is positively affected. In fact, the upfront preparation cost to the employer to initiate and implement the RIF event is minimal, yet the detrimental impact on employees is monumental (Eilam-Shamir & Yaakobi, 2014).

Survivors face challenges directly related to the workplace, competition, economics, organizational changes, and financial uncertainty (Eilam-Shamir & Yaakobi, 2014). The respective employer experiences positive gains from the RIF event and acknowledges minimal effects of the impact of the RIF events to survivors. Although limited research is available about the needs of the employer to recover from market changes and operational challenges after an RIF event is implemented, very little is taken into consideration to the impact to survivors tasked with increased workloads and limited resources. Survivors are often overlooked or given minimal support during times of crisis when help and intervention are needed the most (Appelbaum et al., 1997). The employer focus is directed on strategies to change the direction of the financial downturn resulting in business decisions that could negatively impact their respective employees’ emotional and behavioral characteristics. The RIF event is viewed by survivors as a disruption to work and home life balance. It represents a breach of trust, commitment, and psychological contract (Arshad, 2016). The result of the RIF event can lead to changes in job performance and direct impacts on negative behaviors. The equity that once enhanced the survivor’s motivation decreases in nature and the reflection is in job performance. The survivor’s trust and view of fairness in the workplace are no longer positive, resulting in a demotivation to thrive in the workplace (Adams, 1963).

The employer reverts to the common practice of layoffs, restructuring, downsizing, and similar reduction efforts, many times causing emotional stress and a detriment to their respective employees (Arshad, 2016). Research on the subject of labor reduction activity has supported theories that survivors suffer the same detrimental effects survivors experience when a traumatic event has happened, such as an airplane accident, car accident, or loss of a loved one (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012). RIF event survivors suffer negative impacts to mental health and behavioral instability, also experiencing feelings of uncertainty and hopelessness. Survivors relationships with peers, management, and family sufferers are ultimately causing the employee to feel less valued in the workplace and home. The survivor suffers from low self-esteem and depression (Eilam-Shamir & Yaakobi, 2014). Meanwhile, the employer places its focus on driving effectiveness and efficiencies in the operation, using fewer resources, maximizing flexibility, and making the necessary correction to drive the organization to achieve positive gains in the short term (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012).

The literature review that follows provides insight into research on the topics that drive this study. The literature review encompasses terms used during a search for the literature: Reduction-in-force, equity theory, survivors, psychological contract, workforce planning, and labor turnover.

Reduction-in-Force Strategy

The strategy to downsize the operation by reducing the numbers in headcount directly to increase productivity, efficiency, competitiveness, and profitability among competitors is not a guarantee to deliver financial relief (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012). RIF continues to be the strategy of choice for many businesses globally. The belief that downsizing produces far-reaching financial health, organizational strength, and gains have yet to be proven (Mishra, Mishra, &

Spreitzer, 2009). Companies believe that RIF events can immediately change financial downturn, yet the strategy remains unproven. Mishra et al. (2009) found the decision to execute a downsizing strategy remains multifaceted and complex. Gandolfi and Littler (2012) concurred that the decision to implement an RIF event has become accepted as the industry standard; the impacts of the RIF event on employees do not support the gains to the employer positively.

Martins (2012) believed the employers decision to justify layoffs and restructuring is quite complex and alludes to significant operating impacts negatively affecting the economic performance of the company. Martins (2012) attempted to understand the reasoning behind employer decision to implement an RIF event when the consequences affect the employees negatively and provides no guarantee for improvements to financial performance. When employers fall short of delivering financial targets, they immediately seek options to mitigate the immediate challenge and impact the bottom line within a short window of time. The consequences an RIF event has on employees remains overlooked in the workplace (Eilam-Shamir & Yaakobi, 2014).

The consequences to the survivors are not taken into consideration. Low morale, fear, and lack of motivation are not enough for the employer to seek better alternatives that can be a win-win for the employee and organization. The employees are expected to cope with the current conditions of the workplace out of fear they could potentially be next in the wave of RIFs. In turn, the momentum of high performing employees is lost. Motivation decreases and overall work performance and production levels fall. Employees' find ways to cope with the working conditions, despite the chaotic conditions of the workplace and their mental state (Walinga & Rowe, 2013).

Job Performance and Behaviors Changes

According to Walinga and Rowe (2013), although survivors find ways to cope with workplace change, job performance and behaviors are affected. Furthermore, the mental conditions of survivors are necessary to monitor (Walinga & Rowe, 2013). The relationship between the survivor and management could change drastically in a short time. The survivor's external façade can seem unchanged; yet could be fragile internally and represent an employee close to his or her breaking point. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) concurred with Walinga and Rowe (2013) that survivors can camouflage their emotions by the degree in which they feel threatened by being optimistic about the changes in the workplace conditions. Managers of survivors must be aware of potential risks associated with decreased equity in the organization that directly affect job performance and threats to financial stability. Many survivors are suffering from grief similar to the loss of a loved one (Solove et al., 2015).

Employee Stages of Grief

According to Adams (1963), employees' motivation for their work can boost job performance. Employees feeling a sense of security and fairness in the workplace are motivated to perform at optimal levels. When an RIF event occurs, equity begins to diminish and motivation for the workplace begins to shift, similar to grief survivors' experience after a traumatic event. Friedrich and Wustenhagen (2015) elaborated on the five stages of grief and the ability for survivors to navigate through each step at various times throughout the RIF event. In the first phase, the survivor is in denial that things are changing in the workplace. The thought is the current situation is temporary and things will return to normal, or the event is not happening at all. In the second stage, the survivor realizes the RIF event is inevitable and begins to process the grief negatively. At the same time, decreasing equity in the workplace, losing confidence in

management, and becoming demotivated to perform standard work-related tasks occurs (Adams, 1963).

At times the survivor becomes angry and distant, nonetheless finds ways to cope internally. When the survivors reach the third stage of the grieving process, the thought of negotiation enters their mind (Friedrich & Wustenhagen, 2015). The survivor explores ways to possibly change the situation and replays the situation over and over in his or her mind. In some instances, the survivor may attempt to negotiate with management or offer solutions to impact the current state. As a result, the focus is more on surviving the downturn. When negotiations fail, the survivors enter the fourth stage, depression, and behavior changes to a disengaged state; translating to impacts to job performance (Friedrich & Wustenhagen, 2015).

The behavioral changes begin to appear, and it becomes abundantly clear the survivor is depressed and needs help to address the grieving process. Finally, in stage five, the survivors accept the RIF event and seek ways to adjust to the changes. The survivor's lack of fairness in the current conditions in the workplace has disrupted motivation and the relationship built with the respective manager (Gowan, 2012).

During each stage of the grieving process, survivors are finding ways to cope with the current changes in the workplace. Solove et al. (2015) suggested practical ways for survivors to adjust to changes in the workplace. The first suggestion is for survivors and managers to address issues relating to self-esteem and motivation. When survivors experience self-esteem lows, it becomes difficult to perform their regular job performance at optimal levels. Survivors become emotional, distracted from the norm, and begin feeling victimized and completely powerless (Solove et al., 2015). In most instances, the survivor is barely staying afloat, and behaviors can be unpredictable. The second suggestion is directed at managers to seek internal or external

support for their respective employees. The survivor can reach out to others that have been affected by an RIF event or health resources to provide guidance in a face-to-face setting or telephone meetings. The survivor may feel uneasy about sharing his or her shortfalls to an outsider; therefore, it is essential for managers to understand the impacts of behaviors prompted by the RIF event. The final strategy is seeking financial support as a means to mitigate uncertainty in the workplace (Schwartz, 2013). The manager must find ways to rekindle the relationship with the survivor to increase motivation and equity in a workplace directly affected by the RIF event.

Impacts of RIF Event

Marques, Galende, Cruz, and Portugal Ferreira (2014) articulated the importance of management understanding the impacts of RIF events become even more critical to organizations that hold a competitive advantage in their respective industries. Survivors experience even higher levels of emotional disarray when management relies heavily on the expertise and the role of the company is highly visible to leadership. Survivors holding vital functions are knowledge-intense and expected to deliver on commitments, despite their emotional state or erratic changes in their job performance. Management still holds survivors accountable for their job performance or changes that negatively impact it.

Mathur, Jugdev, and Fung (2013) explained management must plan appropriate strategies to handle external challenges to avoid implementation of an RIF event. Although employers are challenged to respond appropriately to changes in the market, unforeseen events happen that causes management to modify the forecasted budget. Organizational managers are responsible for responding to technologies, new competitors, marketing conditions, and changes in demands, quality, and performance expectations to meet long-term business goals and

budgetary commitments. Frequently, managers are forced to deal with uncertainties and situations that drive agile decision-making. Many of these variables negatively impact the organization's financial health and a positive return on investments in the short term is unlikely. These challenges affecting structure create demands that require an immediate response to protect company assets and marketing conditions. During these severe problems, employers must make business decisions to ensure failure is not an option. Unfortunately, at these times an RIF event can be the best or only option for a quick financial recovery and to gain positive returns to the bottom line (Mathur et al., 2013).

According to Mathur et al. (2013), organizations can choose other options to minimize the impact on survivors and still achieve positive gains. One value-added option is to select a structural change that survivors can easily transition from old to new without creating too much stress. Management is supported by consultants to reconfigure the organization to yield optimal performance and consolidations in areas that can optimize existing resources. By implementing a simple structural change, managers can minimize stress to the survivors and support their efforts in adjusting to their newly structured workplace.

Employers can engage in cost-cutting strategies that put programs in place to focus on eliminating resources that are no longer valuable to the organization. Managers can involve employees in the decision-making process. By doing this, the employees will feel empowered, valued, and better equipped to adjust positively to organizational changes. Process changes are another way to minimize stress on survivors. Managers can find ways to eliminate or streamline processes that do not optimize time in a downsized environment. Also, adopting process changes that are more efficient, cost-effective, and reliable is recommended. Managers finding creative

and innovative solutions to financial shortfalls affect survivors positively, supporting the structure change without disruption to work performance (Mathur et al., 2013).

Survivor Empowerment

According to Adams (1963), managers can work with the survivors to gain some of their power back in the newly structured workplace by shifting the focus on the survivor's job performance and the rebuilding of equity in the organization. Mathur et al. (2013) examined five categories of power that can apply to the new workplace and help managers restore fairness and trust in the workplace. Managers can initiate a structure for rewarding strength in positive forms. The survivor may view this gesture as a step in the right direction and an attempt by management to restore equity. The survivor may begin to accept and adjust to the changes without feeling threatened. The power of reward is an acceptable option for restoring trust and fairness.

Management owns legitimate power in the workplace, and sometimes uses referent power to influence survivors in the RIF event circumstance to mitigate the discomfort in the existing work environment (Mathur et al., 2013). Additionally, managers using expert power in RIF circumstances to better align with the strategy of dealing with survivors' job performance in the workplace. Survivors who are planning to remain in the workplace will begin to view their employer again in a positive way when expert power is practiced consistently (Mathur et al., 2013).

Dae-seok, Gold, and Kim (2012) explained employees who are high performers are likely to find new jobs compared to others that do not perform at optimal levels. Job satisfaction is the goal for managers following an RIF event for survivors. Psychological impacts to survivors are frequently overlooked by the employer creating barrier for trust between management and survivors affecting job performance (Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012).

Rai and Lakshman (2014) reiterated the negative impacts survivors suffer from RIF events, sharing sentiments of researchers who have explored consequences experienced by survivors as a result of RIF events. Rai and Lakshman (2014) concurred with the limited actions taken by employers to mitigate the emotional turmoil imposed on survivors. Managers have a responsibility to survivors to seek understanding relating to the effects RIF events have on emotions, behaviors, and job performance (Brockner, Grover, & Blonder, 1988).

According to Brockner and Wiesenfeld (1996), two critical factors influence survivor's behaviors: the perception of fairness in the RIF process and the direct impact it has on changes in the workplace. Nonetheless, survivors have to deal with the new changes in the workplace, regardless if they agree or disagree. The only defense survivors have is to adjust to the new structure or find employment elsewhere. Organizational culture is an essential element in the execution of an RIF event and how survivors adapt to their newly structured work environment (Rai & Lakshman, 2014).

Psychological Contract

According to Meurs, Koster, and Pannerden (2014), a psychological contract between a manager and employee is the belief that a relationship is reciprocal and an agreement has occurred where a promise or contribution is present. The "relationship may be considered as exchange relations" (Meurs et al., 2014, p. 53). The employee believes the manager is obligated to the initial agreements and conditions when the offer of employment was made and accepted. When the manager communicates an RIF event is going to occur or occurring, the employee experiences a breach of the psychological contract (Nadin & Williams, 2012). The employee believes the manager has breached the contract and can no longer be trusted. The employee becomes distrusting of the manager and consequences can occur. The employee seeks measures

to retaliate against his or her manager due to the perceived threat of job loss (Henderson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2012).

The emotional response employees feel toward their managers after a psychological contract breach is still uncertain, but a recent study has shown a significant downturn in manager and employee relationships (Meurs et al., 2014). The more serious the event is, the harder it is for employees to perceive their manager positively, in some instances, viewing their manager with intense emotional distrust (Henderson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2012). Despite the distrusting relationship, survivors are expected to commit to their employer and perform at expected levels, yet the manager is unable to offer job security or fairness under the current workplace conditions (Meurs et al., 2014).

Waraich and Bhardwaj (2012) suggested managers take necessary training to become skilled at understanding the behavioral changes survivors of RIF experience during detrimental times. The negative perception of downsizing by the survivors can change if the managers use appropriate strategies for appropriate communication and execute organizational changes successfully. The appropriate use of management strategies can minimize or eliminate RIF event survivors from experiencing low morale, loss of self-esteem, lack of commitment to the organization, disloyalty, and distrust, along with consequences to job performance (McManus & Mosca, 2015).

