

SERVANT LEADERSHIP IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

by

John W. Wesevich

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Liberty University, School of Business

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Abstract

Leadership matters because individuals desire to improve their personal, social, and professional lives; corporations seek individuals with specific leadership qualities to improve organizational and financial performance and gain a competitive advantage; and universities provide programs in leadership studies. Leadership encompasses influence over others to accomplish a specific or common goal (Northouse, 2019). This qualitative research study focused on a contemporary leadership approach, servant leadership, and its influence on organizational performance. Researchers have acknowledged a positive relationship between servant leadership and organizational performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Saleem et al., 2020; A. Wong et al., 2018). This qualitative case study corroborates existing research and was primarily based on interview data from 26 individuals across five companies within the oil and gas sector, survey data from 51 participants, and a review of publicly available documents. Servant leadership is an effective leadership style that can positively influence organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. Servant leaders effect this influence through empowering and holding employees accountable, creating a sense of community within their organizations, prioritizing helping followers grow and succeed, maintaining proper business ethics and integrity, adhering to core values regardless of national cultural dimensions, and placing greater emphasis on diversity and inclusion and corporate social responsibility.

Keywords: servant leadership, organizational performance, culture, diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, employee commitment and trust, business strategy.

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Approvals

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to all the wonderful people in my life who have supported and encouraged me over the years throughout my personal and professional pursuits, including family, friends, coworkers, and fellow servants. This study is also dedicated to my late parents, William and Lorraine, who taught me the value of work ethic. Finally, this study is dedicated to Jesus, my Lord and Savior. The primary goal of this research study is to bring glory to God.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

According to Northouse (2019), “Leadership is a highly sought after and highly valued commodity,” and “the public has become increasingly captivated by the idea of leadership” (p. 1). Northouse (2019) states that one of the primary reasons for the increased focus on leadership is that companies are always seeking ways to improve organizational and financial performance, and leadership plays an important role in this process. Some contemporary leadership styles that have received much attention in recent years include transformational leadership, authentic leadership, situational leadership, interpersonal leadership, and servant leadership (Northouse, 2019). This qualitative case study explored one of these contemporary leadership styles, servant leadership, to understand whether servant leadership actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspective of corporate culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. This qualitative case study was primarily based on interview data from 26 individuals across five companies within the oil and gas sector, as well as survey data from 51 participants and a review of publicly available documents.

This section addresses the development of the problem statement and research questions regarding the failure of organizations to adequately consider the cultural context of servant leadership and its potential impact on organizational performance. This first section provides a conceptual framework and a review of the professional and academic literature as it pertains to servant leadership and its influence on organizational performance from the standpoint of corporate culture and business strategy. Furthermore, this section includes the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations considered during the study and describes the significance of the study and how this qualitative research aims to add to the existing body of knowledge for understanding servant leadership’s influence on organizational performance.

Background of the Problem Statement

Servant leadership continues to gain popularity as an effective leadership style; however, it remains under-researched regarding its influence on organizational performance within the corporate environment. Academia has acknowledged the need to conduct more research to understand the cultural aspects of servant leadership, how culture impacts servant leadership, and how servant leadership contributes to sustainable organizational performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Muller et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). This study examined the cultural framework of servant leadership characteristics and attributes and how servant leadership might impact organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy.

Problem Statement

The general problem addressed was the failure of organizations to adequately consider the cultural context of servant leadership style, resulting in limited understanding and inaccurate estimate of its influence on organizational performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Eva et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Saleem et al., 2020). Ample evidence exists regarding the practical application of servant leadership thinking, dating to when Greenleaf (1970) first invented the term servant leadership (McNeff & Irving, 2017). However, academia acknowledges that they need to conduct more research on servant leadership within the corporate environment across multiple sectors, including exploring the (a) cultural context of servant leadership (Saleem et al., 2020); (b) effect of culture on servant leadership (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012); and (c) influence of servant leadership on organizational performance (Do et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019). Recent studies have found a positive correlation between servant leadership and organizational performance (Eva et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). However, researchers have acknowledged the need for more studies to (a) explore the core

mechanisms of servant leadership and its effect on organizational performance; (b) understand its effect on organizational performance over an extended period; and (c) investigate its effects on organizational performance across different cultures and human relationships (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Saleem et al., 2020). The specific problem addressed was the failure of organizations to adequately consider the cultural context of servant leadership style, resulting in limited understanding and inaccurate estimate of its influence on organizational performance within the oil and gas sector.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study and its multiple case study design was to explore the cultural context of servant leadership attributes and to understand whether these actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. Plenty of evidence supports the practical application of servant leadership in the Christian and nonprofit sectors (McNeff & Irving, 2017). However, there is a need to explore further whether servant leadership can have the same effect within the private sector, especially as more organizations adopt a more caring leadership style (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Saleem et al., 2020; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). This study sought to (a) describe how culture mediates servant leadership and its effect on organizational performance; (b) investigate how culture provides further insight into servant leadership and its connection to business ethics; (c) identify whether servant leadership can positively change organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion and positively change organizational culture to one that improves employee engagement and increases employee commitment and trust; and

(d) analyze whether servant leadership actions or behaviors contribute to business strategy formulation and execution that helps organizations gain or sustain a competitive advantage.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study employed a qualitative method involving a flexible design using a multiple case study method. Case study research design involves an in-depth investigation of a real-life contemporary phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Using a case study design, a researcher explores an issue or problem bounded within certain parameters, such as specific individuals or organizations, particular events or processes, certain locations, and defined periods (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Case study design is an appropriate approach whenever multiple sources of evidence, such as interviews, observations, participant responses to research activity instruments, and documents and artifacts, are needed to distinguish the boundaries between a phenomenon and its context. Researchers within social sciences, education, medicine, and business utilize the case study design (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Yin, 2018). The design focuses on answering how and why a particular phenomenon works in a contemporary setting in which a researcher has little or no control (Yin, 2018). Researchers use case study design as a primary way to obtain an in-depth understanding of complex issues and to deal with large numbers of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Raffaghelli et al., 2015). The researcher considered grounded theory methodology for this study, but that design requires (a) focusing on a process over time; (b) setting aside theoretical ideas or beliefs; (c) overcoming the difficulty in dealing with concurrent data collection and analysis; and (d) recognizing when sufficient data exist to develop a theory (Chun Tie et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018) on servant leadership's effect on organizational performance. The researcher also considered phenomenological methodology. However, this method entails bracketing personal experiences based on the interpretation of the

data, which involves much-needed thought, imagination, and feeling to obtain insights into the essence of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Cypress, 2018) of a lived experience, such as one impacted by servant leadership attributes. The researcher also considered a quantitative or mixed-method approach. However, the researcher believed a systematic subjective approach to obtain insights into understanding the cultural context of servant leadership and its influence on organizational performance was more appropriate than examining cause-and-effect relationships between servant leadership and organizational performance.

A multiple case study design suited the specific problem statement, research questions, and purpose statement for several reasons. First, this design enabled a focus on particular companies within the oil and gas sector recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership and then peer companies. Second, the research design involved an in-depth investigation of a real-life contemporary phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The contemporary phenomenon in this study involved the cultural context of servant leadership and its effect on organizational performance through positively changing organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion, increases employee commitment and trust, and sustains a competitive advantage. Third, multiple case study design involved numerous sources of data (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018), including (a) interviews; (b) participant responses to research activity instruments, such as the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ); and, in this case, (c) various sources of publicly available information on these companies, such as annual reports, company profiles, 10-Ks, investor/analyst presentations, company news articles, and scholarly journals that cover aspects of their organization and business. Fourth, the multiple case study design is applicable across the social sciences and business (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Yin, 2018), and this research involved servant leadership within

the business setting. Fifth, multiple case study design provided an effective way to obtain an in-depth understanding of servant leadership and whether servant leadership (a) improves organizational performance; (b) positively impacts diversity and inclusion; (c) increases employee engagement; (d) builds employee commitment and trust; and (e) affects business strategy formulation and execution. Sixth, researchers have utilized case studies to study servant leadership. For example, McNeff and Irving's (2017) study involved a network of family owned companies in Anoka, Minnesota. The researchers found the owners demonstrated servant leadership behaviors, which contributed to worker satisfaction through valuing and developing employees and building community.

Research Questions

The following research questions and sub-questions were intended to be open-ended questions that fit a case study research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018) to (a) address the specific problem statement mentioned above; (b) investigate a real-life contemporary phenomenon that entails the cultural context of servant leadership and its effect on organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy; (c) be aligned with the research concept; and (d) focus on servant leadership within the oil and gas sector. The first research question focused on the cultural context of servant leadership style and its influence on organizational performance. The second research question concerned the impact of culture on servant leadership and its linkage to business ethics. The third research question inquired about the connection between servant leadership and organizational culture, specifically related to diversity and inclusion, and the link between servant leadership and employee engagement, commitment, and trust. The fourth research question centered on the relationship between servant leadership and business strategy development and implementation.

The following are the research questions and sub-questions employed during this qualitative study:

RQ1: How does cultural context mediate any servant leadership influence on organizational performance?

RQ1a: What cultural elements enable servant leadership within organizations?

RQ1b: To what extent, if any, does servant leadership influence organizational performance?

RQ2: How does culture provide a richer understanding of servant leadership and any link to business ethics?

RQ2a: What aspects of culture affect servant leadership attributes?

RQ2b: What aspects of culture impact servant leadership's linkage to business ethics?

RQ3: To what extent, if any, does servant leadership positively change organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion, improves employee engagement, and increases employee commitment and trust?

RQ3a: What does leadership do to support diversity and inclusion?

RQ3b: What does leadership do to improve employee engagement?

RQ3c: What does leadership do to increase employee commitment and trust?

RQ3d: How do these leadership actions relate to servant leadership attributes?

RQ4: How does servant leadership impact business strategy formulation and execution?

RQ4a: What servant leadership actions or behaviors contribute to business strategy formulation?

RQ4b: What servant leadership actions or behaviors contribute to business strategy execution?