RIF survivors believe they have psychological contracts with their employer (Rousseau, 1990). The psychological contract fulfills the commitment between the parties and a lifetime of harmony is to exist. At least, this is the belief until the RIF event occurs and negatively impacts the survivor's equity. The relationship between the manager and survivor changes and the survivor becomes demotivated (Enehaug & Mamelund, 2014)

Survivors believe managers feel no relational obligations to restore the organization back to what survivors think to be fair (Uen, Chen, Chen, & Lin, 2016). The only responsibility for managers is the health of the company and longevity in the industry. Managers' commitments are at the organizational level, and the focus is financial health for the business (Uen et al., 2016).

The issue with psychological contract violations is the survivors feel victimized (Enehaug & Mamelund, 2014). The manager feels no responsibility toward survivors other than providing an opportunity to remain employed. Management never acknowledges the responsibility of the negative impacts on the survivor. Emotions and behaviors are elements of survivors' reactions to specific contract delusion. Managers failed to fulfill their part of the agreement and survivors' productivity suffers. The RIF benefits to the employer are substantial, yet the survivors are left suffering from despair and uncertainties (Rodwell, Ellershaw, & Flower, 2015).

In these given circumstances, managers must open the lines of communication with the survivors and seek to understand their emotions and behaviors. When an employer breaches the psychological contract, it results in emotional turmoil for the survivor (Rodwell et al., 2015). Survivors believe the employer would be concerned enough about their mental health, training, available resources, or emotional help, rather than meeting the financial obligations of the organization.

According to Marques et al. (2014), managers must consider employees' skills and capabilities in the reduction strategy plan. Additionally, managers must create innovative ways to utilize competitive advantages post-RIF by maximizing the human assets within the organization. Survivors are vital assets to their managers during times of financial discourse. Recovery is highly unlikely without their commitment, hence, the importance of survivors

maintaining a healthy mental state and work environment after the RIF event (Ellen, Kalliath & Kalliath, 2012).

Avoiding Disruption in the Workplace

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) discussed strategies managers can implement in the workplace to support survivors in understanding and accepting changes in the organization after the RIF event. Some strategies are simplistic, while others are complex. Managers should be flexible in options and include survivor's opinion before making a decision. Survivors of RIF events are known to use innate coping strategies. When employees experienced a traumatic event adrenaline begins flowing, and the employee must immediately respond to the situation. Once the immediate threat has diminished, survivors eventually find a permanent solution to coping with discomfort and distrust in the changing workplace (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Survivors' feelings of uncertainty can be masked with coping skills; however, management can minimize survivors discomfort by focusing on success in the workplace. The manager can turn the focus on improving processes, rewarding employees, and working on projects that are directly related to long-term solutions. Management strategies can support survivors shift of mindsets and thoughts on workplace longevity (Solove et al., 2015).

According to Solove et al. (2015), management strategies are defined as measures used by individuals in management roles to positively influence employees to meet organizational goals. Three types of management strategies have been deemed effective. Management strategies that are relevant to boost employees' self-esteem, support employees' job performance, and maximize operational resources can be used. All three strategies can mitigate survivor feelings of discomfort and help management identify areas for improvement (Solove et al., 2015). Managers should seek resources for strategy development. By engaging in self-improvement and strategy

development activities, managers can begin to feel confidence in the skills and abilities to appropriately manage survivors during an RIF event. On the other hand, survivors can seek support from community resources, family, and friends. Survivors can seek advice, direction, or support from professional specializing in care for individuals during stressful times. Survivors can seek volunteer opportunities to help others and place attention on job performance and positive action, changing the focus from the RIF event and negative consequences relating to the event (Hall, 2012).

The last strategy is maximizing financial health. In this approach, survivors focus on areas that can lead to resources to support financial health. An idea for survivors to consider is gaining a second income from additional employment or possibly a spouse re-entering the workplace. The options can be many. The goal of this management strategy is to begin concentrating on what the future offers, rather than accepting the current situation as permanent (Solove et al., 2015).

Lynott (2015) further described opportunities for managers to support survivors. First off, managers must realize that this unfortunate event can lead to adverse behavior, if not handled appropriately. Recent headlines are a reminder of the grave consequences that can happen when employees suffer detriment from changes in the workplace (Chhinzer & Currie, 2014). Wells Fargo is an example of survivors suffering negative consequences from financial fallout. Wells Fargo employees were laid off as a result (Wattles, 2017). Survivors of the RIF event suffer financially due to changes in compensation packages (Glazer, 2017). Wells Fargo Bank management asked survivors to do more with fewer people and smaller compensation packages (Glazer, 2017).

Managers must take into account things unseen externally and not allow them to go unnoticed. Behavior is a good indicator something is different, hence, the importance of watching for changes in practices and job performance. Managers should allow survivors time to process the changes by offering survivors time off to spend with friends and family to determine what is best for their future with the organization (Sobieralski & Nordstrom, 2012).

Managers should expect survivors to feel pain and display emotional and physical discomfort. Survivors experiencing changes in job performance, attitude, and behavior is normal. Survivors will need downtime, frequent breaks, and more attention. Managers of survivors must listen, show empathy, and offer support (Chopra & Chopra, 2012).

Managers must remain confident, sensitive, and ready to take immediate action should any unforeseen event transpire. Finally, managers must remember to place people first. People are assets to their respective employers and critical to the success or failure of any business. Managers have a duty to their employees to conform to healthy strategies for adjusting to market changes, financial shortfalls, and competition. Survivors have placed a high level of trust, loyalty, and dedication to their respective employers (Selvaraj & Joseph, 2014).

Survivors Needs

McManus and Mosca (2015) asserted the success of the newly structured organization depends mostly on the willingness of leadership to address the survivors' needs. Survivors must understand the business goals and objectives of the employer and how their roles fit into the organizational plan. Survivors must feel their work and efforts are appreciated and valued. Employers can show this by providing training and helping the survivors reach their potential. By creating an environment where survivors feel valued and empowered, the organization can move forward, focusing on the financial health of the business (McManus & Mosca, 2015).

However, managers still need to understand that survivors need time to reconcile their feelings related to the organizational changes and how best to cope with workplace challenges. The managers must shift from making the workplace a priority to the survivors being valued and supported (Uen et al., 2016).

According to Klimplová (2012), employers are directly responsible and held accountable for human capital skills and qualifications. Managers maintain some level of responsibility in ensuring their employees have the skills and abilities to perform the job function and to survive a job loss with minimal impacts. The organization's framework should include employee learning plans that promote improvements in skills and capabilities for employees (Maheshwari & Vohra, 2015). The shortcomings of an organization should not negatively impact employees' ability to perform their respective roles internally or externally (Maheshwari & Vohra, 2015).

Fadairo et al. (2013) expressed concerns relating to employers understanding the needs of their employees and believe social media has directly affected the way employers interact with their employees, especially during times of economic discomfort. Employers can advertise globally for recruitment opportunities and have options to choose the best talent around the world. This option has impacted the strategic nature of the way RIF strategies are detailed (McDonnell & Burgess, 2013). Employers understand their ability to optimize recruitment strategies when their financial health improves.

Kohanna (2014) suggested every manager has a responsibility to his or her employees to offer a healthy work environment where employees can be productive. Survivors who are physically and mentally healthy are capable of performing the duties of the job. Deelen, Marloes, and Wiljan van (2014) brought forth another concern for tenured survivors experiencing an RIF or similar types of job changes. Tenured survivors suffer at higher levels of anxiety and

depression resulting from a low level of job mobility. Deelen et al. (2014) further explained tenured employees find it harder to mobilize back into the workforce or take on additional workload. Aforementioned holds true when the job is physical or requires extended work hours.

McManus and Mosca (2015) believed the right strategies can improve survivors' morale and help them engage in specific actions to promote engagement and trust in the aftermath of RIF events and restructuring. Survivors are critical assets to the workplace and managers must take the right steps to reinforce their importance by helping during tough economic times and challenging workplace situations. Managers must remember to treat survivors respectfully and allow them to communicate their feeling of fear and discomfort.

Equity Theory

Equity theory is central to this study because it represents the survivor's motivation by fairness in context of the RIF event (Adams, 1963). The survivor's perception of equity decreases affecting confidence, attitude, and job performance. Furthermore, the perception of unfairness to the survivor has demotivating effects (Adams, 1963). Survivors' perception of fairness diminishes when certain things fall short during the RIF event. The initial communication and timing of communication throughout the RIF event are areas of concern. In addition, management does not include the employees in workforce planning efforts or organizational decision-making process. Furthermore, management does not share the selection criterion, adding the perception or the presence of subjectivity (Madden, 2015).

Employees in the transportation industry place a high value on the organization and respective managers. The three-aforementioned fairness diminishing short falls by management can be minimized or eliminated by managers integrating strategies in the RIF event implementation plan (Madden, 2015). As previously mentioned, the transportation industry is

volatile in nature. Although demand may be high, management has to take in consideration the market volatility in workforce planning (Fadairo et al., 2013).

Transportation Industry

The RIF event phenomenon used by many industries for workforce planning is not isolated to the transportation industry, yet important to the longevity of many businesses. The transportation industry is challenged with the recruitment, hiring, and retention of skilled employees who are able to handle the complexities of the day-to-day operation as an integrated operation (Crews & Bhatia, 2012). Furthermore, the increase in demand for products and services should serve as justification for transportation managers to avoid implementation of an RIF event. Unfortunately, the fluctuation in the market and volatility globally drives the need for managers to reduce the workforce (Fadairo et al., 2013). Many times, transportation managers are not skilled nor have the ability to execute RIF events appropriately, leading to decreases in survivors' job performance (Crews & Bhatia, 2012).

Gap in the Body of Knowledge

A wealth of literature on the phenomenon on reduction-in-force, restructuring, downsizing, layoffs, and surplus of employees exists. Additionally, there is literature relating to the psychosocial effects of losing job stability. Doherty and Horsted (1995) defined survivor syndrome as a mixture of emotions and behaviors experienced by employees remaining in the workplace after an RIF event. Appelbaum et al. (1997) discussed survivor's syndrome in the article titled "The Survivors Syndrome: Aftermath of Downsizing," discussing the phenomenon of reduction-in-force and rebuilding employees' commitment in the organization.

The gap found in the literature is the impact the RIF event has on job performance and the management strategies needed by managers to sustain job performance within an RIF

environment. The gaps aforementioned shown in the literature have linkage in the transportation industry, yet literature is limited in studies relating to the associated consequences of a lack or absence of management strategies and survivors job performance. Also, literature relating to equity theory, survivors' perception of trust, fairness, and equality in management after an RIF event is minimal.

Organizational managers are not aware, trained, or skilled enough to address survivors' emotional needs and behaviors (Appelbaum et al., 1997). Additionally, transportation managers have not identified what specific strategies are necessary to sustain job performance during an RIF event, or when or how to execute the identified strategies. Crews and Bhatia (2012) discussed the challenges managers face in day-to-day operations, hiring, recruiting, and retaining employees. In addition, the article discusses the limited strategies the industry can employ when faced with managing the outlined elements of the business. Crews and Bhatia (2012) touched on the importance of employee and manager relationships on job performance and the flattening of organizational structure. The effectiveness and efficiencies of management in retention of employees and the impacted behaviors when challenges are not addressed are noted (Crews & Bhatia, 2012).

In the study titled "Supply Chain, Risk Management Dimensions in Indian Automobile Industry: A Cluster Analysis Approach," Kumar Sharma and Bhat (2014) explained the importance of managers in the transportation industry understanding strategies that improve performance and business excellence. Also, the necessity for transportation managers to be able to navigate through disruption effectively and efficiently is discussed (Kumar Sharma & Bhat, 2014). As suggested by the aforementioned authors, the need for transportation managers to identify what strategies are important to manage the day-to-day challenges and demands of the

operations are essential. On the other hand, the need for transportation managers to identify and execute the appropriate strategies during disruptions, such as an RIF event, becomes critical to the effectiveness and efficiency of the operations. Furthermore, the consequences associated to the omission of these management strategies when the workplace environment requires it can directly impact the job performance of the employees (Crews & Bhatia, 2012; Kumar Sharma & Bhat, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

Snell, Schmitt, Glavas, and Bamberry (2015) suggested employers' understanding of the emotional complexities that survivors experience during the initial stage is limited. The conceptual framework depicts the beginning of the RIF event when employees are beginning to realize something is changing in the workplace. The employees are communicating among themselves and contemplating the timing of the RIF communication. The employer reports the RIF event is taking place. The methods of communication vary from organization to organization. The employer should establish an official announcement that will minimize confusion and frustration to avoid rumors and miscommunication (Omari, 2013).

The employee begins to wonder who will be asked to leave before receiving the involuntary layoff notices. As time passes, employees identified receive official notification (see depiction in Figure 1). The employees given the warnings are hopeful that something changes and their faith is going to change before the established date. The employees' departure date has come, and the employees involuntary leave the workplace.

The employees' left behind are feeling emotional effects such as guilt, uncertainty, and consequences (Snell et al., 2015). Survivor's syndrome is present, and the employees are trying to figure out the best way to cope with the emotional feelings. The employees are wondering

why did I not get asked to leave, and why do I have to take on more work when they forced the other employees to part ways with the company. As time passes, the employees are better able to cope with the newly structured organization (Blau et al., 2012).

Although the employees can cope in the new work environment, it does not alleviate the anxiety and emotions that continue to run high. Brown (2013) pointed out the impact of emotions when uncertainty in the workplace is present. The power of change can outweigh self-confidence and cause survivors' embarrassment and strain. The investment survivors placed in their employer's yield frustration and uncomfortable challenges, yet their mindset is to remain in their existing roles and experience prosperity until the relationship ceases amiably (Brown, 2013).