RQ1: Servant leadership can lead to positive behavioral outcomes at both the individual and organization levels (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). These positive behavioral outcomes include (a) greater individual and organizational commitment; (b) better organizational citizenship behavior; (c) higher levels of individual, team, and organizational performance; (d) raised level of affective trust among the workforce; (e) more employee and group creativity and efficacy; and (f) improved financial performance (Amir & Santoso, 2019; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Harwiki, 2016; Muller et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2020; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2016; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; J. Yang et al., 2017). However, researchers have acknowledged the need for more studies to examine whether servant leadership attributes contribute to organizational performance through goal attainment, customer satisfaction, and financial performance (Hartnell et al., 2020; Hunter et al., 2013). National culture affects the perception and endorsement of servant leadership and its influence on organizational performance. For example, egalitarianism and empowerment have more of an effect on Nordic/European cultures, whereas empathy, humility, standing back, and authenticity have a more significant effect on organizations within Asian cultures (Amir & Santoso, 2019; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). However, academia acknowledges that further studies across different cultures within specific sectors would be insightful (e.g., Hale & Fields, 2007; Van Dierendonck et al., 2017). This first research question is related to the problem statement, as this research question

intended to explore how culture mediates servant leadership and its effect on organizational performance.

RQ2: National culture can be a factor in servant leadership's effectiveness and its association with business ethics through how servant leadership is portrayed and received within organizations. Several studies have examined how national culture can affect the understanding of servant leadership and any link to business ethics. However, researchers have acknowledged the need for further research on this issue, especially as more companies expand into global markets (Hashim et al., 2019; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Van Dierendonck et al., 2017). This second research question is related to the problem statement, as this research question intended to investigate how culture provides further insight into servant leadership and its connection to business ethics.

RQ3: Plenty of research exists on diversity and inclusion from a human resource development (HRD) perspective (e.g., Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2015; Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018) but little on whether servant leadership impacts diversity and inclusion. Servant leadership emphasizes the importance of the personal growth of people and creates an environment of respect and trust that leads to greater employee satisfaction and retention (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). However, more research is needed regarding how servant leadership impacts organizational effectiveness and employee engagement and collaboration and trust over an extended period (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019). This third research question is related to the problem statement, as this research question is intended to understand whether servant leadership can positively change organizational culture

to one that supports diversity and inclusion and positively change organizational culture to one that improves employee engagement and increases employee commitment and trust.

RQ4: Servant leadership continues to increase in importance regarding business strategy formulation and execution. However, more research is needed regarding how servant leadership affects overall business strategy development and implementation (Do et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2018; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018). This fourth research question is related to the problem statement, as this research question is intended to examine whether servant leadership actions or behaviors contribute to business strategy formulation and execution that help organizations gain or sustain a competitive advantage.

Conceptual Framework

Leadership is receiving ever more focus as individuals desire to improve their personal, social, and professional lives, as corporations seek individuals with specific leadership qualities, and as academia provides programs in leadership studies. Leadership has been regarded in many ways over the years, and some of these concepts reflect real-life examples of great leaders. Leadership encompasses influence over others to accomplish a specific or common goal. Some leadership approaches that have received much attention in recent years include transformational leadership, authentic leadership, situational leadership, interpersonal leadership, and servant leadership (Northouse, 2019).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership focuses on using emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals to change and transform individuals. Transformational leadership centers on the importance of developing followers and improving their performance (Avolio, 1999; Northouse, 2019). Transformational leadership encourages followers to accomplish great things by (a)

practicing business integrity and acting as strong role models with high ethical and moral standards for employees to follow (idealized influence); (b) communicating a clear strategic vision and setting high expectations for employees to attain (inspirational motivation); (c) empowering employees to achieve higher standards and be innovative and participate in shared decisions and activities (intellectual stimulation); and (d) creating a work climate that allows employees to share ideas and concerns and to develop their skills, knowledge, and expertise (individualized consideration; Northouse, 2019; Park & Kim, 2018 ; Stock et al., 2017). Transformational leaders focus on company objectives and motivate employees toward a commitment to those objectives (Hoch et al., 2018).

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership emphasizes the importance of leaders being genuine. Authentic leadership has attracted more attention in recent years due to upheavals in society and people demanding their leaders be trustworthy. Authentic leadership involves five dimensions (purpose, values, relationships, self-discipline, and heart) with five related characteristics (passion, behavior, connectedness, consistency, and compassion; George, 2003). Authentic leadership has four components (self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency; Ling et al., 2017; Northouse, 2019). Authentic leaders (a) exhibit passion in their work; (b) understand their values and behave in a manner according to those values; (c) desire to connect with others; (d) exhibit self-discipline; and (e) display compassion toward others (Braun & Nieberle, 2017).

Situational Leadership

Situational leadership focuses on leadership in situations and comprises a supportive and directive dimension intended to be applied appropriately in a given situation (Northouse, 2019).

Situational leadership highlights both directive and supportive behaviors. Situational leaders exhibit these behaviors in one of four styles, and then change depending upon the situation and the development level of the followers. The four styles are (a) directing (high directive – low supportive) – applicable when followers typically have low competence but high commitment; (b) coaching (high directive – high supportive) – applicable when followers have some level of competence but little commitment; (c) supportive (low directive – high supportive) – applicable when followers have moderate to high competence but variable commitment; and (d) delegating (low directive – low supportive) – applicable when followers have both a high level of competence and commitment (Northouse, 2019; Wright, 2017).

Interpersonal Leadership

Interpersonal leadership concentrates on helping the organization succeed as a team and increasing employee engagement, which leads to more significant commitment (Hansen et al., 2014). Interpersonal leadership centers on leaders demonstrating effective communication and listening skills and empowering employees. Interpersonal leadership requires leaders to (a) have effective communication and listening skills; (b) inspire and provide insight to followers; (c) focus on empowering followers; and (d) maintain a team relationship with team members through goal focusing, collaborating, and building commitment (Northouse, 2019). Interpersonal leadership assimilates transformational leadership with interpersonal and informational impartiality (Hansen et al., 2014).

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership focuses on incorporating ethical and caring behavior to create teamwork, community, and personal growth. Servant leadership accentuates the importance of leaders serving their followers by (a) helping them with their personal growth and development;

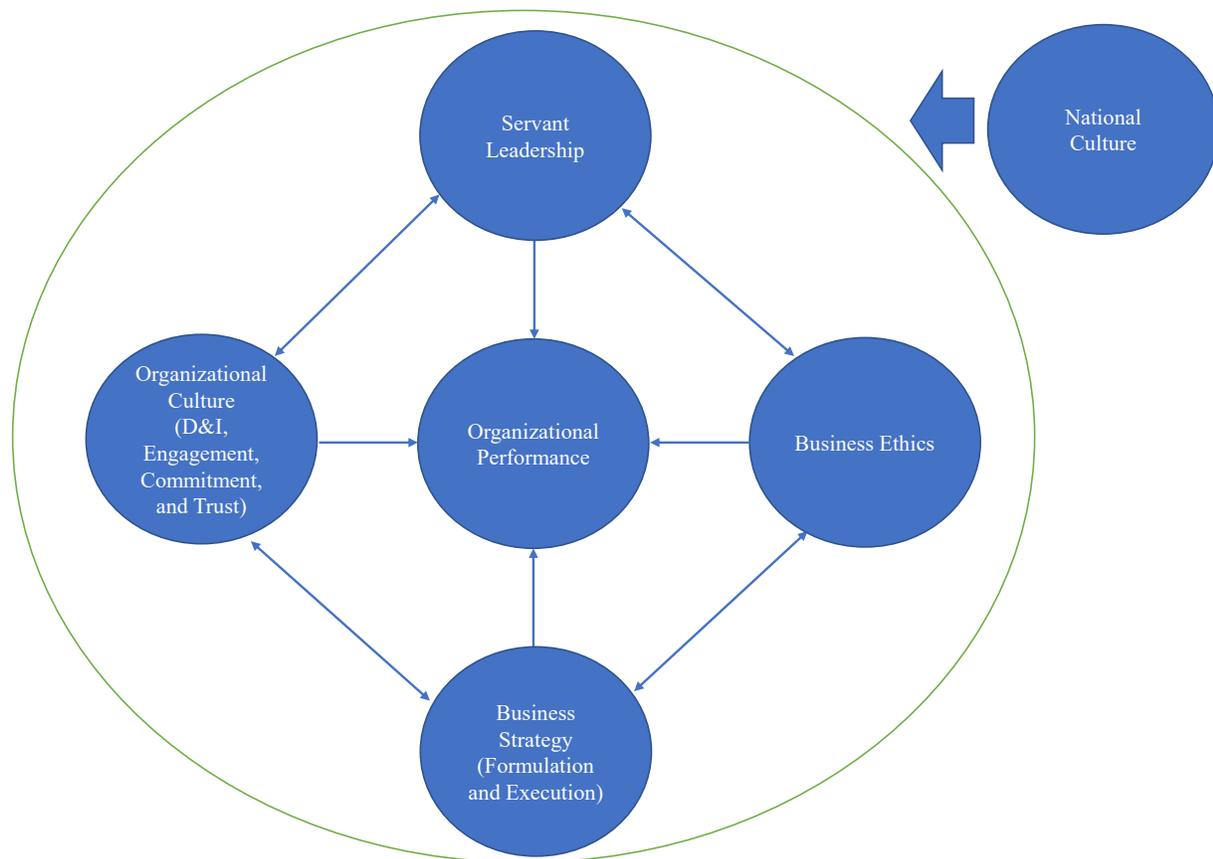
(b) empowering them to be involved in making decisions; (c) building a community in which they feel safe and connected to others within the organization; (d) demonstrating stewardship through providing direction, implementing corporate social responsibility and sustainability programs, and holding followers accountable for activities they can control (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Northouse, 2019). Servant leadership has several characteristics, including compassionate love, humility, stewardship, commitment, and empowerment. Servant leaders exhibit compassionate love by genuinely caring for others, being interested in followers' lives, and expressing sincere appreciation (Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Servant leaders display humility by focusing on others and accepting a realistic view of self (Muller et al., 2018). Such leaders practice stewardship by taking responsibility for their followers and making decisions in the best interest of their followers instead of their self-interest (Heyler & Martin, 2018; Northouse, 2019). Servant leaders prioritize being committed to helping their followers grow, contribute, and feel valued. These leaders empower their followers by giving them the freedom to handle stressful situations and by creating a sense of ownership and community (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Muller et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019).

The research framework involved studying the (a) relationship between the concept of national culture and the theory of servant leadership; (b) effect of national culture on understanding servant leadership; (c) the importance of organizational culture; (d) link between the theory of servant leadership and the concepts of diversity and inclusion management, employee engagement, and business strategy formulation and execution; and (e) influence of servant leadership on organizational performance, with a focus on the oil and gas sector. The research framework explored the connection between national culture, servant leadership, and organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture and business strategy

(Figure 1). The framework included selecting (a) companies within the oil and gas sector recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership, and that agreed to participate in this study; (b) peer companies; and (c) a sample of organizational leaders, direct reports, and human resource managers from the selected oil and gas companies. The conceptual framework diagram corresponds to the research questions by examining how national culture can provide a deeper understanding of servant leadership and its connection to business ethics. Furthermore, how servant leadership can influence organizational performance by incorporating diversity and inclusion initiatives, engaging employees, and developing and implementing business strategies was also explored.

Figure 1

Qualitative Case Study Conceptual Framework



Research Concept 1 – National Culture

National culture includes beliefs, values, customs, and language that can influence how leaders behave and lead their organizations to attain company goals and objectives (Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Perez, 2017). This concept has greater importance as more companies expand into global markets. In other words, an interdependent relationship exists between national culture and leadership, and leadership behaviors vary across different cultures (Hofstede, 2001). National culture is related to the specific problem statement and research questions because the research attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of how culture provides insight into servant leadership and mediates servant leadership and its effect on organizational performance.

Research Concept 2 – Organizational Culture

Organizational culture exists internally within a company based on prevailing norms, beliefs, values, and existing procedures that represent what is essential to the company and drive its business practices (Daft, 2016). Senior leaders exhibit values and actions that define organizational culture, which influences employee behaviors, work practices, and operating styles to achieve strategic initiatives (Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019; Snyder et al., 2018; Spector, 2013). The significance of organizational culture is related to the specific problem statement and research questions that focused on a corporate culture conducive to promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives, as well as employee engagement opportunities that impact organizational performance.

Research Concept 3 – Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity entails appreciating people's differences because of specific attributes, such as age, gender, race, and sexual preference (Mello, 2019). Inclusion recognizes diversity and includes programs that foster the diversity and integration of the entire workforce (Bourke &

Dillon, 2016). Senior management can use diversity and inclusion initiatives to help employees feel safe and connected (Mello, 2019). This concept is related to the specific problem statement and research questions because one of the focus areas of this study involved understanding whether a positive relationship exists between servant leadership and diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Research Concept 4 – Employee Engagement, Commitment, and Trust

Employee engagement entails companies making a concerted effort to make employees feel valued and appreciated for their work (Hooi, 2021). Such engagement improves task performance, job satisfaction, and office behavior (Y. Lee et al., 2017). Employee trust and job satisfaction are the key antecedents to inclusion and engagement, whereas innovation, performance, commitment, and reduced turnover are benefits of inclusion and engagement (Mello, 2019). Worker trust serves as an essential precursor to organizational performance since credibility matters and fosters collaboration, meaning employees are more likely to be engaged, attached, and committed to the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). This concept of employee engagement is related to the specific problem statement and research questions because one of the focus areas of this research involved understanding whether a positive relationship exists between servant leadership and increased employee engagement opportunities.

Research Concept 5 – Business Strategy Formulation and Execution

Business strategy formulation sets a company's direction regarding strategy and involves establishing a strategic vision, mission statement, set of core values, and goals and objectives. Business strategy formulation also involves selecting a strategic approach and establishing a competitive scope of operations (Gamble et al., 2019). Business strategy execution involves incorporating specific techniques, actions, and behaviors customized to the chosen strategic

alternative and competitive scope criteria that executives believe will give their company a competitive advantage and allow them to provide superior value to their customers (Gamble et al., 2019). This concept of business strategy formulation and execution is related to the specific problem statement and research questions because one of the focus areas of this study included understanding how servant leadership impacts business strategy development and implementation.

Research Theory 1 – Servant Leadership

Servant leadership was introduced in 1970 by Greenleaf, who believed there was a better way to lead and manage organizations than the traditional hierarchical leadership style. Greenleaf (1970) introduced a paradigm shift in which leaders focus on serving and developing those they lead (McNeff & Irving, 2017). Although the term “servant leadership” is relatively new, the concept dates to biblical times, with Jesus as the perfect example of a servant leader and the greatest leadership role model of all time (Blanchard et al., 2016). Servant leadership can result in positive behavioral outcomes at the individual and organization levels and in society-at-large (Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Servant leadership creates an environment of trustworthiness, respect for others, responsibility through accountability and excellence, fairness, transparency, open communication, and citizenship by complying with laws and regulations that can lead to greater job satisfaction, employee commitment and trust, and involvement in business strategy formulation and execution (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Y. Lee et al., 2017; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Snyder et al., 2018). This theory of servant leadership is related to the specific problem statement and research questions as this research attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of servant leadership and whether it influences organizational performance through (a) positively impacting diversity and inclusion; (b) increasing employee

engagement; (c) building employee commitment and trust; and (d) affecting business strategy formulation and execution.

Research Theory 2 – Importance of National Culture on Servant Leadership

National culture represents the shared values, conventions, and way of life within a society (Sulieman, 2017). National culture impacts leadership styles, attributes, and behaviors, and leadership needs to be open to cultural diversity, especially in this era of globalization (Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Perez, 2017). National culture can provide a deeper understanding of servant leadership and its connection to business ethics through how leaders (a) exhibit servant leadership characteristics, such as humility, service, and vision; (b) empower followers; (c) help employees grow and succeed; and (d) demonstrate ethical behavior and treat employees fairly (Bedi et al., 2016; Hale & Fields, 2007; Zhang et al., 2021). This theory of the importance of national culture is related to the specific problem statement and research questions that focused on national culture's impact on servant leadership and its connection to business ethics.

Research Theory 3 – Servant Leadership Link to Organizational Culture

Servant leaders can make servant leadership criteria part of their company's values, norms, and beliefs. Servant leaders can demonstrate these criteria by establishing a corporate culture that supports diversity, inclusion, and employee engagement, creating an environment conducive to increased employee commitment and trust, which can lead to improved organizational performance and competitive strategy (Eva et al., 2018). As mentioned, academia has conducted little research on servant leadership's effect on diversity and inclusion. However, the servant leadership criterion of empowerment can make employees feel more engaged and committed and positively affect the social exchange relationship between employees and management within an organization (Panaccio et al., 2015). This theory of a connection between

servant leadership and organizational culture is related to the specific problem statement and research questions that focused on whether a positive relationship exists between servant leadership and a corporate culture conducive to diversity and inclusion initiatives and employee engagement opportunities.

Research Theory 4 – Servant Leadership Connection with Business Strategy

Servant leadership mediates the hierarchical relationship between strategic initiatives and employee creativity, leading to effective business strategy execution. Servant leadership provides a link between strategy and creativity through guidance, sacrifice, and ethical values that lead to respect, loyalty, and commitment to execute strategic initiatives and goals (Do et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019). This theory of a connection between servant leadership and business strategy is related to the specific problem statement and research questions that focused on how servant leadership impacts business strategy formulation and execution.

Research Actors – Oil and Gas Companies

This study involved selected companies within the oil and gas sector recognized for servant leadership (e.g., Fortune Media Corporation, n.d.) or promoting servant leadership. These companies included both publicly and privately held companies that agreed to participate in this research study. This study encompassed a review of publicly available information on these selected companies, such as annual reports, company profiles, 10-Ks, investor/analyst presentations, company news articles, and scholarly journals that cover their organization and business (i.e., data on employee growth, diversity and inclusion initiatives, corporate social responsibility [CSR] – now commonly referred to as environmental, social, and governance [ESG] – business strategy, and anything else that could indicate why these companies are recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership). Furthermore, this study

included peer companies of these selected companies (i.e., reviewing similar publicly available information on these companies).

Research Actors – Organizational Leaders and Human Resource Managers Within Selected Oil and Gas Companies

This study entailed requesting interviews with a sample of organizational leaders, direct reports, and human resource managers, as well as participants completing the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ), an academically recognized survey instrument developed by Liden et al. (2008). The researcher developed a list of questions about (a) leadership approach; (b) organizational culture; (c) diversity and inclusion initiatives; (d) employee development, engagement, and commitment; and (e) business strategy formulation and execution (see Appendix A), and then conducted interviews with the actors.

Summary of the Conceptual Framework

Servant leadership attributes can lead to positive behavioral outcomes within a firm because servant leadership emphasizes both individual and organizational performance and growth through creating an environment of integrity, respect for others, responsibility and accountability, fairness, open communication, and transparency (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). This research framework attempted to build on existing research by focusing on servant leadership, the significance of organizational culture, and the connection between servant leadership, organizational culture (e.g., diversity, inclusion, and employee engagement), and business strategy within the oil and gas sector. The framework incorporated gathering data from multiple sources, including (a) interviews, (b) participant responses to the SLQ, and (c) various sources of publicly available information.

Definition of Terms

Business Strategy: A business strategy is a plan that companies develop that focuses on using resources to achieve defined goals considering the competitive environment (Blocher et al., 2019). Business strategy incorporates management's critical decisions to meet organizational goals and objectives, gain or sustain a competitive advantage, and achieve performance targets (Gamble et al., 2019). Business strategy includes strategy development and implementation. Strategy development involves (a) setting a company's direction via a strategy; (b) formulating a strategic vision, mission statement, set of core values, and goals and objectives; (c) choosing a strategic approach; and (d) establishing a competitive scope of operations. Strategy implementation involves executing the formulated strategy (Gamble et al., 2019).

Diversity and Inclusion: Diversity describes the differences of individuals through various attributes, such as age, gender, race, and sexual preference (Mello, 2019). Inclusion involves how organizations address diversity and foster the integration of all employees (Guillaume et al., 2014). Diversity and inclusion within companies include initiatives implemented to create an inclusive working environment in which people sense acceptance and feel valued for their contributions (Russell, 2018).

Employee Engagement: Employee engagement involves the emotional commitment a worker has to their organization and the goals of that organization (Hooi, 2021). Employee engagement centers on the working environment and captures both the physical and psychological work experience (Shuck, 2020). Furthermore, such engagement involves organizations carrying out actions that make employees feel a part of the company (Hooi, 2021).

National Culture: National culture encompasses the traits and preferences that individuals of a society share and that shape their behavior (Hofstede, 2001). These traits and

preferences differ between various culture clusters. Regarding servant leadership, empathy and humility are more likely in collective cultures (e.g., Asian cultures). In contrast, individualistic cultures (e.g., Nordic/European cultures) are more likely to engage in empowerment (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012).

Oil and Gas Sector: The oil and gas sector has three major segments: upstream, midstream, and downstream. The upstream segment includes the exploration and production of hydrocarbons (crude oil and natural gas). The midstream segment involves transportation (via pipeline, truck, rail, barge, or oil tanker), terminaling, and wholesale marketing of crude or refined products (Shqairat & Sundarakani, 2018). The downstream segment involves refining crude oil into petroleum products (e.g., fuel oil, gasoline, jet fuel, lubricants, and petrochemicals) and marketing these products. Companies within the oil and gas sector are (a) integrated since they have operations within each of the three segments; (b) exploration and production companies; (c) refining and marketing companies; and (d) oil and gas service and engineering companies.