Blau et al. (2012) explained how survivors view RIF events as a measure of distributive injustice. RIF survivors are unwilling to endorse their employers to others for future employment opportunities. Selvaraj and Joseph (2014) suggested employers must re-prioritize the perception that products take precedence over survivors. RIF effect employer's reputation. The strategy for the implementation of labor reductions can have adverse long-term effects on profitability (Selvaraj & Joseph, 2014). Ultimately, management principles and practices are on display during each stage of the RIF event. If ignored the organization's brand can be negatively impacted (Selvaraj & Joseph, 2014)

The conceptual framework depicts the initial communication of the RIF event throughout the lifecycle, as shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 is an original figure that was created for this study. The initial communication phase is a sensitive period. Management's communication and actions must be delivered with careful consideration to the survivor. According to Brown (2013), during times of organizational change, methods chosen for discussion are extremely important and a factor in how information is received, such as RIF, job loss, or re-structuring in an organization.

Brown (2013) recommended leaders consider several factors before delivering information to employees related to changes in roles and responsibility.

Individuals' preferences in communication are critical during this period. RIF events happen simultaneously during time periods depicted by the arrows pointing upward, which are also representative of time (see Figure 1). Beginning from the initial communication by management to the final message delivered to employees exiting the company, survivors feel a complete loss of equity in the workplace. Gowan (2012) explained survivors deal with a crisis and feel uncertain about their future with the organization. If the employee has marketing or transferable job skills, he or she is less likely to spend an abundance of time trying to figure out what is next and developing a plan to execute to minimize or eliminate the threat of job security (Spence & Zagha, 2012)

Management must understand anxiety and depression among employees are at a high level after the initial communication (Karkoulian et al., 2013). Employees that are less likely to find employment elsewhere are usually the most affected. The manager must pay close attention to those employees following the RIF communication (Spence & Zagha, 2012)

Survivors' anxiety levels continue to climb, and the workplace can become unbearable to some survivors. Employees become exhausted with thoughts of how they will survive if laid off. Wagner and Garibaldi (2014) explained the fundamental process minimizes perceptions and feelings when employees are suffering from uncertainty, fear, and stress in the workplace. Survivors' judgment of the workplace conditions during the RIF period can become unfair and hostile.

Once the designated employees exit the company, the survivors experience feelings of guilt, uncertainty, and consequences, eventually decreasing equity in the workplace (Solove et

al., 2015). Many survivors have few options and begin to exhibit negative behaviors toward management. Managers need to understand survivors inside the newly structured organization experience a wealth of changes both physically and mentally (Solove et al., 2015). Finally, survivors eventually adjust to the new structure and begin to thrive, as depicted in Figure 1.

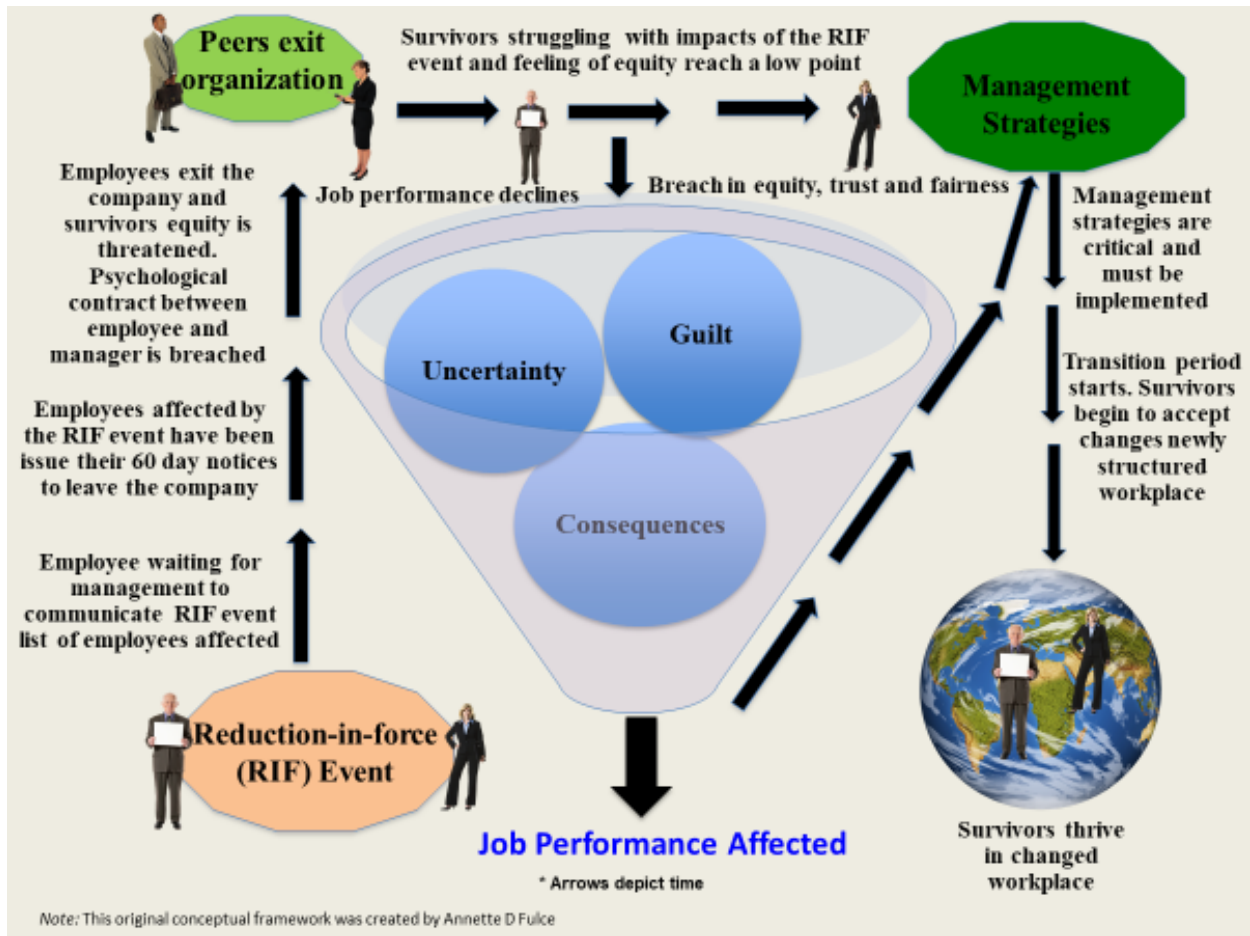


Figure 1. Conceptual framework illustration.

Summary of Literature Review

The strategy to downsize the operation by reduction of labor costs or mitigation of financial fallout that impact employees is not a guarantee of financial recovery (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012). Transportation management deciding to implement an RIF event is not always a sound strategy. An employer's decision to justify layoffs and can negatively affect the economic

performance of the company and surviving employees' behavior and job performance (Martins (2012). Additionally, survivors have a feeling of demotivation and view management as being unfair and in breach of the psychological contract once binding the employee and respective manager. As Adams (1963) outlined, equity theory is a representation of the survivor's motivation and demotivation driven from the feeling of fairness and equality in the workplace. The implementation of management strategies early in the process can minimize negative impacts from the RIF event and allow the survivors to complete the stages associated with grief.

Organizational managers are not aware, trained, or skilled enough to address survivors' emotional needs and behaviors (Appelbaum et al., 1997). Additionally, transportation managers have not identified what specific strategies are necessary to sustain job performance during an RIF event, or when or how to execute the identified strategies (McManus & Mosca, 2015). The gap in the body of knowledge is limited in identifying what management strategies are required in the transportation industry throughout the RIF lifecycle.

Managers in the transportation industry face many changes in the day-to-day operation; however, management can empower survivors by addressing the associated consequences of an RIF event (Crews & Bhatia, 2012). As indicated in the conceptual framework illustration, in order to bring harmony back in the workplace, managers' timely communication and transparency may be helpful. Managers promoting an environment that is inclusive, open, and allowing of employees to partake in decision making can be beneficial to the survivor (Jenkins, 2013). Managers being forthcoming with the selection criteria and explaining the process for selection could mitigate some of the consequences to changes in job performance and restore trust (Adams, 1963).

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in the study to address the central research question and propositions. The research tradition and design for the study are outlined. Also, in Chapter 3, population and sample, sampling procedure, and instrumentation are presented. The study validity and reliability are addressed. Data collection and analysis, along with ethical considerations for the study, are addressed. Chapter 3 concludes with a summarization.

CHAPTER THREE

Transportation managers lack the appropriate strategies needed to sustain job performance during an RIF event (Carey, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and gain an understanding of the management strategies needed to sustain transportation employees' job performance in an RIF environment. Managers in the transportation industry fall short of having the skills and abilities to support survivors during an RIF event. Survivors' feelings of guilt, uncertainty, and adverse behaviors led to changes in job performance. The diagnosis is known as survivor's syndrome (Appelbaum et al., 1997). Survivor's syndrome is defined as an infectious array of feelings and behaviors experienced by individuals after a catastrophic event (Appelbaum et al., 1997). Survivor's syndrome affects two types of employees found in an organization that has experienced an RIF event. The classifications are employees that stay and others that exit the company. Survivors remaining in the workplace are negatively affected and experience decreased equity. Organizational managers are not aware, trained, or skilled enough to address survivors' emotional needs and behaviors (Appelbaum et al., 1997). Management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employees' job performance in an RIF environment. The central research question asked: what management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employees' job performance in a reduction-in-force environment?

This chapter provides detail on the methodology that was used address the central research question regarding management strategies needed to sustain transportation employees' job performance in an RIF environment. Chapter 3 begins by describing the research tradition and central research question and associated propositions. Chapter 3 provides the research design, which includes the study population, sample, sampling procedure, instrumentation,

validity, reliability, data collection, and data analysis plan. The chapter concludes with the discussion of ethical considerations required to conduct the study and chapter summary.

Research Tradition

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative exploratory research is a methodology used for examination to gain an understanding of an “individual or group” for a cause to “resolve a social or human problem.” (p. 246). Creswell (2014) further stated, “The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants setting” (p. 246). The study sought to understand a human problem that is the result of an economic shortfall within an organizational structure through exploratory qualitative methodology. The methodology and design of the research were appropriate to address RIF events in the transportation industry and management strategies needed to sustain job performance associated with such events.

Giorgi (1994) asserted exploratory qualitative methodology references the consciousness of one’s complete experiences. The most apparent characteristics of awareness are the object that becomes real to the person. In the study, the RIF event becomes the actual object to the person, followed by the direct cause of negative feelings and the consequences that follow. Bevan (2014) explained an exploratory study is beneficial when the researcher is seeking to disclose themes from data analyzes using the voice of the study participants. As Giorgi (1994) described, an exploratory design is used to reflect the individual’s experiences.

Nascent research theory seeks to understand an event as it transcends into a story or experience or unique phenomenon, digging into the enigma and explaining the occurrence of a mysterious event (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). The qualitative exploratory study on management strategies needed to sustain transportation employees’ job performance in a reduction-in-force environment aligned within the boundaries of a nascent research study. In the

context of the research and outlined goals, other research designs would not yield results to answer the research question.

In determining what method was appropriate for the study, a review of quantitative and mixed methods was performed. According to (Creswell, 2014), a quantitative methodology is a measure for testing multiple variables by examining relationships between variables. The numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. A quantitative methodology would not provide an in-depth examination of the research problem and would fall short of addressing the central research question. Furthermore, a mixed method methodology integrates both qualitative and quantitative methodology. The combination of both approaches would exceed the boundaries of the study, requiring the need for the study to address “the mixing of the strands of the research” (Creswell, 2014, p. 244). Qualitative exploratory methodology was the appropriate methodology for addressing the central research question.

Research Question and Propositions

This study explored the research question: what management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employees’ job performance in a reduction in force environment? Three central propositions were the focus for this study. The first was management strategies may eliminate the negative consequences that impact survivors emotionally and behaviorally avoiding changes in job performance. Management strategies that promote communication and transparency will be relevant (Solove, Fisher, & Kraiger, 2015). Communication is an area that may have a direct impact to the RIF event outcome. Additionally, the inclusion of employees in the workplace in decision-making or encouragement in speaking up should be considered with communication (Karkoulian et al., 2013). Transparency in the selection process and how decisions are weighted were additional elements to potentially consider. The possibility of

removing the perception of subjectivity or preferences in the RIF selection process, if present, should be considered. Many strategies exist in various industries; however, this phenomenon has not been studied in the transportation industry. In addition, Solove et al. (2015) indicated the need for further development in management strategies necessary to manage RIF events.

The second proposition was management may fall short in understanding the consequences of RIF event, and therefore management strategies needed to sustain employee's job performance have not been identified. Jenkins (2013) supported the need for management strategies to sustain employees' job performance when undergoing an RIF event. The third proposition was managers in the transportation industry that better understand the emotional and behavioral impacts of an RIF event may help survivors rebuild equity in the workplace and begin to restore job performance back to optimal levels through appropriate management strategies. This proposition was supported by the work of Munnich and Iacono (2016).

Research Design

Marshall and Rossman (2016) explained a qualitative methodology focuses on individuals perceived description, feelings, judgment, memories, understanding, and communication of the actual event. The research aligned with the criteria of the qualitative exploratory study of this type. As explained by Creswell (2014), qualitative exploratory research provided the investigator in the study the option of adding beneficial descriptions to survivors' experiences, relating to the RIF phenomenon from the beginning of the lifecycle to the end. Additionally, it provided the investigator with the foundation to explore survivors' experiences and interpretations of the RIF event from the beginning of the lifecycle to the end. The qualitative design in the study aided in removing bias and errors in the credibility of the study.

The intent of the study was for the investigator to gain an understanding of the RIF event through the lens of the survivor by collecting data from semi-structured interviews. Interviews are a traditional approach to qualitative exploratory studies of this nature. The RIF phenomenon is both a human and social problem, aligning with the criteria of a qualitative exploratory methodology. According to Giorgi (1994), qualitative exploratory research requires a three-step process. The first step is to divide the original descriptions into units. The second step is to transform groups into meanings. The themes express exploratory concepts. The third and final step is the transformation of data integration to create a general description of the experience. Biases and changes in the meaning can result in some level of subjectivity creating risk in the study reliability. Risks were avoided by the use of an interview guide.