Organizational Culture: Organizational culture includes the prevailing norms, beliefs, values, and existing procedures within a company that drive their business practices (Daft, 2016; Snyder et al., 2018). According to Daft (2016), organizational culture involves shared values, norms, guiding beliefs, and understandings within an organization that are taught to new employees regarding how to think, feel, and behave. Organizational culture is a system of values or shared meaning accepted by the workforce (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

Servant Leadership: Servant leadership is a leadership theory that centers on the importance of leaders serving others and putting the needs of followers first (Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Servant leadership accentuates the importance of leaders

serving their followers. Servant leadership focuses on incorporating ethical and caring behavior to create teamwork, community, and personal growth. Servant leadership involves several characteristics, including compassionate love, humility, stewardship, commitment, and empowerment (Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

This research study had three underlying methodological assumptions: first, the participants would respond to interview questions and surveys honestly and truthfully; second, the respondents would be interested and supportive of the research; and third, the companies recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership are companies that exhibit servant leadership attributes. The potential risk regarding these three assumptions was there could be undesirable responses that could have influenced the study's outcome, which would be difficult to mitigate fully. However, the researcher (a) made every effort to provide a safe environment for participants to express their true opinions and establish parameters to preserve their anonymity and confidentiality (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019); (b) created straightforward interview questions; (c) treated participants with respect and gratitude; (d) maintained a positive attitude throughout the research process; and (e) used the SLQ, a credible survey instrument (Grobler & Flotman, 2020; Liden et al., 2015). The researcher also employed validation and reliability constructs in qualitative research to ensure accuracy, such as (a) corroborating evidence through multiple data sources through interviews, observations, and review of documents (triangulation); (b) searching for exceptions (disconfirmation); (c) comparing current data with data previously collected (reflexivity); (d) soliciting respondent feedback; (e) seeking participant collaboration; (f) building rapport with the individuals; and (g) creating a thick, rich description (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher conducted interviews in person, as well via

Zoom and Microsoft Teams. The primary data collection was qualitative, via interviews, and then included a descriptive quantitative analysis of the survey instruments and a review of publicly available information from selected companies for triangulation purposes. This study also contained an underlying assumption that servant leadership is a distinctive leadership approach separate from other leadership styles, and that servant leadership attributes can positively impact organizational performance.

Limitations

This research study had five inherent limitations. First, this study included only companies and individuals that agreed to participate in interviews and complete the instruments. This limit could have been further compounded if the researcher had not been able to obtain respondents from various countries to draw conclusions from a cultural context. However, the researcher was able to find respondents from multiple countries. Second, the validity of this study depended on the reliability of the SLQ research instrument; however, the SLQ has credibility from past studies, so this was not an issue (Grobler & Flotman, 2020; Liden et al., 2015). Third, this study had the potential to be constrained by the self-reporting of data by participants, coupled with an individual-level understanding of servant leadership, which could create the potential for bias. Fourth, this study reflected data representative of a single point in time. Fifth, this study involved gathering, interpreting, and analyzing data, which could lead to human error. The researcher mitigated these five limitations by (a) selecting 26 individuals across five companies within the sector to obtain a large enough sample and broad representation; (b) making every effort to gather information from a range of participants and treating them with respect and dignity; (c) asking clear, unbiased, and focused questions that corresponded to the problem statement and research questions; (d) employing a credible survey

instrument (SLQ); (e) conducting the gathering, interpreting, and analyzing of the survey results in accordance with case design methodology; (f) relying on publicly available information from the selected companies to corroborate the qualitative data; and (g) performing the triangulation, disconfirmation, and reflexivity steps, as mentioned above (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Delimitations

This research study included three delimitations. First, the scope of this study explored only companies within the oil and gas sector, instead of a broader examination across multiple sectors. Second, this study specifically focused on the theory of servant leadership, rather than general leadership theory or multiple leadership theories. Third, this study centered on how servant leadership impacts organizational performance from the perspectives of corporate culture and business strategy.

Significance of the Study

This research study intended to corroborate existing research and contribute to the knowledge of servant leadership and its impact on organizational performance in four distinct ways. First, the study focused on servant leadership in the corporate environment, specifically the oil and gas sector, as scholars have recognized the need to conduct more research on servant leadership within the corporate environment across multiple sectors (Do et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; A. Wong et al., 2018). Second, the study examined servant leadership from a cultural context, as researchers confirm that more studies are needed to assess the core mechanisms of servant leadership and its effect on organizational performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Saleem et al., 2020). Third, the study explored the effect of national culture on servant leadership and considered Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions, such as power distance, humane orientation, institutional and in-group

collectivism, and performance and future orientation. Fourth, the study evaluated servant leadership's influence on organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture and business strategy, including (a) diversity and inclusion management, (b) employee engagement, (c) worker commitment and trust, and (d) strategy formulation and execution, as academia acknowledges that there is a need to conduct more research to understand servant leadership's impact over an extended period and across different cultures and human relationships (Eva et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). Some studies have revealed a positive relationship between servant leadership and organizational behavior (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Saleem et al., 2020; A. Wong et al., 2018), which this research supports.

Reduction of Gaps

This research study aimed to reduce a few gaps in the literature and add to the existing body of knowledge regarding understanding servant leadership's influence on organizational performance. First, researchers have acknowledged the need for more studies regarding the potential influence of national culture on servant leadership and its link to business ethics (Bissessar, 2018; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Saleem et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Second, more studies are needed regarding the potential impact of servant leadership on organizational performance over an extended period and across different cultures and human relationships (Eva et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). Third, scholars have conducted studies on the effect of HRD on diversity and inclusion; however, there is little research on the effect of servant leadership on diversity and inclusion. Fourth, researchers have concluded that servant leadership attributes can positively affect employee commitment, trust, and interaction with management and can lead to greater respect, loyalty, and commitment to execute strategic initiatives and goals; however, they have acknowledged the need for more studies within specific corporate sectors (Do et al., 2018;

Eva et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2020; A. Wong et al., 2018). Fifth, scholars have extensively studied the effect of servant leadership on organizational performance from the perspectives of individual and team performance, organizational culture, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational sustainability, and the social exchange between leaders and followers (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Eva et al., 2018; Panaccio et al., 2015; Saleem et al., 2020). However, this research study focused on the influence of servant leadership on organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture, specifically diversity and inclusion management, employee commitment and trust, and business strategy.

Implications for Biblical Integration

The concepts and theories employed in this study are connected to biblical principles for several reasons. First, servant leadership is modeled on the life of Jesus, who is often described as the model of a servant leader (Blanchard et al., 2016). Second, servant leadership bases itself on the biblical concept of being called and commanded to serve. R. Warren (2002) mentions in his famous book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, that people were created to serve, saved to serve, called to serve, and commanded to serve. Third, servant leadership bases itself on the biblical concept of stewardship, because God owns all and people are only stewards of what God has given them: "We were put on earth to make a contribution," and "God designed us to make a difference in our life" (R. Warren, 2002, p. 227). Fourth, servant leadership bases itself on the biblical concept of focusing on others. Jesus said the second greatest commandment is to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39, NIV). This biblical concept of focusing on others, when translated into business, includes (a) appreciating the workforce for their diversity; (b) engaging employees and making them feel valued and included; (c) helping workers attain outstanding performance, enjoy their work, and recognize their calling as stewards of what God

has given them; and (d) encouraging personnel to behave ethically, treat people the way they want to be treated, and serve others (e.g., customers, suppliers, coworkers, and other stakeholders). When people recognize the purpose and value of work involving serving and helping others, they have more reason to use their talents, ambitions, and energy and are more successful (Keller, 2012). Paul expounds on the purpose and value of work in his letter to the Colossians: “whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Colossians 3:23 NIV). Servant leadership conceptually aligns with the biblical worldview because of its emphasis on service and stewardship, its focus on others, and it being modeled on the life of Jesus (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003).

Nehemiah, a biblical character, demonstrated servant leadership characteristics, especially when he rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:18). Nehemiah displayed compassionate love by attending to the needs of his followers. He exhibited genuine concern for them as he listened to their distress and plight. When servant leaders display love, followers feel alive, connected, and energized (Daft, 2002). The citizens of Jerusalem were connected and energized; they completed the project in less than two months. Nehemiah exhibited humility by acting as an equal to them when he worked alongside them on the wall. Therefore, Nehemiah was able to engage his followers and attain commitment and trust. Nehemiah demonstrated stewardship over the people and resources he managed and took responsibility for overseeing the project and protecting the Jewish workers with guards at stations around the city (Friedman & Herskovitz, 2019). Proper stewardship is a biblical concept that encourages leaders to take care of what has been entrusted to them (Duby, 2009), which Nehemiah did. Nehemiah realized that to start the reconstruction efforts, he needed to create a sense of community and display commitment to the project and the people of Jerusalem and help them succeed in doing what was

necessary to bring safety and security to the city. Nehemiah empowered his followers by allowing them to work in family units and be responsible for the respective sections of the wall (Thomas et al., 2015).

Relationship to Field of Study

This research study is related to the researcher's specific discipline/field of study in leadership. Leadership encompasses influence over others to accomplish a specific or common goal and has been examined in many ways over the years. Some of the leadership approaches that have received much attention in recent years include transformational leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, and team leadership (Northouse, 2019). This study extensively considered one of these contemporary leadership styles – servant leadership – regarding its cultural context and its impact on organizational performance from the perspectives of (a) positively changing organizational culture; (b) increasing employee engagement, commitment, and trust; and (c) affecting business strategy development and implementation.

Summary of the Significance of the Study

Researchers have acknowledged a positive relationship between servant leadership and organizational performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Saleem et al., 2020; A. Wong et al., 2018). However, more studies are needed on the influence of servant leadership on organizational performance within specific corporate sectors, over an extended period, and across different cultures and human relationships (Bissessar, 2018; Do et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2018; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Saleem et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). This research study intended to support existing research and contribute to the knowledge of servant leadership and its influence on organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture and business strategy, focusing on companies within the oil and gas sector and considering national

cultural conditions. This research study also aimed to reduce gaps in the research and aspired to take the research concepts and theories and connect them to biblical principles, especially since servant leadership is based on (a) the life of Jesus, (b) being commanded and called to serve, (c) stewardship, and (d) focus on others.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Introduction

Leadership encompasses influence over others to accomplish a specific or common goal (Northouse, 2019). Various leadership approaches and styles work better in particular contexts or situations. Leadership approaches and techniques change depending upon the contexts and situations. Some leadership approaches that have received much attention in recent years include transformational leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, and team leadership (Northouse, 2019). One of the common themes in these leadership approaches is the increased focus on the relationship between leaders and followers. This literature review focuses on one of these contemporary leadership styles: servant leadership. Greenleaf (1970) introduced servant leadership as a leadership approach that premises "true leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others" (Spears, 2004, p. 8). Servant leadership continues to receive attention in the academic and corporate realms and attracts a broad audience across all types of organizations (Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017). Servant leadership involves ethical and caring behavior that focuses on teamwork, community, and personal growth (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). However, the principle of servant leadership has its roots in biblical times when Jesus walked the earth. Jesus demonstrated authentic servant leadership in the way He led His disciples. Jesus taught that service is a mandate for leadership and lived a life of service (Blanchard et al., 2016). Greenleaf's beliefs

parallel the Christ-centered perspective by using servant leadership as an expression to serve others.

This literature review covers numerous topics pertaining to servant leadership and its influence on organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture and business strategy. First, this literature review provides an overview of servant leadership. Second, this literature review addresses how national cultural conditions affect servant leadership and its link to business ethics. Third, this literature review captures how servant leadership impacts organizational culture through (a) diversity and inclusion management, (b) employee engagement, and (c) building employee commitment and trust. Fourth, this literature review defines servant leadership's role in business strategy formulation and execution.

One theme in this literature review is an increase in both qualitative and quantitative research in an attempt to understand how servant leadership impacts organizational performance because an increasing number of organizations are (a) adopting a more caring leadership style; (b) seeking a leadership approach that engages employees; (c) encouraging collaboration and creativity; and (d) promoting service to stakeholders (e.g., workforce, customers, suppliers, and society-at-large; Neubert et al., 2016). A second theme involves more research being needed to understand better the cultural context of servant leadership and its effect on organizational performance. A third theme centers on how national culture affects servant leadership and its connection to business ethics. A fourth theme involves how servant leadership positively impacts organizational culture. A final theme involves mostly positive viewpoints regarding servant leadership's influences on business strategy formulation and execution.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a contemporary leadership theory involving the principle that leaders must serve their followers and focus on their subordinates' needs ahead of their own (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977; Northouse, 2019). Servant leadership has attracted growing research interest in organizational studies because its premise of putting the needs of others first can foster positive organizational outcomes (Liu, 2019; Saleem et al., 2020). Servant leaders prioritize being committed to helping their followers grow, contribute, and feel valued (Northouse, 2019). Based on the literature review, servant leadership involves several characteristics: (a) exhibiting compassionate love, (b) demonstrating humility, (c) practicing stewardship, (d) empowering others, (e) expecting accountability, (f) building community, (g) sharing vision, (h) creating an environment of trust, (i) conceptualizing, and (j) helping followers grow and succeed. Furthermore, based on this literature review, servant leadership is connected to business ethics. According to Blanchard et al. (2016), the concept of servant leadership dates to biblical times, and the life and teachings of Jesus best illustrate servant leadership.

Servant Leadership Characteristics

Exhibiting Compassionate Love. One of the significant characteristics of servant leadership involves exhibiting compassionate love, which requires leaders to (a) genuinely care for others and be interested in the lives of their followers, including understanding their personalities and learning their strengths and weaknesses; (b) express sincere appreciation and inspire hope; (c) demonstrate acts of kindness intended to benefit employees instead of themselves; and (d) exhibit selfless behavior and motives for the good of others (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Compassionate love is central to the overall theory of servant leadership, premised on the desire of leaders to invert the organizational pyramid and serve their followers (Heyler & Martin, 2018; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Van Dierendonck and

Patterson (2015) state that compassionate love acts as the cornerstone of servant leadership, and that compassionate love leads to other servant leadership traits and behaviors, such as humility, gratitude, empowerment, stewardship, providing direction, and a sense of community.

Compassionate love is sometimes referred to as *agápa* love, which involves unconditional or unselfish love that emphasizes doing the right thing for others at the appropriate time and for ethical reasons (Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015).

Demonstrating Humility. A second significant characteristic of servant leadership entails demonstrating humility, which means leaders putting their interests, talents, and achievements in the proper perspective (Heyler & Martin, 2018; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Humility is a crucial element for Collins' (2001) Level 5 leadership. Humility involves (a) focusing on others; (b) accepting a realistic view of self; (c) admitting the task is more significant than the person; (d) acknowledging others' contributions and strengths; (e) demonstrating openness to listen, learn, and develop; (f) rejecting self-glorification; and (g) allowing God to work in people's lives (Mulinge, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; Wilkes, 1998). Humility also entails a willingness to stand back by (a) prioritizing the interests of followers; (b) providing employees with support and recognition; and (c) exhibiting modesty (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017).

Practicing Stewardship. A third significant characteristic of servant leadership involves practicing stewardship, which means leaders being willing to take responsibility for their organization, commit to service, and make decisions for the best interest of everyone within their organization instead of their self-interest, as well as society-in-general (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Heyler & Martin, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Servant

leadership aligns with stewardship theory, which emphasizes that individuals are “other-focused as stewards for their companies and make decisions for the best interest of the organization rather than in their own self-interest” (Heyler & Martin, 2018, p. 234). Stewardship involves having the attitude of being a caretaker focused on leaving a positive legacy (Sims, 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017), which Greenleaf (1977) believes is necessary to lead successfully. Proper stewardship is a biblical concept involving leaders caring for what has been entrusted to them (Duby, 2009).

Empowering Others. A fourth significant characteristic of servant leadership is empowering others, which allows leaders to (a) provide autonomy to followers to complete tasks, foster talents, engage in independent problem-solving, participate in effective self-leadership, and have the freedom to handle stressful situations (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Northouse, 2019; Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); (b) create a sense of ownership and responsibility in employees (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); (c) improve self-confidence through accepting views of followers, coaching, information sharing, and giving them the ability to practice power (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Sims, 2018); (d) incorporate employee input on essential managerial decisions (Hunter et al., 2013); and (e) build a sense of community within organizations to enable followers to flourish and grow (McNeff & Irving, 2017; A. Wong et al., 2018). Empowerment can lead to an improvement in the decision-making process, increase in productivity, enhancement in morale, and reduction in employee turnover (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Maxwell (2007) contends that, “only secure leaders give power to others” (p. 121). Servant leaders empower employees by being motivational, intellectually stimulating, and inspirational

(Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). Jesus empowered His followers to serve, and then he trusted them to do just that (Blanchard et al., 2016).

Accepting Accountability. A fifth significant characteristic of servant leadership is accepting accountability, which necessitates leaders (a) assume responsibility; (b) provide transparency; (c) ensure employees are responsible for their actions and results; (d) monitor performance; and (e) establish clear expectations in accordance with their followers' capabilities, needs, and potential areas of contribution (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Accountability is necessary for leaders to build strong relationships with their employees, as accountability promotes trust, breeds responsibility, enhances identification with the organization, and encourages stewardship (Mulinge, 2018). Accountability creates an environment for effective performance management, learning opportunities, and responsibility acceptance throughout the organization (Ragnarsson et al., 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017).

Building Community. A sixth significant characteristic of servant leadership is building community, which encompasses leaders working toward viewing their organizations as groups that can have positive relationships internally, as well as externally with their customers and the people in the communities they operate in and society-in-general (Jaramillo et al., 2015; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Building community entails leaders creating a caring, supportive, encouraging, and collaborative environment (Coetzer et al., 2017; A. Wong et al., 2018). Furthermore, Building community involves leaders (a) spending quality time with their employees to learn the goals, needs, and aspirations of their followers; (b) making themselves available for their staff; (c) recognizing workers' accomplishments; (d) hosting special events, such as Christmas parties and cultural celebrations; and (e) encouraging the

workforce to participate in community service opportunities outside of work (Hunter et al., 2013; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Sharing Vision. A seventh significant characteristic of servant leadership involves leaders (a) leading with a clear vision; (b) effectively communicating their vision or hopes, dreams, and aspirations; (c) expressing high ideals and values; (d) inspiring their workforce to act and accomplish; (e) stimulating followers' spirit; and (f) focusing on the future state of the organization (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Qiu & Dooley, 2019; Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017). Greenleaf (1977) defines vision as having a strategy and sharing that vision with others in a way they can grasp and become excited about. Servant leaders communicate their vision in a manner that employees can embrace, imagine the future, feel empowered, and maximize efforts to accomplish (Heyler & Martin, 2018).

Creating an Environment of Trust. An eighth significant characteristic of servant leadership entails creating an environment of trust, which means leaders (a) acting with integrity; (b) establishing meaningful dyadic relationships with subordinates; and (c) fostering a psychologically safe and fair organizational climate (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leaders emphasize the importance of trust to (a) establish credibility; (b) build rapport and long-term relationships; and (c) enable open communication to share insights and problem-solving approaches and to resolve conflicts (Sims, 2018; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Creating an environment of trust "sends social cues about the importance of concern for others' feelings and conveys compassion" (Lu et al., 2019, p. 509).

Conceptualizing. A ninth significant characteristic of servant leadership involves conceptualizing, in which leaders thoroughly understand their organization, including its goals, purposes, mission, and tasks at hand, and continuously focus on broader perspectives while

remaining connected to day-to-day realities (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Hunter et al., 2013; Lumpkin & Achen, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Samuel et al., 2018). Servant leaders conceptualize to support and assist their followers effectively (Boone & Makhani, 2012). Servant leaders also conceptualize to encourage employees to “use mental models and expand their creative processes” (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 307).

Helping Followers Grow and Succeed. A tenth significant characteristic of servant leadership involves leaders (a) exhibiting genuine interest in their employees’ career progression, goals, and ambitions; (b) providing subordinates with various opportunities to enhance their skills and develop new talents; (c) offering support and mentoring; (d) putting the needs of others ahead of their own; and (e) focusing on their workers’ wellbeing and growth (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Hunter et al., 2013; Liu, 2019; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leaders prioritize creating a climate of growth in which workers can develop and improve their potential (Neubert et al., 2016). Such leaders provide learning and encourage and affirm their followers (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Servant Leadership Connection to Business Ethics

A well-supported concept in ethics research involves recognizing leaders play a critical role in creating an ethical work climate and influencing ethical perceptions and actions within companies (Jaramillo et al., 2015). Servant leadership aligns more with business ethics and ethical work climate than any other leadership theory because of its focus on leaders putting the needs of others first, the inclusion of moral safeguards, the emphasis on positive and collective purposes, and the attention to ethics and behavioral integrity (A. Lee et al., 2020; Liu, 2019; Northouse, 2019). In other words, servant leadership differs from other leadership styles because of its emphasis on focusing on subordinates’ interests and demonstrating ethical and moral

character (Northouse, 2019). When Greenleaf started his second career as a leadership consultant and articulated his new leadership paradigm – servant leadership – he made business ethics a central tenet (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Greenleaf founded the Center of Applied Ethics in 1964 to further research in servant leadership and provide training on servant leadership. In 1985, this center was renamed the Robert K. Greenleaf Center (Parris & Peachey, 2013). In recent years, business ethics has taken on greater importance due to concerns over ethical scandals within the corporate landscape, such as Enron, WorldCom, and the subprime crisis (Conrad, 2018; Liu, 2019).