Giorgi's (1994) research derived from "dissatisfaction with the limitations of empiricism and proposed a method involving inspiration drawn from the research" (p. 195). Two examples of qualitative exploratory studies that supported the study design were "A close call: Perception of Alternative HR arrangements to layoffs" conducted by Parzefall (2012) and "The Personal and Professional experiences of downsizing managers: A qualitative exploratory study" performed by Shroyer (2013).

The study by Parzefall (2012) is a qualitative exploratory study. The study drew on psychological contracts and organizational justice. The purpose of the study was to examine how organizations handle the pressures associated with layoffs by utilization of alternative human resource arrangements. Parzefall (2012) interviewed, observed, and distributed questionnaires to nineteen employees affected by job loss and part of the pool of one hundred and fifteen employees given alternative arrangements, including employees allowed to remain with the employer for an additional period with specific guidelines. The study revealed sustaining

employment relationship under specific conditions for a period of time resulted in the mitigation of some of the consequences relating to psychological contracts and organization injustice.

Parzefall (2012) explored the RIF event survivors' alternative management strategies that can mitigate consequences related to the aftermath of an RIF event.

In the qualitative exploratory study conducted by Shroyer (2013), an examination was made of the experiences of managers downsizing relating to how the decisions were made, how the RIF event was executed, restoration of organizational practices, and process for handling similar decisions in the future. Shroyer (2013) selected 14 managers to interview using purposeful selection. Beginning with an opening script, 10 semi-structured guided interview questions were asked relating to downsizing experiences, decision-making, and execution of and the management of the RIF event aftermath. The outcome of the study found that managers involved in the RIF event suffered consequences from the challenges, decision-making, and associated experiences. Additionally, formal training for managers should be utilized. Shroyer (2013) explored various options for managers to consider in their management strategies when faced with an RIF event or similar incidents in the organization.

As indicated in the two qualitative exploratory studies aforementioned, the individual experiences by RIF event survivors and managers can impact behaviors and job performance negatively. Management strategies and formal training could mitigate some of the challenges and minimize consequences. In both studies, the focus was on the individual participant's experiences and consequences as a result of an RIF event, which was also the focus of this qualitative exploratory study in the transportation industry.

Population and Sample

The population for this study resided or worked in the Puget Sound area of Washington State. The population consisted of individuals who have experienced an RIF event, downsizing, restructuring, or layoff, remained employed by the same employer within the past 5 years, and work in the transportation industry. For this study, the transportation industry was defined as “a system connecting producers to consumers locally, regionally, nationally and globally” (Toth, 2015, p. 44). The population included survivors of an RIF event who had experienced the event within the past 5 years. All study participants were drawn from the population described here and met the criteria outlined for the population.

Creswell (2014) confirmed, “Qualitative study sample participants range from three to ten” (p. 189). A qualitative study seeks a “depth of understanding rather than a breadth,” therefore the appropriation of a sample size can vary depending on what can be justified (Boddy, 2016, p. 426). A sample size of 10 was used to conduct this study. Data saturation was used to determine the appropriateness of the sample size. As Creswell (2014) suggested, the collection of data should end when data no longer yields new information.

The sample size was determined by published articles using the same design, and selected sample size was compared based on recommendations from qualitative studies similar to this research (Boddy, 2016). Information found in the literature review confirmed the appropriate sample size of approximately 10 for a purposive selection in a qualitative study. Parzefall (2012) conducted a similar qualitative study with a focus on layoffs using a sample size of 19 drawn from purposeful selection. Additionally, Shroyer (2013) conducted 14 in-depth interviews using purposeful selection for an exploratory qualitative study on managers’ experiences on downsizing. In this study, a sample size of 10 was targeted with the possibility of revision based

on data saturation. Therefore, it was possible that more than 10 participants or less than 10 participants would be used in this study. An analysis of the richness of data collection and synthesis of data throughout the data collection phase was used to ensure the data collected could yield sufficient results to address the central research question (Creswell, 2014). Ultimately, 10 study participants were used in this study.

Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling is a procedure used at the discretion of the researcher to select the specific participants who meet the study criteria, using judgment or subjectivity. Purposive sampling technique is non-probability and is well-constructed for the framed population of this qualitative study (Creswell, 2014). Purposive sampling is the appropriate procedure to help the researcher understand the problem and research question (Creswell, 2014). Purposive sampling ensures the study participants share the same characteristics and support the feasibility of the study (DeFeo, 2013).

The study participants resided or worked in the transportation industry in the Puget Sound region of Washington State. Also, participants had experienced an RIF, downsizing, restructuring or layoff and remained employed by the same employer within the past 5 years. Exceptions were not made to the criteria of this study to accommodate non-qualified participants.

The following processes were used to identify interested potential participants for the study. The first step consisted of a posted notice of interest within the transportation community and affinity group websites requesting interested participants to provide contact information. In the second step, the collection of contact information for interested participants was gathered. The interested potential participants were given information about the study and interest in the study was reaffirmed. In the third step, the interested participants were administered a pre-screen

questionnaire to validate each participant met the study criterion. If the interested participant met the study criterion, an informed consent form (see Appendix A) was provided with a brief summary of the study and expectations.

All consent forms obtained remain in a secure file located on the researcher's computer for the duration of the study and 5 years following the publication of the study. This threshold was established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Colorado Technical University (CTU). The last step consisted of the researcher conducting 10 interviews using two mediums; face-to-face or virtual. The researcher collected data using multiple media strategies. The primary collection instrumentation included recordings and handwritten notation. Study subjects participated in face-to-face interviews, using WebEx with recording capabilities used to collect data. Subjects had the option of selecting the locations, times, and dates at their convenience. Interviews were scheduled, and a subject roster was created and maintained during the duration of the study. The one-on-one interviews were scheduled in a private closed conference room. Participants were given instructions on what to expect during the interview and follow-on activity after the study. Interviews lasted approximately 45 - 60 minutes.

Confidentiality of the participant was protected by using a pseudonym for study purposes; SP1-SP10 was given to each participant respectively. The participants were referenced using their assigned alias.

Instrumentation

The instrument for the qualitative exploratory study was semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher. The researcher followed a detailed plan (see Appendix B) for conducting the study. A purposeful sample size of 10 was used to conduct this study. Data saturation was used to determine the appropriateness of the sample size (Creswell, 2014). The

participants were asked 10 open-ended questions using a semi-structured interview process. The expectation was for the participants to respond to the questions describing their experiences throughout the RIF event lifecycle.

The study participants were briefed on what to expect during and following the interview. The interview consisted of 10 open-ended questions. The participants were given approximately 45-60 minutes to answer questions directly related to their experiences from the RIF event. The data collected from the participants' responses was voice recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researcher used the interview guide (see Appendix C) to conduct the interview and to guide the participants through the interview questions. The researcher's goal was to allow the participants to provide an in-depth recollection of individual experiences throughout the RIF event.

The questions used to conduct the interviews derived from the central research question in this study: what management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employee's job performance in an RIF environment? Additionally, the questions evolved from the three central propositions: management strategies can eliminate negative consequences, management fall short in understanding the consequences of an RIF event, therefore fall short of determining the appropriate strategies, and managers understanding the emotions and behaviors associated to RIF can support survivors in rebuilding equity in the workplace.

The interview was semi-structured and managed to ensure participants addressed the research question and remained on target to meet the time scheduled for the interview. Participants' responses were carefully monitored to ensure credibility and personal biases were not introduced in the data collected. The researcher used conversation management to keep the interviewee fixated on the study questions (Lord, Bolton, Fleming, & Anderson, 2016). The respondents were asked to confirm, validate, and clarify when appropriate. Credibility probes

were employed to influence the respondent to provide evidence to support the data collected (Creswell, 2014).

Validity

As explained by Creswell (2014), validity in a qualitative study is performed to authenticate the accuracy of the findings yielded from data collection. Furthermore, validity demonstrates to the audience the data is an accurate reflection of the study findings. Bryman and Bell (2011) further elaborated that validity addresses questions relating to generalizations established from the study results being used outside the context of the study. Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2011) explained four components required for to validate trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Credibility established the integrity in the study results. Transferability addressed the generalization of the results being applicable or transferable to another context. Dependability addressed the technique and the applicability to findings at other times. Confirmability was used to address the fidelity of the results. Additionally, validity was essential in data collection to ensure the findings were representative of the phenomenon being researched.

In this study, credibility was ensured by following the appropriate research methodology that was applicable to the study purpose, a qualitative exploratory methodology, and by interviewing participants who had experience in the research topic. The study ensured dependability by the investigator providing an appropriate amount of information from the study to duplicate and yield similar results (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Confirmability was ensured by the investigator demonstrating the findings in the study were derived from the data provided by the participants. The investigator conducted an audit of the data to the findings yielded from the study to ensure the two were aligned (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Validity referred to the conclusion of the research as an accurate description of what transpired during the study. It provided an accurate model of the presentation of the phenomenon being studied (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Validity in the context of the study was to “guarantee” the descriptions, finding, documentation, and reporting were authentic (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). In qualitative studies, validity is critical in the data examination and analysis. According to Conboy, Fitzgerald, and Mathiassen (2012), limited validity or an issue with validation in qualitative studies can affect themes that can emerge from the data, such as philosophical underpinning, real-world engagement, generalization approach to final presentation, and publication. To ensure validity in the study, a pilot study was conducted prior to conducting the full study.

Pilot Testing is a pre-test, or a trial run, to test the study interview questions. Creswell (2014) described a pilot test as a means to test the content validity of results on the ascribed instrument and as a measure to improve on questions, format, or structure. Two pilot study participants who met the study criteria were interviewed using the study interview questions to validate the effectiveness of the interview questions in their ability to yield the appropriate data to address the study phenomenon. Questions were presented during the interviews and the respondents were encouraged to answer the questions based on individual experiences relating to the RIF event lifecycle. The study instrument required no revision after the pilot testing. Results from the pilot study were not included in the overall study findings.

Reliability

According to Creswell (2014), reliability indicated the researcher has taken into consideration the various study approaches used consistently across similar studies to align the chosen data sources. Reliability combined with validity justifies the credibility of a qualitative

study. Moreover, reliability was aligned with the collection of the data. As Creswell (2014) explained, reliability determines if the instrument is consistent with the patterns and themes derived from the constructs and stability in administering and criterion. Furthermore, the use of “rich, thick description” to describe findings can help direct the audience to explore multiple perspectives creating rich and enhanced realistic view (Creswell, 2014).

For the qualitative exploratory study, data triangulation was used to validate the reliability of the data using a cross verification process from multiple participants. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), triangulation is a process used to identify "reference points to locate an object" (p. 412). Examining evidence from the participants' data and using it to develop themes and patterns added validity to the study and provided data triangulation (Creswell, 2014).

Member checking was used in the study to ensure accuracy, credibility, dependability, and transferability (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The investigator implemented member checking throughout the interview process, by repeating the participants' responses and summarizing the key points before moving to the next question and during the conclusion of the interview. The participants were required to validate all the responses at the conclusion of the interview or within 48 hours of receiving the transcription from the interview. A triangulation validity strategy was used to improve the trustworthiness of the study results.

Handling and storage of the data for the qualitative exploratory study was handled electronically. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews were handled confidentially by scrubbing all personally identifiable information and storing it in an encrypted secure file on the investigator's computing device. Participants were given a study identification number in place of their names. The investigator is the keeper of the protected password and the only person with access to the storage file.

Data Collection

The following process was used to identify interested potential participants for the study. The first step was to post a notice of interest in a transportation community and affinity group websites requesting perspective participants to provide contact information. In the second step, the collection of contact information for interested participants were gathered. The interested participants were provided information about the study, and their interest was again confirmed in being a participant in the study. In the third step, the interested participants were administered a pre-screen questionnaire to ensure each participant met the study criterion. If the interested participant met the study criteria, an informed consent form was provided for the participant's review and signature. Also, each prospective participant was given a summary of the study and expectations.

Once the participants were invited to interview, a medium was selected. The participants selected the option that was best suited for their location and timeframe aligned with interview availability. Participants had the options of choosing a face-to-face, Skype, or WebEx teleconferencing depending on availability and comfort level. Nine of the ten participants elected the use of WebEx teleconferencing. One of the ten participants elected a face-to face interview. The interviews were scheduled in advance using timeframes convenient for the participants. The participants signed an informed consent form document before participating in the interview.

During the semi-structured interview, 10 guided questions were asked (see Appendix C), and the participant was expected to respond to each question in the allotted 45-60 minutes timeframe. The interview data was collected using voice recording and hand-written notation. Interviews conducted virtually included recording capabilities. WebEx was used as the appropriate medium to capture data. The researcher captured the information shared by the

participants verbatim. Once the interview closed, collected data was transcribed by Rev.com. The interview transcription was sent back to the participant for validation of the data collected and for adherence to the member checking process. The data captured from the participants was transferred into a Microsoft Excel© spreadsheet. The information transferred to the spreadsheet was categorized based upon similar attributes within the data. In the last step of the process, the data was analyzed. The collected data was stored electronically in a file on the investigators computing device. The investigator is the keeper of the protected password and the only person with access privileges to the storage file.

Data Analysis

Glaser (1992) explained data collection and analysis steps for qualitative studies. The investigator collected the data and analyzed the data for concepts, categories, and interrelationships within the data. The investigator interpreted the findings and established generalizations from the content. Creswell (2014) also recommended this approach for qualitative data analysis to generate themes from data collected through semi-structured interview techniques. The investigator followed a step-by-step process. After the interviews were completed, the collected data was collated and integrated. The data was prepared for content analysis. The initial steps in the analysis process were to read, review, and read again. A good understanding of the data was essential for this action. The next step was the reflection phase, followed by the coding process. Coding is the process to develop description, themes, and patterns (Creswell, 2014). The final step was data interpretation and documentation of the finding.

The investigator used Microsoft Excel © to organize data collected from the interviews. Once data was organized, the investigator examined and reviewed the data multiple times. The

investigator identified key words, themes, and summary statements from data collected from the semi-structured interviews. The data was then transferred from the transcription document to the spreadsheet. Key words, themes, and summary statements with identified similarities were grouped together. Once all interviews were concluded, data was transcribed, reviewed, examined, and added to the spreadsheet. The investigator used pivot tables to group data. From the groupings, the investigator made interpretations from the information to discover patterns and themes.

Ethical Considerations

Four ethical considerations were prevalent in the study. The first consideration was the threat of potential professional relationships. The participants once identified, were briefed on participation confidentiality. The participants were provided the details of how confidentiality was protected throughout the study and the lifecycle of data storage protocol. Additionally, interview questions remained within the scope of the study boundaries. The confidentiality of participants was protected by the investigator eliminating any personal information through de-identification of study participants and ensuring the interviews were conducted in a private setting (Office for Human Research Protection [OHRP], 2015). The second consideration was the appropriate organizational representatives providing approval for the study population to participate in the study. This process was not required since a specific organization was not targeted for this study and participants were recruited through transportation and affinity communities.

The third consideration was working with human subjects. According to the (OHRP, 2015), the Belmont report ethical principles must be followed when conducting research that involved human subjects. The principles are “respect for person, beneficence, and justice”

(OHRP, 2015, p. 4). The participants were versed with the parameters of the study and what was to be expected. Participant awareness and following the study protocol eliminated the possibility of emotional guilt or the participants feeling guilt about discussing subjects that are uncomfortable. The investigator used the human subject and IRB guide as a tool to ensure the confidentiality and protection protocols were implemented throughout study (OHRP, 2015). Vulnerable participants were not included in the study. The investigator had no conflict of interest associated with this study.

The fourth consideration related to assumptions and biases by the researcher. Since the researcher has a long history of working in the transportation industry, assumptions and biases could threaten the outcome of the study. The consciousness of understanding assumptions and biases are safeguards to eliminate risk associated to familiarity. IRB guidelines and policy and procedures set by CTU were followed to protect participants, minimize risks, and mitigate any risks associated with assumptions and biases (Colorado Technical University, 2017).

Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter provided detail on the qualitative exploratory methodology used for examination and understanding of the central research question: what management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employees' job performance in an RIF environment? Chapter 3 began by providing insight to the research tradition, central research question, and three associated propositions. Chapter 3 provided the research design and a three-step process needed to conduct a qualitative exploratory study. The study sample consisted of 10 RIF event survivors selected using purposive sampling. The interview participants had experienced an RIF event within the past 5 years, resided in the Puget Sound geographical area of Washington State, and worked in the transportation industry.

The study instrumentation were semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher. Validity and reliability processes for the study were disclosed. The data collection process began by recruiting participants through transportation and affinity communities. Additionally, the data analysis plan included step-by-step instructions used in the study. Four ethical considerations were relevant and have been discussed.

The presentation of Chapter 4 includes the pilot study findings, participant demographics, presentation of the data, and presentation and discussion of findings. It concludes with a summarization of the chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory research study was to gain an understanding of the management strategies needed to sustain job performance when an RIF event occurs in the transportation industry. Additionally, the examination of survivors' emotional feelings, behavioral changes, and associated affects relating to survivors' equity during the RIF lifecycle were examined. Qualitative exploratory methodology was used to explore a social and individual problem relating to the RIF phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

A qualitative research design was used to identify and collect data from RIF survivors in the transportation industry located in the Puget Sound Region. The data collected was obtained from interviews conducted with 10 study participants. Beforehand, a pilot study was conducted with two individuals. The semi-structured interviews were used to solicit responses to 10 interview questions relating to the survivor's job performance, and emotional and behavioral changes as a consequence of the RIF occurrence. Moreover, the changes survivors experienced toward organizational equity were examined.

This chapter includes details about the pilot study conducted, participant demographics, and presentation of the findings. Also, a presentation and discussion of the findings, followed by a discussion on the applicability of the findings to the research question, is provided.

The Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study beginning January 3, 2018, and ending January 4, 2018. The pilot study included two participants that met the criteria of the study. The pilot study participants worked in the transportation industry in the Puget Sound region and had experienced an RIF event within the past 5 years. The pilot study used the same 10 semi-structured interview questions that were included in the full research study (see Appendix C). As ascribed in the

interview guidelines (see Appendix B) for the full research study the pilot study participants followed the same outline. The researcher engaged the pilot study participants in video-recorded phone conversations.

The data collected from the two-pilot study was prepared and organized using Microsoft Excel © . The data analysis recommendation by Creswell (2014) was followed to ensure the data collected would address the primary research question, as described in Chapter Three. Pilot testing is a pre-test, or a trial run, to test the interview questions, content validity of results on the ascribed instrument and as a measure to improve on questions, format, or structure (Creswell, 2014). The investigator made no changes to the interview questions or protocol as a result of the pilot study outcome. Data collected and analyzed from the pilot study was not included in the data collected from the full study participants and only served for the purpose aforementioned.

Participant Demographics

All participants confirmed employment in the transportation industry and residence in the Puget Sound region. Additionally, all participants interviewed for the study had experienced an RIF event within the past 5 years. The 10 study participants included survivors in demographic groups defined as age within four clusters of 31-41, 42-50, 51-60 and >60; gender; years in the transportation industry; and number of RIFs experienced. There was one participant in the age cluster of 31 to 41 years of age, four participants in the age cluster of 42 to 50 years of age, four participants in the age cluster of 51 to 60 years of age, and one participant that was greater than 60 years in age. Eight females and two males participated in the study. Years in the transportation industry ranged from 6 to 35. The number of RIFs experienced ranged from 1 to 13. The demographic data for the participants are presented in Table 1 by study participant.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Data

Study	Age	Gender	Years in transportation	Number of RIFS
SP1	> 60	F	28	13
SP2	42-50	M	19	6
SP3	51-60	F	20	1
SP4	42-50	F	20	4
SP5	31-41	F	6	1
SP6	51-60	F	22	3
SP7	42-50	F	24	2
SP8	51-60	F	26	7
SP9	42-50	F	17	2
SP10	51-60	M	35	1

Presentation of the Data

The full research study interviews began on January 8, 2018, and concluded on January 12, 2018. The semi-structured interviews consisted of 10 study participants that met the criterion of the study and agreed to voluntary participation in the study. The researcher used an interview guide (see Appendix C) to solicit responses from the study participants on 10 questions (see Appendix C) and four demographic questions. The interviews were conducted using teleconferencing with voice-recording. One participant interview was performed face-to-face and voice-recorded. The voice-recording was handed off to a professional transcription service,

Rev.com, and returned to researcher within 12 hours. The transcriptions were then checked against the voice-recordings and researcher notes from the interviews. The transcriptions were returned to the participants for review. The data collected from the study participants was organized and prepared for content analysis using Microsoft Excel ©. Creswell (2014) recommended the appropriate guidelines for qualitative research data analysis, as ascribed.

The data analysis yield three major themes and five sub-themes. The three major themes were (a) actions by management, (b) job performance, and (c) communication methods. Theme 1, actions by management, reflects actions management took to eliminate changes in job performance. Sub-theme 1 depicts survivors' view on transparency, fairness, and trust. Sub-theme 2 is an indication of what management did to restore transparency, fairness, and trust. Sub-theme 3 is a reflection of what impacts the RIF had on survivors' views of the organization. Participants' responses in theme 1 indicated management took action or their inability to take action. Also, participant responses relating to transparency, fairness, and trust were captured. Theme 2, job performance, depicts what impacts to job performance were associated to the RIF event and includes sub-theme 1 relating to the emotional and behavioral changes survivors experienced during the RIF lifecycle. Theme 2 and sub-theme are the results of study participants' responses to changes to job performance, emotional, and behavioral changes. Theme 3, communication methods, depicts a variation of vehicle management used to share information relating to the RIF. Theme 3 and sub-theme are survivors' responses to communication and the impact it had on their views of the selection process.

Table 2 provides a summary of the themes, sub-themes, and participant agreement. Participants' responses to the 10 interview questions serve as descriptors to emerging themes and subthemes. The themes and subthemes are discussed in detail to follow.

Table 2

Presentation of Themes

Themes	Number of Participants who supported the theme	Study Participant ID
Theme 1: Actions taken by management	0/10	
Sub-theme 1: View before RIF in transparency, fairness, and trust	4/10	SP2, SP3, SP5, and SP6
Sub-theme 2: Restore transparency, fairness, and trust	2/10	SP8, SP9
Sub-theme 3: Impact view transparency, fairness, and trust	10/10	SP1-SP10
Theme 2: Job Performance	9/10	SP2-SP10
Sub-Theme 1: Emotional and behavioral changes	10/10	SP1-SP10
Theme 3: Communication methods	10/10	SP1-SP10
Sub-Theme 1: Selection process	9/10	SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4, SP5, SP6, SP8, SP9, and SP10

Theme 1 – Actions by Management

All participants indicated management took no action to eliminate changes to job performance associated to the RIF event. One participant explained his manager provided feedback for his annual performance, but offered no information on how his skills could be used within the reorganization.

SP7 explained,

We had a performance review, and it just covered my work for the year, and my business goals and how I did, he really didn't discuss anything regarding the reorganization and how my skills or work could be utilized with the reorg at all.

Another participant suggested that management did not take into consideration the impact of workload to survivors and felt the discomfort of taking on additional work. Study participant 7 responded, "My manager could have spread out the left over, extra work that got-reallocated among the team could have spread it more evenly." Study participant 8 elaborated on the nervousness managers feel when an RIF event is announced and feel the need to protect the security of their jobs by stating, "Managers get worried and want to take visibility away from their employees to get the visibility for themselves." Study participant 10 further explained, "They need to help you get visibility, help you network and get challenging assignments." Study participant 8 requested information from the manager on how it would be decided on who would be asked to voluntarily leave the company and explained the manager agreed to provide the requested information the next team meeting: "She scheduled it, and the meeting lasted maybe 20 minutes, and we ended up talking about other stuff".

Sub-theme 1. View before RIF in transparency, fairness, and trust. The first sub-theme emerged with survivors' responses on their view of the organization in terms of transparency, fairness, and trust. Six participants (SP1, SP4, SP7, SP8, SP9, and SP10) responses indicated transparency, fairness, and trust was low before the RIF event and remained low after the lifecycle of the event. Study participant 3 commented, "I have much less trust in the company now, I don't think they were honest with us on the reason for the reorganization." Study participant 6 believed transparency changed during the RIF event stating, "A shift in transparency, in this company, a lot of times lower level management is not shared everything that is going on." One participant (SP5) provided a positive response to the organizations transparency, fairness, and trust during the RIF event and explained, "In my view, the company did a good job on being transparent and trust with its employees."

Sub-theme one related to survivors' view of the management within the organization or company demonstrating, transparency, fairness, and trust during the RIF event. The emerging sub-theme indicated survivors' views of transparency, fairness, and trust was low before and after the RIF event. While other survivors believed it to be high before and low afterward or low before and high afterward. The majority of study participants experienced no change as a result of the RIF event.

Sub-theme 2. Restore transparency and trust. The second sub-theme emerged from responses relating to action managers could have taken to restore transparency, fairness, and trust after the RIF event. All participants agreed management did not take any actions to restore, transparency, trust, and fairness in the workplace. Study participant 9 included in her response, "I don't know if they've taken any steps like that" and study participant 8 believed it would be helpful for survivors' to understand how management determines the number of employees who

would be affected by an RIF event and included in her response, “I am not sure how to answer that, maybe lots of upfront communication or officially published the numbers, maybe that would have been helpful.”

Sub-theme 3. Impact view of transparency and trust. The third sub-theme emerged from participants’ reaction to their reflection on the view of the organization or company in terms of transparency, fairness, and trust. Seven participants (SP1- SP10) viewed the organization or company low in terms of trust and fairness. Study participants 2 and 5 responded with positive affirmations on trust and fairness. Study participant 2 explained, “I guess in all things considered it was fair” and study participant 5 commented, “In my opinion, it was done very fair, and they have a process they follow so that it is done fairly”. Study participant 1 viewed trust negatively and fairness low and sums it up for the majority of participants by stating, “It impacted it negatively, I find I have much less trust in the company, there is no trust in the workplace.” As a result of the responses, all participants shared views relating to transparency, trust, and fairness at the organization or company level.

Theme 2 – Job Performance

In analyzing the data, a theme emerged indicating there is a slight change in job performance before surviving the RIF event. Nine participants (SP2-SP10) experienced a change in job performance before, during and after the RIF event. One participant (SP1) experienced no change in job performance. Study participant 3 responded, “Very much did I suffer lower job performance.” Study participant 1 responded, “My performance has not gone down” and study participant 2 commented, “I don’t think based on my performance reviews, I don’t notice any changes.” Study participant 4 stated in her response, “My performance was not affected as a result of the RIF.”

The data reflect an emerging theme indicating job performance before, during, and after an RIF occurrence survivor's experience change. Some survivors experienced higher job performance than before while many suffer negative consequences. One participants (SP1) indicated no change in job performance. Study participant 10 indicated job performance suffered after the RIF event. Two study participants (SP2 and SP9) indicated a slight job improvement; while four participants (SP3, SP6, SP7, and SP8) experienced a higher job performance after the RIF than before knowing the outcome of surviving the event. Study participant 5 responded, "I blossomed, I would say that my job performance increased higher than before the RIF event occurred." The sub-theme emerging from the data analyzed indicated there is a relationship between higher job performance and the conclusion of an RIF event. Study participant 6 responded, "I felt like I was more empowered to hit the floor running." Study participant 10 indicated, "Even though you survived the RIF, you don't feel like the work that you are doing is as valuable to the company."