Business Ethics

Business ethics is primarily concerned with the proper ethical conduct of enterprises, including considerations of morality (Melkevik, 2019; Perez, 2017). Business entails managers and employees following a code of ethical and moral principles and values that influence individual, group, and company actions and behaviors about right and wrong (Daft, 2016). Business ethics involves company personnel at all levels of the organization operating ethically among themselves and with stakeholders (e.g., customers, suppliers, shareholders, government officials, and society-in-general), which makes good business sense because it can keep companies from incurring the significant costs associated with unethical behavior (Conrad, 2018). Regarding firms, ethical values are among the essential values that form organizational culture (Daft, 2016). Some costs associated with unethical behavior include (a) fines, penalties, and lawsuits; (b) internal administrative costs, such as legal costs, ethics training, and corrective action costs; (c) reputational risk; and (d) worker morale and turnover (Conrad, 2018; Gamble et al., 2019).

Servant Leadership Connection to Business Ethics

Based on the literature review, servant leadership practices correlate with business ethics in several ways. First, servant leadership provides an ethical and transparent working climate (Jaramillo et al., 2015). Such a working climate entails a principled-based work environment associated with ethical behaviors, rather than an egoistic climate that emphasizes self-interest (Haldorai et al., 2020). An ethical and transparent climate encourages prosocial behavior and raises the level of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Haldorai et al., 2020). Haldorai et al. (2020) came to this conclusion in a study based on data collected from over 600 Indian hotel employees. Saleem et al. (2020) surveyed 233 pairs of subordinate–supervisor dyads within Pakistani universities. Based on department heads doing what they promise and holding their staff to high ethical standards, the researchers conclude that servant leadership provides an ethical and transparent work environment and improves OCB (Saleem et al., 2020).

Second, servant leadership emphasizes the importance of leaders behaving ethically, which involves (a) consistently doing the right thing in the right way; (b) always holding to solid ethical standards; (c) continuously acting and interacting in a transparent, fair, and honest manner with others; and (d) regularly employing ethically justifiable means (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019). Behaving ethically means practicing integrity, in which leaders (a) do what they say they are going to do; (b) live a life with exemplary character; (c) make ethical decisions; and (d) ensure their actions do not affect their credibility (Boone & Makhani, 2012). Based on a study of supervisor and salesperson dyads within large Spanish enterprises, Jaramillo et al. (2015) conclude that ethical behavior by supervisors positively impacted salesperson performance.

Third, servant leadership promotes more morality-centered self-reflection by leaders than other leadership styles (Hunter et al., 2013). Authentic and ethical leadership also has a moral component; however, servant leadership emphasizes organizational stakeholders and altruistic and self-reflective behaviors (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Hunter et al., 2013). Society tends to perceive leaders and leadership as self-serving (Hill, 2017), but servant leadership is a leadership style recognized as ethically and morally sound (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Servant leaders focus more on others and strive to lead and act morally and humbly (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Hunter et al. (2013) studied the relationship between servant leadership and critical subordinate and organizational outcomes. The researchers collected data from multiple stores of a large US retailer. One of their conclusions was that servant leaders who were ethically and morally sound ignited role-modeling servant behaviors that led to improved customer service (Hunter et al., 2013).

Fourth, servant leadership guides leaders to their primary calling, which is to assist and care for those around them (Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Servant leaders (a) concentrate on the interest and development of subordinates (Bao et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2018); (b) help followers grow professionally and personally (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); (c) involve employees in decision-making (Northouse, 2019); (d) focus on the rights of others (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); and (e) demonstrate the servant leadership characteristics of humility, gratitude, forgiveness, altruism, empathy, a sense of ethics, and community stewardship (Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse, 2019). Bao et al. (2018) surveyed over 200 public- and private-sector Chinese employees. The researchers conclude that servant leadership increases employee engagement

through social exchange relationships, including focusing on employee interests, mentoring employees, and having employees participate in decision-making (Bao et al., 2018).

Fifth, servant leadership highlights the importance of treating others (e.g., employees, customers, suppliers, and communities) how they want to be treated, as Jesus states in Matthew 7:12, which is commonly referred to as the “Golden Rule” (Marques, 2018; Molano, 2019). Researchers have found that Jesus “used the Golden Rule as a positive call to following God’s example in loving others” (Marques, 2018, p. 37). One significant servant leadership theme involves servant leaders focusing on building people, relationships, and a sense of community, which leads to healthier organizations and communities and corresponds to the Golden Rule (Molano, 2019). Maxwell (2003) defines ethical behavior as living by the Golden Rule, which is a good barometer for business decisions.

Sixth, servant leadership encourages CSR (Kincaid, 2012). Servant leaders act in a socially responsible manner and acknowledge the importance of CSR (Kincaid, 2012; Van Dierendonck, 2011). CSR centers on the premise that company executives display a social conscience when deciding how they (a) develop and implement strategy; (b) conduct business; (c) treat stakeholders; (d) engage in society-at-large; and (e) impact the environment (Gamble et al., 2019). These points align with a critical tenet of servant leadership, which is serving others as a top priority (Kincaid, 2012). Firms that practice CSR and implement CSR programs demonstrate their commitment to socially responsible behavior that improves the quality of life for their stakeholders (e.g., employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and the community-at-large; Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019). Corporate social responsibility involves companies (a) conducting business honorably; (b) providing appropriate working conditions for employees; and (c) striving to contribute to the welfare, interest, and quality of life within the communities they

operate, as well as in society-in-general (Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019; Mello, 2019; Spector, 2013). Enterprises that engage in the last point practice conscious capitalism, in which they incorporate policies and practices that focus on advancing economic and social conditions within their local communities while enhancing their economic success (Daft, 2016). Servant leaders embrace CSR because they view it as a way to (a) create value for the community, (b) practice stewardship, and (c) behave ethically through linking organizational goals and objectives with broader community purposes and setting the right tone at the top as it pertains to business ethics and CSR (Kincaid, 2012; Northouse, 2019; Painter et al., 2019). Painter et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of values-driven leaders embracing CSR based on developing a conceptual framework regarding organizational alignment that includes a structural and sociocultural alignment.

National Cultural Conditions Affecting Servant Leadership and its Link to Business Ethics

National cultural conditions or differences include beliefs, values, customs, and language, which can influence how organizations function and communicate (Perez, 2017; Sulieman, 2017). Beliefs and values vary among cultures, such as the importance of quality or efficiency or timeliness and considerations of religion, legal systems, and history. Customs also differ from one culture to another and can be considered offensive if companies do not adhere to cultural norms. Language covers both words and gestures and can negatively impact relationships if perceived as inappropriate (Daft, 2016; Hofstede, 2001; Northouse, 2019). The concept of national culture includes traits and preferences that individuals of a society share, shaping their behavior (Hofstede, 2001). These traits and preferences vary among national cultures (Hofstede, 2001). National cultural conditions affect leaders and their organizations, especially as more companies expand into global markets (Hale & Fields, 2007; Sulieman, 2017; Zhang et al.,

2021). This literature review focuses on national cultural conditions that impact servant leadership and business ethics. As mentioned above, research supports the connection between servant leadership and business ethics.

National Cultural Dimensions and Clusters

Researchers across multiple disciplines have conducted numerous studies on national culture, including ways to identify and classify cultural dimensions and clusters (Northouse, 2019). One of the most well-known researchers on national culture includes Hofstede. Hofstede (2001) conducted a major study on national culture that analyzed questionnaire data from over 100,000 participants worldwide. Based on this study, Hofstede (2001) identified five national culture dimensions that influence thinking and action in predictable aspects and has served as the point of reference for much of the studies on world cultures (Hale & Fields, 2007; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). These five national culture dimensions include (a) power distance; (b) uncertainty avoidance; (c) individualism-collectivism; (d) masculinity-femininity; and (e) long-term – short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001). Power distance defines how societies deal with inequalities and social status differences. Uncertainty avoidance explains the extent that societies act comfortably in ambiguous or uncertain situations. Individualism-collectivism determines how much individuals focus on self vs. group orientation. Masculinity-femininity shows whether societies favor male-related traits (e.g., assertiveness) or female-related traits (e.g., altruism). Long-term orientation – short-term orientation describes how much societies prefer future rewards, such as perseverance and thrift, vs. emphasizing living for today (Hofstede, 2001; Bissessar, 2018). Another group of researchers, House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta (2004), classified cultures into clusters considering cultural similarities.

Power Distance. Power distance refers to the extent to which people within a specific culture accept that power is unequally distributed. Power distance considers how cultures segment themselves based on the dispersion of power, authority, influence, and wealth (Hofstede, 2001; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Societies that have high power distance (a) established hierarchical structures in place; (b) well-defined positions of leaders and subordinates; (c) a limited few with power, wealth, influence, and decision-making authority; and (d) a dominant viewpoint that uneven power distribution is natural, desirable, and necessary for them to function (Bissessar, 2018; Hale & Fields, 2007; Stojanović-Aleksić & Krstić, 2016). The power distance index (PDI) measures the extent of an individual's expectation and acceptance of unequal power distribution (Bissessar, 2018). Some examples of cultures with high power distance include China, Russia, Arab countries, and Southeast Asia (Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia). These cultures have (a) hierarchical systems, (b) an expectation not to question authority, and (c) an acceptance that a limited number of people have power, control, wealth, and influence (Bao et al., 2018; Bissessar, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Some examples of cultures that have low-to-moderate power distance include the US, Canada, Nordic countries, Israel, and the UK because they (a) value social equality; (b) permit questioning someone in power; (c) value worker independence; (d) have open and transparent communication; and (e) deemphasize differences in power and wealth among citizens (Bissessar, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Regarding leadership, power distance can affect how followers react to leaders, depending upon whether leaders exercise power based on expert power vs. legitimate or reward power with their subordinates (Northouse, 2019; J. Yang et al., 2017).