From the end of the RIF event occurrence to the present time, study participants responses developed a theme that indicated job performance increased over a period of time. Study participant 1 experienced no impact to job performance during the RIF and improved job performance as a survivor. Study participant 2 responded, "It has encouraged me to step it up and do a better job overall. Mentally, I think a better job afterwards." Study participant 10 indicated in the response, "Even though I being praised for taking on two other jobs, my job performance got better." Study participants 5, 8, and 11 experienced low job performances during and higher job performance from then until now. Study participant 4 experienced high job performance during the RIF as a survivor and stated in her response, "I would say every RIF made me a better employee, I actually benefited from every single one."

Sub-theme 1. Emotional and behavioral changes. The analysis of the data disclosed there were relational impacts between emotional and behavioral changes during the RIF event. Eight participants (SP2, SP3, SP5, SP6, SP7, SP8, SP9, and SP10) experienced feelings of anxiety. Study participant 2 responded, “I didn’t experience any changes in job performance, but personal anxiety.” Study participant 8 responded, “It’s the uncertainty, I tend to get angry and frustrated and not feel in control.” Five participants (SP6, SP7, SP8, SP9, and SP10) experienced feelings of uncertainty. Three participants (SP3, SP8, and SP10) experienced feelings of guilt. Study participant 8 summarizes his response, “When you know that it could have been you, it makes you feel kind of guilty and it makes you want to emphasize and feel like you can do something, but your kind of feeling helpless.” Study participants 1 and 10 experienced feelings of providing no value to the company or organization. Study participants 1 stated in her response, “I have been with the company for decades and all of a sudden they tell you, that I am of no value.” One participant (SP10) experienced anger, and another (SP4) experienced no change emotionally.

Many types of behavioral changes were identified in the data collected. Once analyzed, a theme emerged indicating a strong relationship between an RIF event occurrence and changes behaviorally. Nine participants (SP2 - SP10) experienced behavioral changes. Study participant 2 commented, “I re-evaluated my financial health and ask do I really need to take a family vacation.” Study participant 4 viewed the RIF event occurrence as an opportunity to re-evaluate his current job role and felt optimistic about the outcome. Study participant 4 responded, “I do not see it as a negative thing, I see it as a positive thing.” Study participant SP3 explained the behavior changes experienced:

Spare keys were left behind in a key box, and begin to put them in the desk key holes and reflected on who once sat there and how they left the condition of the desk. Emotionally, it was hard to say goodbye. It was really melancholy.

Study participant 1 experienced no behavioral changes and responded, “Behaviorally nothing changed.”

Theme 3 – Communication Methods

Ten study participants’ responses indicated management communicated the initial RIF event and ongoing information using a variety of communication methods. The emerging theme from the data collected from participants’ responses is with frequent communication survivor’s view transparency, trust, and fairness at higher levels. The methods included email, group meetings, rumors, official announcements, and using one-on-one meetings with employees. Seven participants (SP1, SP2, SP4, SP5, SP8, SP9, and SP10) indicated management communicated by email and group meetings. Four participants (SP2, SP3, SP8, and SP10) received communication through rumored channels. Two participants (SP3 and SP8) engaged in one-on-one meetings with their respective manager and one participant (SP8) experienced all five methods of communication from initial communication and throughout the RIF event.

Study participant 8 explained,

It was first communicated through my manager, but we often heard rumors through other people and later they would sort of announce it at a group or leadership meeting.

Sometimes that would happen before email communication. Then your manager would tell you in a one-on-one a reduction in force was coming

Study participant 7 explained, “The only communication that I received was via email, and there was just a few, and they were bulletins.”

Study participants 8 experienced receiving communication from three or less methods from the initial RIF announcement and throughout the lifecycle of the event. Study participant 4 drew an account of the communication during the RIF event: “I seem to remember rumors first and then official announcement through email, and I believe there were periodic emails. Communication flow down in weekly meetings.”

Sub-theme 1. Selection process. In the data collected from the participants a sub-theme emerged, there is a connection between RIF survivors’ views of transparency, trust, and fairness and the selection process in determining how survivors will be affected by the RIF event. Five of the participants (SP2, SP3, SP6, SP8, and SP9) referred to the selection process as ranking employees against one another to determine which has the best skills to remain on the job, has more credentials, or is more experienced. Several participants believed the selection process was subjective, based on project visibility. While another participant’s response indicated, it was a popularity contest. Study participant 7 responded, “At this point, I don’t know how they selected where I will end up.” Additionally, study participants 1 and 4 responses indicated the selection process was directly linked to strategic alignment or cost-cutting. Nine out of 10 participants agreed there is a disconnect in what management communicates and what actually happens during the selection process.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The data analysis performed for this study was executed by following Glaser (1992) and Creswell (2014) data collection and analysis processes for qualitative exploratory. The investigator analyzed the data collected to identify concepts, categories, and interrelationships. Additionally, the analysis generated themes from the data collected through semi-structured interview techniques. The investigator followed a step-by-step guided analysis process. After the

interview concluded, data was collated, organized, and prepared for content analysis. The initial step in the analysis process was to read, review, and read again while reflecting during interval of reading. Once a high level of understanding was obtained from the data, the investigator engaged in a reflection phase, followed by the coding process. After which time, the analysis of the data began. The analysis process yielded description, themes, and patterns. The investigator explained the analysis process and the steps taken to develop concepts, themes, and patterns from the phenomenon being studied in Chapter Three. Figure 2 below provides the data analysis through conceptual mapping.

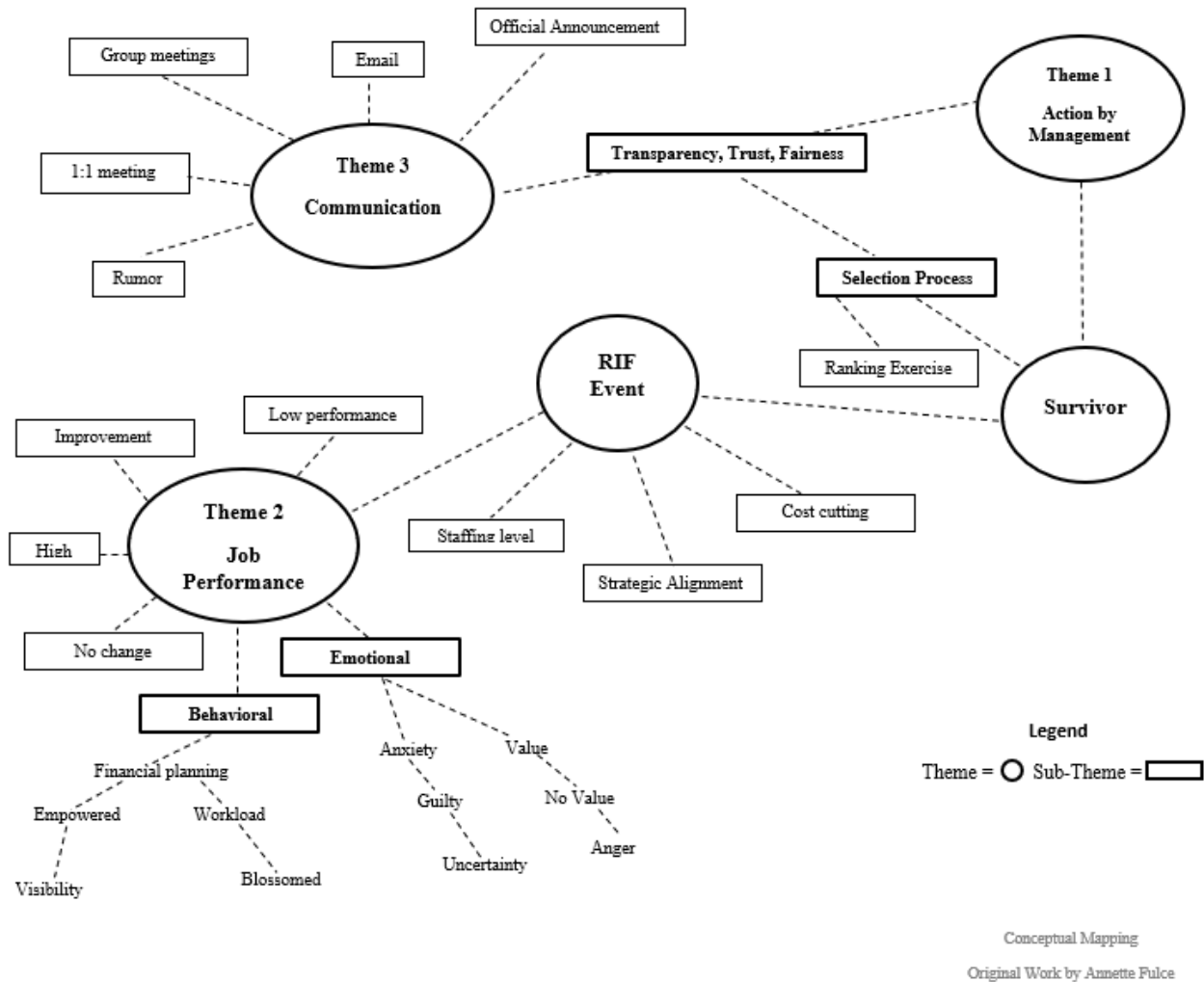


Figure 2. Data analysis using conceptual mapping.

Findings

The investigator used qualitative exploratory research design to examine and gain an understanding of the management strategies needed to sustain job performance when an RIF event occurs in the transportation industry. The central research question asked: what management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employee's job performance in a reduction-in-force environment? The data analysis yield three major themes and five sub-themes. The three major themes were (a) actions by management, (b) job performance, and (c) communication methods. The five sub-themes were (a) view before RIF in transparency, fairness, and trust (b) restore transparency, fairness, and trust (c) impact view transparency, fairness, and trust (d) emotional and behavioral changes, and (e) selection process.

The result of the data analysis indicated some management strategies needed to sustain job performance were present. However, management strategies to address survivor's concerns relating to transparency, trust, and fairness were absent in the RIF lifecycle. Survivors indicated the RIF selection process was unclear in the details of determining which employees would be asked to leave the company. Management strategies going forward should include details of the RIF justification, rather than what survivors view as a euphemism (i.e., staffing levels, strategic alignment, and cost cutting). The finding revealed management strategies do not necessarily need to focus specifically on job performance. Based on the findings from the data, the majority of participants experienced minimal changes to job performance and others slight improvements. A few survivors even experienced higher job performance following the RIF occurrence. Future management strategies must include strategies for addressing emotional and behavioral changes survivors experienced from the RIF event. Many survivors experienced, anxiety, guilt, and uncertainty, while a large majority experienced behavioral changes. Communication plans are of

the utmost importance in developing management strategies needed to address themes emerging from this study. The findings revealed the communication types and vehicles are relevant throughout the lifecycle of the RIF occurrence. However, critical elements of the study were survivors' views relating to transparency, trust, and fairness in the communication received from their respective managers. The critical elements greatly impacted the survivors' view of the selection process.

Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter included details about the pilot study, participant demographics, and presentation of the findings. Additionally, a presentation and discussion of the findings, followed by a discussion on the applicability of the findings to the research question were addressed. A pilot study was conducted with two participants who met the study criteria. The pilot interviews, using the study interview questions, validated the effectiveness of the questions in the ability to yield the appropriate data to address the study phenomenon. Purposeful sampling was used for participant selection, which narrowed the scope of the study. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were used which included 10 open-ended RIF related questions. The conclusion of the data analysis integrated the data collected from the 10 full study interviews. The findings yielded three themes and five sub-themes. The data analysis yield three major themes and five sub-themes. The three major themes were (a) actions by management, (b) job performance, and (c) communication methods. Theme 1, actions by management, reflects actions management took to eliminate changes in job performance. Sub-theme1 depicts survivors' views on transparency, fairness, and trust. Sub-theme 2 is an indication of what management did to restore transparency, fairness, and trust. Sub-theme 3 is a reflection of what impacts the RIF had on survivors' view of the organization. Theme 2, job performance, depicts what impacts to job performance were

associated to the RIF event and includes sub-theme 1, relating to the emotional and behavioral changes survivor's experienced during the RIF lifecycle. Theme 3, communication methods, depicts the variation of vehicles management used to share information about the RIF and the impact communication has on the perception of fairness in the selection process.

Next, Chapter 5 presents findings and conclusion, limitations of the study, implications for practice, and implications of the study and recommendations for future research. Chapter 5 also provides a conclusion for the entire study.

CHAPTER FIVE

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory research study was to gain an understanding of the management strategies needed to sustain job performance when an RIF event occurs in the transportation industry. The study provided an in-depth view of the RIF lifecycle from the lens of the participants and identified critical elements that were essential in eliminating and minimizing the consequences of an RIF occurrence. The demands in the transportation industry and advancement in technologies stemming from globalization, product, and services have challenged transportation managers to strategically mitigate financial risks expediently (Marchet et al., 2012). The RIF event has provided the platform for transportation managers to implement cost savings initiatives, despite consequences directly impacting survivors. Transportation managers have an obligation to their employees to implement strategies to mitigate the negative impacts from an RIF event (Jenkins, 2013). Management actions must be transparent and take in account the consequences of the RIF event. Management strategies must include frequent, clear, and concise communication. Managers must be transparent in their communication and use a variety of communication methods to ensure the flow of communication is vertical and horizontal (Solove et al., 2015). Transparency, fairness, and trust must be considered in all aspects of the RIF strategy, specifically in the selection process.

The goal of the study was to understand from the experience of the RIF survivors the consequences of management's inability to sustain job performance during an RIF occurrence. Transportation managers struggle with implementing the appropriate strategies to minimize or eliminated negative impacts to survivors. The central research question was: what management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employees' job performance in a reduction-in-force environment? The exploratory qualitative research findings are disclosed in Chapter 4,

providing a presentation of data collected from WebEx teleconferencing and face-to face semi-structured interviews using 10 open-ended questions developed to address the central research question as outlined.

The qualitative exploratory study sought to address gaps in the literature identifying specific strategies management need to sustain job performance during an RIF event. The gap included consequences associated with the absence of strategies and the exploration of survivors' perception of transparency, fairness, trust, and equity in the workplace during the RIF lifecycle. In the infancy of the study, a comprehensive literature review was conducted on the after effects of downsizing, re-organization, and other similar traumatic changes in the workplace. Survivors' syndrome, coined by Appelbaum et al. (1997), provided an in-depth understanding of the effects of an RIF occurrence and guided the investigator to examine the problems associated with a traumatic event of this nature.

Equity theory is the representation of an individual's motivation by fairness and suggests the higher an individual perceives fairness, the more motivated one becomes. The literature review provided an understanding of the appropriateness of equity theory for this study. An exploratory qualitative study was appropriate for researchers seeking to disclose themes, concepts, and patterns from data analysis using the voice of the study participants (Bevan, 2014). From data collected and analyzed from 10 semi-structured interviews three themes and five sub-themes emerged. The three major themes were (a) actions by management, (b) job performance, and (c) communication methods. Theme 1 relates to specific actions taken by management to sustain job performance during the RIF lifecycle. Three sub-themes emerged from theme one, actions by management, and indicated management actions impacts survivors' views of transparency, fairness, and trust. Theme 2, job performance, aligns RIF event consequences to

changes in survivor's job performance. Furthermore, the theme links the detrimental effects survivors experience both emotionally and behaviorally. Theme 3, communication methods, is one of the most important elements within the RIF lifecycle. The frequency of communication used throughout the RIF occurrence weighs heavily on survivors' view of transparency, fairness, and trust. The selection process outlines how management engage in the decision-making process to determine who will remain in the workplace once an RIF is executed.

In this chapter, the study findings and conclusions are discussed in detail. The study limitations and implications for practice are detailed. Additionally, implications of the study and recommendations for future research, reflections, and the conclusion of the study are provided.

Findings and Conclusions

The central research question asked: what management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employees' job performance in a reduction-in-force environment? The study was conducted in the Puget Sound region in the state of Washington and targeted RIF survivors in the transportation industry who had experienced an RIF event within the past 5 years. The study used a qualitative exploratory approach to better understand RIF survivors' experience throughout the lifecycle of the event directly associated to management strategies used during the event, survivors' perception of transparency, trust and fairness; impacts to job performance, emotional, and behavioral changes; communication and the selection process.

From the data collected and the analysis, three primary themes and five subthemes emerged from the results of the study. The three major themes were (a) actions by management, (b) job performance, and (c) communication methods. The five subthemes were (a) view before RIF in transparency, fairness, and trust; (b) restore transparency, fairness, and trust; (c) impact view of transparency, fairness, and trust; (d) emotional and behavioral changes; and (e) selection

process. The problem identified in this study was that transportation manager's lack the appropriate strategies needed to sustain job performance during an RIF event (Carey, 2012).

The emerging themes and subthemes all related to the central research question and indicated a connection associated with the actions or non-actions taken by transportation managers. The connected themes were actions by manager, job performance, and communication methods, indicated a relationship between actions by managers and job performance changes. Also, the frequency and type of communication was found to be critical to survivors' perception of the organization and RIF outcomes. The five subthemes were (a) view before RIF in transparency, fairness, and trust; (b) restore transparency, fairness, and trust; (c) impact view of transparency, fairness, and trust; (d) emotional and behavioral changes; and (e) selection process are consequences of the themes. When management does not take the appropriate action transparency, fairness, and trust are perceived by survivors negatively. Job performance is impacted when survivors suffer from changes in their emotion and behaviors. If communication is minimal or information is not shared about the selection process, survivors perceive the organization negatively and experience decreases in equity.

Theme 1, actions taken by management, indicated survivors did not connect with actions taken by management during the RIF lifecycle. A requirement for management to incorporate specific actions in their implementation plan to mitigate consequences associated to changes in job performance is needed. Additionally, theme 2, job performance, indicated survivors job performance was negatively impacted. Subthemes were (a) view before RIF in transparency, fairness, trust and (b) restore transparency, fairness trust are consequences of theme 1, survivors not connecting with actions taken by management. As mentioned, if management tactically include survivors in decision making and communicate frequently and openly, the dynamic will

change relating to actions taken by managers. Also, the impacts to emotional and behavioral changes would be minimized or eliminated. Survivors will view management actions positively. Subtheme (e) selection process, indicates survivors did not connect with the ranking activity associated to the selection process. Theme 1, actions taken by management, and theme 3, communication methods, are associated with survivors' experiences with the selection process and ranking activity. As indicated previously, the three themes and five subthemes have integration points throughout the RIF lifecycle and are interconnected (see depiction in Figure 2).

Actions by Management

The first theme, actions by management, addressed the impact of manager's inability or lack of skills to manage survivors' perspective of transparency, fairness, trust at the beginning, during, and end of an RIF lifecycle. As indicated in the literature and responses from the survivors, the manager is responsible for determining the appropriate strategies needed to sustain job performance during an RIF occurrence. Based on the findings, management took no specific action to mitigate issues associated to survivors' view and impact of transparency, fairness, and trust in the workplace. Before the RIF occurrence, 6 out of 10 survivors viewed management's transparency, fairness, and trust dissatisfactory. A mere 4 out of 10 viewed transparency, fairness, and trust satisfactory. Eight out of ten survivors from their perspective believed management did not take the appropriate actions to restore transparency, fairness, and trust, while 2 out of 10 survivors' perceived management did take appropriate actions to restore transparency in the workplace. The actions management took from the beginning of the RIF to what the survivors view in the current state impacted survivors' overall perception of the organization. The actions by managers before, during, and after the RIF occurrence directly impact survivors' perspective of transparency, fairness, and trust in management. In fact, the

more transparent, fair, and trusting a manager's actions were perceived to be during the RIF lifecycle, the less likely survivors were to suffer associated consequences. In fact, survivors' perception of the managers were proven to be improved when managers actions demonstrated survivors concerns about the RIF outcome were taken into consideration. As explained by Jenkins (2013), managers that promote an inclusive environment with open dialogue and allow employees to partake in decision-making can be benefactors to positivity in the workplace. Additionally, transparency, fairness, and trust can be restored.

Job Performance

The second theme, job performance, addressed consequences survivors experience emotionally and behaviorally throughout the RIF lifecycle. The review of literature outlined the transportation managers' shortfalls in skills and inability to support survivors during an RIF event (Carey, 2012). The findings from the data collected indicated 9 out of 10 survivors connected with the results from the literature review. One out of ten survivors did not connect with the emerging theme from the study and what the literature review unveiled. All survivors suffered consequences associated to emotional and behavioral changes during the lifecycle of the RIF event, supporting the literature review. Based on the study outcome, emotional and behavioral changes are directly linked to poor job performance. As explained by Appelbaum et al. (1997), survivor's syndrome is defined as an array of feeling and behaviors after a traumatic event. Survivors' experienced feelings of guilt, uncertainty, and adverse behaviors, leading to changes in job performance. The literature unveiled transportation managers are not equipped to deal with the repercussion of an RIF occurrence (Jenkins, 2013).

In order for transportation managers to be equipped to address RIF associated consequences that affect job performance, the strategic plan must include appropriate training

and resources. Additionally, it should include a tactical plan for the implementation during the RIF lifecycle. Transportation managers must be fully prepared to support survivors during disruption in the workplace.

Communication and the Selection Process

The third theme, communication methods, was directly linked to the perspective survivors have concerning the selection process. The lack of transparency in the ranking process management uses to determine who remains with the company or who is asked to voluntarily leave is an issue during RIF events. Management strategies that promote communication and transparency are relevant (Solove et al., 2015). Furthermore, communication is an area that directly impacts the RIF outcome. Communication is viewed by survivors as transparency in the selection process. Findings from the study indicated that survivors' perception of the selection process is based on the methods, measures, and frequency of communication. Nine of the ten survivors connected communication with the selection process outcome. One survivor believed management was open and honest with communication during the RIF lifecycle. In order for management to address issues relating to communication, a robust communication plan must be part of the plan. Communication is an integral piece of the implementation process and information relating to all RIF activity and decisions must be shared with survivors frequently and timely. Survivors must understand all components relating to the selection process.

Study Significance to Management Strategies

As outlined in the significance of the study, changes in the transportation industry from advancements in technology and globalization have increased demand for products and services (Crews & Bhatia, 2012). Yet, management in the transportation industry continues to strategically use RIF events for mitigation of financial risk and business uncertainty (Iovan,

2017). Managers are tasked to creatively implement cost saving initiatives, despite consequences to employees who are involuntarily asked to leave the company and survivors job performance (Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012). Furthermore, survivors are being asked to do more with less people and in many situations less pay. Yet, direct managers expect no changes to job performance of survivors (Munnich & Iacono, 2016). Additionally, managers of affected employees are unskilled and lack the ability to support survivors by using the appropriate management strategies to guide behaviors and actions throughout the RIF event lifecycle (Jenkins, 2013). The results of this study concluded actions taken by managers, changes in job performance, and communication methods are primary elements to include in management strategies for an RIF implementation plan that minimizes or eliminates changes to job performance. Moreover, transparency, fairness, and trust, and emotional and behavioral changes are other critical factors affecting survivors' perspective of the selection process.

The information from the study can provide managers, organizational leaders, human resources, and training professionals with knowledge to develop strategies for sustaining employees' job performance during an RIF lifecycle. A critical takeaway from this study is the need for managers to receive the appropriate training to support the emotional and behavioral needs of survivors. Most importantly, there is a need to develop robust strategies that place emphasis on minimizing or eliminating changes to job performance and survivors' equity in the workplace. The findings from this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of management and bring awareness to the detrimental effects of a volatile organization. This information at minimum will bring awareness and provide an understanding of the consequences associated with RIF events and useful strategies appropriate to use during workplace turbulence.

Central Propositions

Three central propositions were the focus on the study. The first proposition were management strategies may eliminate the negative consequences that impact survivors emotionally and behaviorally, avoiding changes in job performance. This proposition was presented to address the absence of literature relating to the consequences of the RIF phenomenon on job performance. RIF events and occurrences are standard protocol when organization are faced with financial risk, yet many managers RIF implementation plans are absent of identifying appropriate strategies to deal with the negative impacts of an RIF event. The themes and subthemes directly address this proposition and provided validation that managers are not equipped to take the appropriate action to mitigate consequences associated to emotional and behavioral changes that impact job performance. Managers that are equipped to sustain job performance during an RIF occurrence will ensure their implementation plan includes resources to address transparency, fairness, trust, and changes in survivors' job performance. Additionally, they will include an in-depth communication plan that frequently and thoroughly ensure survivors are abreast with the current status of changes in the workplace. By taking the aforementioned actions, survivors would view the workplace favorably, impacting job performance positively. Theme 1, actions by management, supports this proposition by identifying specific actions necessary for managers to restore and impact survivors' views of the workplace following an RIF event. Theme 2, job performance, supports this proposition by identifying the negative impacts to work brought on by changes in survivors' emotions and behaviors. If transportation managers include survivors in decision-making and survivors are abreast with changes in the workplace, survivors can direct attention on sustaining job performance. Theme 3, communication methods, supports this proposition by outlining the

importance of communication throughout the RIF lifecycle. Transportation managers must begin to communicate at the infancy of the RIF occurrence and continue throughout. The communication must be transparent, fair, and trustworthy for survivors to sustain work performance during turbulent times such as an RIF event.

The second proposition was management may fall short in understanding the consequences of RIF event and therefore management strategies needed to sustain job performance have not been identified. Theme two, job performance, honed in on the effects an RIF event has on job performance, validating the proposed proposition. Nine of the ten participants experienced changes in job performance. Although one survivor indicated positive changes, Theme 1, actions by management, emerged as a result of management taking no action to sustain job performance. From these findings, it is clear that current management strategies are not sufficient to sustain job performance. Furthermore, management must seek the necessary training and resources to ensure the appropriate actions are taken to mitigate survivors' concerns.

The third proposition were managers in the transportation industry that understood the emotional and behavioral impacts of an RIF event may help survivors rebuild equity in the workplace and begin to restore job performance back to optimal levels through appropriate management strategies. The validation of this proposition was demonstrated by the subthemes that emerged relating to transparency, fairness, and trust.

Management strategies must include actions to be taken by managers to address emotional and behavioral changes directly impacted by survivors' perceived feeling of management not sharing transparent, fair, and trustworthy information. Furthermore, management must include a plan to restore and rebuild equity in the workplace. Managers in the transportation industry that understood the emotional and behavioral impacts of an RIF event

may help survivors rebuild equity in the workplace and begin to restore job performance back to optimal levels through appropriate management strategies.

Limitations of the Study

Potential limitations of this study were included in the research design. A limitation was discovered in the direct responses from the participants based on individual experiences in the transportation industry. As explained by Ring, Jepson, and Ritchie (2011) the qualitative researcher is constrained by the complexities of interpretation and appropriateness of the findings due to the methods of synthesizing the data. The study was limited to the survivor's recollection, interpretation, and truthfulness of the RIF event through individual perspectives. Qualitative research stems from perspective and opinions of the participants and is therefore difficult to replicate (Ring et al.,2011). Due to the qualitative nature of this study, findings may be difficult to replicate if another sample of participants were used who had varying recollection, interpretation, or expressed truthfulness regarding experience with an RIF event.