Uncertainty Avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance refers to how much a society or organization attempts to follow social norms, customary rituals, and established procedures and evade ambiguous situations due to feeling threatened. Uncertainty avoidance considers how cultures segment themselves based on the level of applying rules, structures, conventional ideas, and laws to reduce ambiguity (Hofstede, 2001; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Societies that have (a) prescribed laws and codes of conduct in place; (b) a firm expectation to adhere to rules and regulations; (c) a focus on structure vs. innovation; and (d) a lack of willingness to accept risk and change exists typically in high uncertainty avoidance societies (Bissessar, 2018; Stojanović-Aleksić & Krstić, 2016). The uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) measures how much members of a culture feel threatened and try to avoid unknown situations (Bissessar, 2018). Some examples of cultures with high uncertainty avoidance include Japan, Latin American countries, Arab countries, and some European countries (Greece, France, and Spain). These countries have (a) many rules, laws, and regulations; (b) are reluctant to take risks; (c) prefer to give careful and considerable thought before making business decisions; and (d) are narrowminded regarding instability (Bissessar, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Some examples of cultures that have low-to-moderate uncertainty avoidance include the US, the UK, Nordic countries, Singapore, India, and the Caribbean because of (a) an entrepreneurial spirit; (b) willingness to take risks and make swift business decisions; (c) openness to new ideas and innovation; and (d) an inclination to accept informality and flexible rules (Bissessar, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Regarding leadership, uncertainty avoidance can affect whether leaders express a willingness to take risks and embrace innovation or stick to formality and structure and cultivate decisions and relationships (Northouse, 2019).

Individualism-Collectivism. Individualism-collectivism refers to the extent to which a society or organization encourages a “we” mindset or an “I” mindset. Individualism–collectivism corresponds to how a person views themselves in relation to the collective (Hofstede, 2001; A. Lee et al., 2020). Individualism-collectivism considers how cultures segment themselves based on whether they focus more on broader societal and organizational interests or personal goals and accomplishments (Hofstede, 2001; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Societies that have (a) strong group cohesion when working as communal groups; (b) a reliance on leaders to make decisions on behalf of the group; (c) an emphasis on collaboration, teamwork, and relationship-building; and (d) a value system that places the interests of the group over the interests of individual members exists typically in high collectivist societies (Bissessar, 2018; Stojanović-Aleksić & Krstić, 2016). Societies that focus more on individual interests and expect workers to be self-reliant, demonstrate initiative, and be responsible for making decisions exist typically in high individualist societies (Bissessar, 2018; Hale & Fields, 2007; Stojanović-Aleksić & Krstić, 2016). The individualism–collectivism index (IDV) measures the extent to which a society focuses on individual interests vs. interests of the group as a whole (Bissessar, 2018; Hofstede et al., 2010). Some examples of cultures with high collectivism include Japan, South Korea, China, Arab countries, and Latin American countries because of (a) an emphasis on communal efforts; (b) a focus on doing what is best for society; (c) greater importance on common goals; and (d) high regard for the family (Bissessar, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Some examples of cultures with high individualism include the US, the UK, Germany, and Australia because of (a) a high value on autonomy, independence, and uniqueness; (b) self-reliance expectations; and (c) greater emphasis on individual rights (Bissessar, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017).

Regarding leadership, individualism–collectivism can affect whether leaders allow workers to act independently or require consensus and collaborative efforts (Northouse, 2019).

Masculinity-Femininity. Masculinity-femininity refers to how much a society or organization clearly defines gender roles. Masculinity–femininity considers how cultures segment themselves based on how much they promote gender equality regarding power, influence, and roles within their communities and organizations (Hofstede, 2001; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Societies that emphasize achievement, advancement, self-assertiveness, task orientation, competition, success, and material possessions exist typically in high masculinity societies. In contrast, societies that encourage social contacts, support and assistance, harmony in relationships, empathy, and respect and dignity exist typically in high femininity societies (Bissessar, 2018; Stojanović-Aleksić & Krstić, 2016; Zhang et al., 2021). The masculinity–femininity index (MAS) measures the extent to which a society stresses achievement, assertiveness, and material rewards vs. cooperation, caring for the less fortunate, and quality of life (Bissessar, 2018). Some examples of cultures with high masculinity include Japan, Arab countries, and some European countries (Hungary, Austria, and Italy) because of (a) substantial gender differences, some of which are tied to religion; (b) acceptance of assertive behaviors; and (c) a strong sense of competition (Jabarkhail, 2020; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Some examples of cultures with high femininity include Nordic countries and the Netherlands because of (a) modesty and a caring attitude; (b) a greater focus on quality of life; and (c) egalitarianism (Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Regarding leadership, masculinity–femininity can affect how much gender equality exists within organizations and whether leaders embrace a work–life balance (Northouse, 2019).

Long-Term-Short-Term Orientation. Long-term-short-term orientation refers to the extent to which a society or organization engages in future-oriented activities that entail setting long-term goals, planning and investing, and deferring gratification. Long-term–short-term orientation considers how cultures segment themselves based on whether they emphasize long-term or short-term goals and prepare for the future or live for the present (Bissessar, 2018; Hofstede, 2001; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Societies willing to (a) take necessary steps to plan for the future; (b) make sacrifices today for a better tomorrow; and (c) persevere and adapt to changing conditions for future benefits exist typically in high long-term-oriented societies (Bissessar, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). Societies that focus more on the needs of today exist typically in high short-term-oriented societies (Bissessar, 2018; Northouse, 2019). The long-term orientation–short-term orientation index (LTO) measures the extent to which a society focuses on long-term goals, saves for tomorrow, perseveres, and adapts to change vs. live for today (Bissessar, 2018; Hofstede et al., 2010). Some examples of cultures with high long-term orientation include China, Japan, South Korea, and Nordic countries because of (a) a futuristic mindset; (b) placing importance on relationship order and social contacts; (c) exhibiting persistency and perseverance; (d) stressing frugality (Belyh, 2019; Northouse, 2019). Some examples of cultures with high short-term orientation include Sub-Saharan countries and the Philippines because they focus on the present, saving face, and stability (Belyh, 2019; Northouse, 2019). Regarding leadership, long-term orientation–short-term orientation can affect whether leaders demonstrate a willingness to prioritize long-term objectives and engage in planning and strategy activities (Northouse, 2019).

Culture Clusters. Due to the increase in globalization, House et al. (2004) expanded the study of world cultures by emphasizing the relationship between culture and leadership (Zhang

et al., 2021). They published numerous findings, commonly referred to as GLOBE, which stands for Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (Northouse, 2019). One of the significant outcomes of the GLOBE studies of over 60 societies concerned establishing 10 culture clusters based on a complex validation process that groups societies with similar cultural histories, language, geography, and religion (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Northouse, 2019). The 10 culture clusters are Anglo, Latin America, Germanic Europe, Nordic Europe, Latin Europe, Eastern Europe, Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Confucian Asia, and Southern Asia (House et al., 2004). Over the past 15 years, numerous researchers have studied the relationship between leadership styles and national culture while considering these 10 culture clusters. For example, Prasad (2016) examined the extent of various leadership theories within different cultural clusters. Another example is Koo and Park (2018), who conclude specific leadership styles are more or less salient in Asia because of unique Asian cultures. A third example is Van Dierendonck et al. (2017), who found servant leadership characteristics could differ across various culture clusters.

National Cultural Dimensions and Clusters Affecting Servant Leadership

National cultural conditions or differences and culture clusters can significantly impact organizations and how their senior management runs them. National cultural conditions influence leadership style, including servant leadership, especially as more companies expand into global markets (House et al., 2004; Northouse, 2019). Leaders, including servant leaders, can use national cultural dimensions to effectively match their values and behaviors to the culture of where they engage in business activities (Perez, 2017). These national cultural conditions include the five dimensions mentioned above: power distance, uncertainty avoidance,

individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity, and long-term–short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001).

National Cultural Dimensions Affecting Servant Leadership

National cultural conditions or differences, as well as culture clusters, can significantly impact servant leadership. Each of the five national cultural dimensions can affect the effectiveness of servant leadership attributes and followers' reactions to their leaders (Hale & Fields, 2007; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Northouse, 2019; J. Yang et al., 2017). Some ways that power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity, and long-term–short-term orientation can affect servant leadership include the (a) perception by employees of whether inherent status differences exist between them and leaders or opportunities exist for equal rights and voice; (b) workers feel empowered and have the ability and authority to complete tasks independently, participate in extra-role responsibilities, and engage in creative and innovation activities; (c) openness by followers to servant leaders' humility and altruism attributes; and (d) receptiveness by the workforce to a more caring and engaging leadership style (Bao et al., 2018; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; J. Yang et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2021).

In societies with high power distance, servant leaders may be perceived as less effective, leading to lower levels of trust and self-efficacy (Hale & Fields, 2007; J. Yang et al., 2017). In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, servant leaders can hedge uncertainty by sharing a clear vision with the workers (Hale & Fields, 2007). In societies with high collectivism, servant leaders may not be accepted in the same way as other types of leaders because of (a) employees caring less about their interests and not being open to leadership support; (b) coworkers investing more time and effort in developing relationships among themselves; and (c) subordinates not

regarding leaders as having a dominant role in meeting their workplace needs (A. Lee et al., 2020; Panaccio et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2021). In cultures with high masculinity, servant leaders may struggle to establish strong personal connections with their followers and improve employee work attitudes and behaviors because they prefer assertive and task-oriented interpersonal relationships (Zhang et al., 2021). In societies with a high long-term orientation, servant leaders are better positioned to take a longer-term view of developing their subordinates and helping them reach their full potential (Bissessar, 2018).

Servant leadership aligns more with the behavioral norms of low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance cultures because these cultures allow servant leaders to (a) value equality among leaders and followers; (b) demonstrate humility; (c) encourage employee participation and interaction; (d) empower subordinates; (e) accept and expect accountability; and (f) legitimize uncertainty (Bissessar, 2018; Hale & Fields, 2007; A. Lee et al., 2020; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Humility can positively affect cultures regardless of the power distance level (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Servant leadership aligns more with the behavioral norms of high individualistic cultures because these cultures are more open to servant leaders (a) being follower-centric and self-sacrificing; (b) equipping their workforce; (b) encouraging employees to demonstrate initiative; (c) empowering workers; and (d) providing subordinates more opportunities for personal growth and development (Hale & Fields, 2007; A. Lee et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Based on their meta-analytic study of servant leadership and culture, A. Lee et al. (2020) acknowledge it is challenging to predict the moderating effect of individualism–collectivism on servant leadership. The researchers state that, “the emphasis of servant leadership to build community among followers could have particular relevance in collectivist cultures” (A. Lee et al., 2020, p. 6). Servant leadership aligns more with the

behavioral norms of high femininity cultures because these cultures are more open to servant leaders (a) taking the time to listen to employee concerns and care for their wellbeing; (b) building stronger leader–follower relationships; and (c) creating a sense of community (Jabarkhail, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Servant leadership aligns more with the behavioral norms of high long-term orientation because these cultures are more open to servant leaders (a) practicing stewardship, (b) sharing their vision, and (c) investing in the future, including employee development (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017).