Another limitation associated with the study methodology was using more than one modality of communication. One of the ten interviews were conducted face-to face. The other nine interviews were conducted by using WebEx. Face-to-face interviews are important in qualitative semi-structured interviews to enhance personal contact for sensitive topics and telephone interviews are sometimes discounted (Vogl, 2013).

An additional limitation emerged from the participants' demographics. The small sample size did not allow for much variability in participant demographics. All study participants were greater than 30 years in age. Eight of ten were female. The study demographics favored certain age groups and collected limited data from male survivors that could have impacted the study

outcome. Recognizing limitations in data collection and synthesis add validity to the study methodology.

Implications for Practice

The findings from this exploratory qualitative study can be used by transportation managers and business managers to develop implementation management strategies for organizational changes that directly impact the job performance of their employees. Themes, subthemes, and concepts from this study provided beneficial information for managers to identify critical elements in their implementation strategies for RIF events. The identified themes, subthemes, and concepts can serve as a guide for transportation managers to take the necessary actions to restore transparency, fairness, and trust in the organization. Secondly, the findings provide evidence survivors experience emotional and behavioral changes when faced with an RIF event in the transportation industry. Therefore, managers need the proper training and resources to support survivors during turbulent times in the workplace. Finally, management strategies must include robust communication plans that provide high-level and low-level details that flow vertically and horizontally. Survivors need to understand how decisions are made in the selection process when encountered with an RIF occurrence.

Management strategies are necessary to run any business and must be included in business plans to obtain financial success. However, managers experiencing success financially and meeting the business target must consider the health of their direct reports. The management strategies must include the people component relating specifically to the health of the survivors as indicated in the findings of these studies. Strategies that are implemented must include and outline actions managers need to take to protect employees from anxiety, guilt, and uncertainty, despite whatever financial woes the company is experiencing if job performance is to be

maintained. Management strategies must include specific elements that sustain survivors' job performance during turbulent times.

Implications of Study and Recommendations for Future Research

The intent of this study was to close gaps in the literature review on the RIF phenomenon and management strategies needed to sustain job performance during an occurrence. Gaps in the literature unveiled an absence of management strategies in the RIF implementation plan and a critical need for transportation managers to promote transparency, fairness, and trust during times of turbulence in the workplace. Additionally, managers must attain the necessary skills to support their employees during an RIF occurrence by using appropriate skills and resources to fill identified gaps. Management can close the gaps and rebuild survivors' equity in the workplace after an RIF occurrence by taking the appropriate actions to mitigate risk early in the lifecycle. This study found that mitigation strategies should be focused on what actions managers need to take to improve transparency, fairness, trust, and equity in the workplace.

The implications that can be drawn from this study are RIF events impact survivors' job performance, emotions, and behaviors negatively. Therefore, transportation managers need to ensure the RIF strategies include mitigation plans to ensure the right training and resources are available for managers to focus on critical areas aforementioned. By taking the appropriate action, managers can gain the skills and capabilities necessary to support survivors in times of turbulence in the workplace.

At the expense of immediate financial gains, survivors are experiencing various stages of grief. Survivors experience denial, reality of the current situation, anger, depression, and finally acceptance (Friedrich & Wustenhagen, 2015). Managers can alleviate many of these consequences by empowering survivors by initiation of transparency, fairness, and trust in their

communication and actions, as indicated by the study findings. Empowerment allows survivors to gain some of their power back in the workplace (Adams, 1963).

The study led to a need to address in future research the psychological contract between management and survivors. Although the relationship is not built on a physical contract, there is an emotional contract between survivors and their managers that is not addressed in management strategies (Meurs et al., 2014). A breach of the psychological contract leads to survivors distrusting management and decreased equity in the workplace. This chain of events affects survivors' job performance and leads to emotional and behavioral changes. The relationship between survivors and management changes disrupts the workplace (Meurs et al., 2014).

The importance of a communication plan should be further explored for a management strategy during an RIF occurrence. By implementation of a communication plan managers can avoid disruption in the workplace. A robust communication plan can minimize or avoid a disruption in the workplace. Managers can shift the focus from the RIF occurrence to supporting survivors' efforts to understand and accept change (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Building management strategies for avoiding an RIF event or mitigating an RIF event requires additional understanding that far exceeds this study. Many critical elements remain uncovered, and future research is needed to address missing elements. Management strategies, as defined, are measures used by individuals in management roles to positively influence employees to meet organizational goals (Solove et al., 2015).

The unveiled themes, subthemes, and concepts in this study can serve as a framework for managers to address deficiencies in their strategies. The critical elements identified such as actions taken by managers, transparency, fairness, and trust; impacts to job performance, emotional and behavioral changes; and communication can provide the foundation for managers

to leverage as a starting point. Additionally, concepts resulting from this study, such as the selection and ranking process, and methods and frequency of communication, will enrich the body of knowledge to promote growth and development for management practitioners.

Conclusion

The topic of this research study was: management strategies needed to sustain employees' job performance during an RIF event in the transportation industry. The need for managers to employ the appropriate strategies during a disruption in the workplace, such re-organization, re-structuring, or downsizing, was explored. The purpose for this qualitative exploratory research study was to gain an understanding of the management strategies needed to sustain job performance when an RIF event occurs in the transportation industry.

This research provides transportation managers with pertinent information to support the development of strategies to sustain employee job performance during an RIF occurrence. Moreover, it aids in the preparation of training and development of management implementation plans. The primary themes, such as actions taken by managers, job performance, and communication, are important elements in promoting transparency, fairness, and trust. The concepts, as outlined, are areas that can serve as starting points for new research or practitioners ready to examine in greater depth.

The central research question asked: what management strategies are needed to sustain transportation employee's job performance in a reduction-in-force environment? The findings from the study produced information to address the central question. Three themes and five sub-themes were established from data collected, analyzed, and coded: (a) Theme 1: Actions by manager; Sub-Theme 1: View of transparency, fairness and trust before the RIF event; Sub-theme 2: Restore transparency, fairness and trust after the RIF; Sub-theme 3: Impact to view of

transparency, fairness and trust; (b) Theme 2: Job performance; Sub-theme 1: Emotional and behavioral changes; and (c) Theme 3: Communication methods; Sub-theme 1: Selection process. The themes, subthemes, and concepts elicited from this study serves as a foundation for transportation managers to develop appropriate strategies for sustaining job performance during disruption in the workplace. Additionally, the findings provide managers with guidance on growth and development to enhance skills and capabilities.

Theme 1, actions taken by management, highly influences survivors' view of transparency, fairness, and trust. This was apparent before, during, and after the RIF event, ultimately affecting the views of the RIF survivors long after the occurrence of the RIF. The literature validates the participants' responses on the importance of managers actively engaging early in the RIF lifecycle. Managers can positively influence job performance and workplace motivation by including transparency, fairness, and trust in the workplace (Solove et al., 2015). Management strategies must include tactics to ensure survivors are fully aware that management actions are in their best interest.

Theme 2, job performance, aligns survivors' responses with literature on the RIF phenomenon. The evidence in the literature substantiates decreases in job performance, as a result of the emotional and behavioral changes of a RIF occurrence or turbulence in the workplace (Appelbaum et al., 1997). Moreover, actions that directly influence changes in the emotional and behavioral state of survivors have long-term positive effects on their views of transparency, fairness and trust in the workplace and management (Solove et al., 2015). Transportation managers can influence positive behaviors relating to job performance by allowing survivors to actively participate in decision-making and empowering survivors by open communication and sharing.

Theme 3, communication, was shown in the findings and confirmed from the survivors' responses. Various ways of communication, such as group meeting, email, official announcement, 1:1 meeting, and rumors are elements that impact survivors' perspectives of the selection process, specifically what was identified in the study as the ranking exercise. As the participants reflected back on their RIF experiences; specifically, the selection process, only one of the participants admitted a moderate level of knowledge relating to the ranking exercise. As indicated in the literature and study findings, the themes and subthemes of this study are interconnected throughout the RIF lifecycle. Each element could and does in many instances impact the other. The literature affirms the importance of each element in the strategic planning and implementation of a RIF occurrence or turbulence in the workplace. The absence of these elements causes detrimental long-term effects on survivors and unfavored view of their respective managers.

The findings of this qualitative exploratory study can serve as a foundational framework for transportation managers and practicing managers in similar capacity. The identification of critical elements that directly affect employees' job performance, such as transparency, fairness, and trust were validated from the study findings to have a significant impact on sustaining job performance by surviving employees in the workplace. The emotional and behavioral changes experienced by the survivors are areas managers can address when creating an implementation plan to execute during times of turbulence in the work environment. The emotional changes occur from the onset to the completion of the lifecycle. Management must be prepared to support employees during times of uncertainty by becoming skilled and trained to take the appropriate actions when needed. Additionally, managers must acknowledge the critical need for robust communication plans that span across various methods and flow vertically and horizontally. By

developing a management strategy that is inclusive to these critical elements, managers can minimize or eliminate the detriment to surviving employees.

The findings from this study also provided some concepts that should be further explored, such as those stemming from the emotional and behavioral changes; anxiety, guilt, uncertainty, anger, empowerment, value, and visibility. A future study examining empowerment survivors' feelings of being valued and promoting positive visibility of survivors' job performance during an RIF occurrence, would be beneficial to the body of knowledge. Furthermore, an expansion of this study to include the identified elements in a management strategy, given the same environment, and to further validate the findings, would be a value to practicing managers.

Transportation managers are faced with daily challenges and production demands that require a robust management plan, yet they lack the appropriate strategies, skills or capabilities to sustain job performance during turbulent times. By integrating critical elements in their strategies, many of the identified consequences can be mitigated. The RIF phenomenon is one commonly used to mitigate financial risks, yet knowledge relating to the consequences sustained by survivors of the occurrences are limited. The need for additional research could not be any greater.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent



Title of Study: Reduction-in-force: Management strategies needed to sustain employee's job performance in the transportation industry

Investigator: Annette Denise. Fulce

Contact Number: xxx

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore and gain an understanding of the impacts related to job performance when an RIF event occurs.

Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you have been identified as an employee working in the transportation industry and experienced a reduction-in-force event, within the last 5 years.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: Review and sign an informed consent to serve as an agreement by you to participate in the research study. Participate in a 45-60 minute recorded interview and any follow-up or clarifying questions to conclude your interview for this research study. Review and sign the final transcribed document to validate your responses are true and accurate.

Benefits of Participation

There may/may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn about your experience as an employee who has been involved in a reduction-in-force event.

Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study is estimated to involve minimal risk. An example of this risk is participants re-living the lifecycle of the reduction-in-force event during the interview. There is also the risk of confidentiality in any study. This risk is mitigated by de-identifying study participants and reporting findings as aggregated data.

Cost/Compensation

This will be no financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take approximately 45-60 minutes. You will not be compensated for your time. *Colorado Technical University will not provide compensation or free medical care for an unanticipated injury sustained as a result of participating in this research study.*

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Annette D.Fulce, xxx, Email: xxx or Alexa Schmitt, E-mail: xxx, xxx. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, you may contact Colorado Technical University – Doctoral Programs at 719-598-0200.

Voluntary Participation Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or at any time during the research study.

Confidentiality

Data obtained during the interview will be used specifically for the research study as indicated. The data will be securely stored in a locked file that is only accessed by the researcher. Participants identity will be undisclosed, and no personally identifiable information will be included in this study. All participants will be identified by pseudonym throughout the study, during recording and transcription. The locked file used for data storage will be destroyed after 5 years following the publication of this research study.

Participant Consent

I have read the above information and agreed to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

APPENDIX B

Detailed Plan

Research Study Title: Reduction-in-force: Management Strategies needed to Sustain Employee's Job Performance in the Transportation Industry

Step 1 – Contact Potential Interview Participants – Transportation Community and Affinity Group Websites

Step 2 – Collect Contact Information for Potential Interview Participants

Step 3 – Contact and Screen Participants to validate study participant criteria is met

Step 4 – Schedule Interviews – 2 pilot interviews first, make small modifications if needed

Step 5 – Begin interview process for selected interview participants

Step 6 – Before participant arrives, ensure location is private without distractions and interruption. Test equipment by performing a quick run through to ensure in working order

Step 7 – Once participant is comfortable and ready to start the interview begin with the script

Step 8 – Interview Script: Hello XX, my name is Annette Fulce, and I would like to begin by thanking you for your interest in my dissertation study and willingness to volunteer for this interview. The study is titled “*Reduction-in-force: management strategies needed to sustain employee's job performance in the transportation industry.*” The interview will consist of 10 questions relating to your RIF event experience and impact to job performance. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes. Your responses will be recorded, and in closing, you will

be asked to validate your responses. Do you have any questions before we begin? Follow Appendix C.

Step 9 – Once the interview is complete allow time for the participant to review their recorded responses and have them sign on the interview guide.

Step 10 – Thank the participant for their time. Once the participant leaves assign a pseudonym to the interview guide, document time and date.

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions/Topics

Primary question/topic:

1. Describe in detail the initial and ongoing communication received relating to the RIF event?
2. Please explain the selection process for determining who would be affected by the RIF event?
3. Explain any actions your manager could have taken to eliminate changes in your job performance associated to the RIF event?
4. Describe your job performance before you knew you would survive the RIF?
5. Please explain how the RIF event affected you emotionally and behaviorally?
6. Describe your job performance after you survived the RIF?
7. Explain your view of the company/organization in terms of transparency, fairness, and trust before the RIF and afterward?
8. Describe actions management took to restore transparency, trust, and fairness in the workplace?
9. Reflect on the impact the RIF event had on your view of the company/organization in terms of trust and fairness?
10. Explain how this impacted your overall job performance from then until now?

Study Participants Census Data

1. What is your gender?

2. What is your age range {20-30} {31-41} {42-50} {51-60} {over 60}?
3. How long have you worked in the transportation industry?
4. How many RIF events have you been affected by?
5. Have you experienced a reduction-in-force (RIF) event within the past 5 years?