J. Yang et al. (2017) conducted an empirical study based on a sample of over 400 employees and 80 team leaders from 11 banks in China. One aspect of their research involved exploring the relationship between servant leadership and power distance. The researchers conclude that power distance moderates servant leadership’s effect on team efficacy and that high power distance diminishes servant leadership’s effect on employee self-efficacy (J. Yang et al., 2017). Zhang et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analytic review of 125 studies on the relationship between servant leadership, power distance, and individualism–collectivism. The researchers found servant leadership has a weaker influence on employee performance and outcomes in cultures with high power distance, low individualism, and high masculinity (Zhang et al., 2021). Mittal and Dorfman (2012) conducted an extensive exploratory study on the relationship between national cultural dimensions, including power distance and uncertainty avoidance, and servant leadership. The researchers conclude that power distance was negatively correlated with servant leaders putting followers first, behaving ethically, and empowering others, and uncertainty avoidance was negatively associated with servant leaders putting followers first and empowering others (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012).

National Cultural Dimensions Impacting Business Ethics

National cultural conditions, including beliefs, values, and customs of different societies, also affect business ethics. According to Perez (2017), “cultural differences are an important factor in how leaders and followers interact ethically in a transcultural environment” (p. 65). By understanding these cultural differences, leaders can avoid miscommunication and a loss of trust with their employees and fulfill their ethical duty to be sensitive to their subordinates’ needs (Northouse, 2019; Perez, 2017). Mittal and Dorfman (2012) examined moral integrity as part of their extensive exploratory study on the relationship between national cultural dimensions and servant leadership. The researchers conclude that moral integrity was considered an essential attribute of servant leadership across all cultural clusters (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012).

Other researchers have examined business ethics across different cultures. Li et al. (2018) empirically examined moral integrity and relationship commitment in a cross-cultural setting. The researchers found that business ethics and integrity involve (a) companies demonstrating consistency between words and actions; (b) firms making commitments to acceptable moral values and principles across the business community; (c) organizations honoring these commitments; and (d) enterprises ensuring alignment between ethical principles and their actions and business dealings, which can positively impact consumer behavior and improve customer relationship commitment (Li et al., 2018). According to Brenkert (2019), progress has been made in business ethics but there remain challenges and limits on a global scale. Brenkert (2019) mentions the issue of enacting (theory of moral change) business ethics or closing the gap between what firms do and what they should be doing, and suggests three approaches to address this gap, especially in this era of increased globalization. These three suggestions center on developing an awareness of unethical influences and cultural and political

barriers that prevent changes in ethical and moral behavior. First, business ethics need to focus on better understanding the ethical positions held by different cultural, social, and political institutions and their resistance to change. Second, business ethics need to consider the pressure points of internal and external influences, such as power and authority that could drive change from unethical stances to ethical behaviors. Third, business ethics need to include the importance of persuasion, influence, and power that can affect how firms conduct business (Brenkert, 2019).

Servant Leadership Behavior and Culture Clusters

Culture clusters also affect servant leadership actions and the acceptance of servant leadership. Numerous studies have examined servant leadership from a cross-cultural perspective. Mittal and Dorfman (2012) conducted an extensive exploratory study of servant leadership across different culture clusters, focusing on egalitarianism, moral integrity, empowerment, empathy, and humility. The researchers conclude that servant leadership endorsement differed across the culture clusters for all the elements other than moral integrity. The following table lists the culture clusters with the highest and lowest endorsement (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012):

Table 1

Servant Leadership Endorsement Among Different Cultures (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012)

Servant Leadership Elements	Highest Endorsement	Lowest Endorsement	Possible Explanations
Egalitarianism	Nordic and Germanic Europe	Confucian Asia	Nordic Europe culture embraces societal practices that are more open and equal Asian cultures relatively high on power distance
Empowerment	Anglo and Nordic Europe	Confucian Asia and Middle East	Major virtues of Confucian philosophy include class system and obedience Anglo culture shift toward team and participative leadership Nordic Europe culture promotes interdependence and growth of citizens Confucian Asia and Middle East cultures are more assertive
Empathy	Southern Asia	Latin and Nordic Europe	Southern Asia culture has strong humane orientation Latin and Nordic Europe cultures place less emphasis on humane orientation and focus more on reason and intellect
Humility	Southern Asia	Nordic, Germanic, and Latin Europe	Humility is considered an important virtue in most Asian cultures Most European cultures see assertiveness, achievement, and individualism for leaders to be effective instead of humility

Hale and Fields (2007) conducted an empirical study that explored servant leadership from the perspective of followers from Ghana and the US. Based on a review of survey data from about 160 participants, the researchers made the following conclusions. First, US followers experienced servant leadership behaviors, such as developing subordinates and building community, more frequently than employees in Ghana because the US has lower levels of power distance and collectivism. Second, there were no substantial differences between the two cultures concerning humility and service, which was unexpected because Ghana is a higher power distance culture. Third, Ghanaians placed greater emphasis on the vision and foresight of their leaders than the US, which was considered a hedge against uncertainty avoidance (Hale & Fields, 2007).

Pekerti and Sendjaya (2010) conducted a similar comparative study that explored servant leadership in Australia and Indonesia based on data gathered from followers. The researchers determined both cultures practice servant leadership and recognize the value of servant leadership. However, there were culture-specific differences regarding why these cultures endorse servant leadership and place importance on others' needs above their own. Australians embrace an egalitarian culture and authenticity, whereas Indonesians adopt a paternalistic culture and responsible morality. The findings confirm that culture influences individuals' perceptions of servant leadership (Pekerti & Sendjaya, 2010). Qiu and Dooley (2019) conducted a similar study involving employees within the Chinese hospitality industry and arrived at the same conclusion regarding cultural influences, as some servant leadership behaviors are rooted and embodied in Chinese culture.

Servant Leadership Link to Organizational Performance and Culture

Plenty of evidence supports the practical application of servant leadership in the Christian and nonprofit sectors (McNeff & Irving, 2017). However, only recently have researchers attempted to understand whether servant leadership can have the same effect within the private sector regarding organizational performance and organizational culture (de Waal & Sivro, 2012; Harwiki, 2016). This literature review examines the link between servant leadership and organizational performance regarding (a) individual and team performance, (b) OCB, (c) organizational sustainability, and (d) social exchange between leaders and followers. This literature review explores the connection effect of servant leadership on organizational culture from the perspectives of (a) diversity and inclusion, (b) employee engagement, and (c) employee commitment and trust.

Servant Leadership Influence on Organizational Performance

Individual and Team Performance. Organizations comprise individuals and teams. Overall organizational performance depends upon the performance of its individuals and teams. Leadership can drive the level and success of individual and team performance because leadership encompasses influence over others to accomplish a specific or common goal (Northouse, 2019). Research has endorsed the importance of leadership support to help individuals and teams perform better. However, only recent studies have focused on how different leadership styles impact individual and team performance because of their value to organizations. Some of these studies have focused on contemporary leadership approaches, such as situational leadership, servant leadership, and transformational leadership. The results are mostly positive; however, scholars acknowledge more research is needed in this area (Chen et al., 2020; Tortorella & Fogliatto, 2017; A. Wong et al., 2018).

“Strong leaders stand apart because they assess the abilities of others and assist them in capturing the best of those abilities” (Boone & Makhani, 2012, p. 91). Effective leaders significantly raise the level of performance of employees and teams by caring deeply and having faith in workers’ capacities (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Servant leaders are committed to developing their followers and taking actions to build their character and competence, which leads to improved individual and team task performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Servant leaders accomplish developing their followers in several ways. First, servant leaders recognize the importance of empowering their subordinates and teams (Sims, 2018; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Empowerment helps increase productivity, enhance morale, build self-confidence, and reduce employee turnover (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Sims, 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Second, servant leaders communicate a compelling vision their workforce can embrace (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Boone & Makhani, 2012). Articulating a compelling vision effectively helps followers imagine the future, feel empowered, and desire to accomplish more (Heyler & Martin, 2018; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). Third, servant leaders provide training and development opportunities, including ways to be more innovative and better service providers (Eva et al., 2018; Greenleaf, 1977; Otero-Neira et al., 2016). Training and development opportunities provide a visible way for leaders to display commitment to helping followers grow, succeed, and enhance their skills (Franco & Antunes, 2020). Fourth, servant leaders clearly distinguish between accepting individuals and not accepting their effort or performance (Brouns et al., 2020). This distinction indicates a commitment by servant leaders to build positive relationships with subordinates and help them identify with the organization, take responsibility for their actions, and be good stewards (Mulinge, 2018). Fifth, servant leaders build a supportive and psychologically safe work environment centered on trust and loyalty

(Brouns et al., 2020). Chughtai (2016) conducted a study on servant leadership and organizational identification that involved employees from a Pakistani food company. The study determined that supportive leadership styles, such as servant leadership, (a) improve institutional performance; (b) increase employee trust, loyalty, and sense of psychological safety; (c) invite workforce participation in team discussions; and (d) inspire workers to seek negative feedback (Chughtai, 2016). Sixth, servant leaders satisfy followers' needs (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). Chiniara and Bentein (2016) state that servant leaders' emphasis on meeting others' needs is the core psychological mechanism to enhance performance. The researchers collected data from about 250 supervisor–employee dyads within a large Canadian high technology company. The study found strong evidence to support a positive relationship between servant leadership and satisfaction of autonomy, competency, and relatedness needs that led to improved task performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). Seventh, servant leaders create an ethical climate and demonstrate moral courage, which positively impacts the ethical conduct and prosocial actions of subordinates (Jaramillo et al., 2015). Eighth, servant leaders implement a serving culture (Hunter et al., 2013). Hunter et al. (2013), based on their study of a large US retailer, conclude that servant leadership promotes a service climate involving serving customers and eventually results in higher performance.

Many authors have mentioned that servant leadership behaviors lead to improved individual and team performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Chughtai, 2016; Franco & Antunes, 2020; Hunter et al., 2013). Other researchers, such as de Waal and Sivro (2012) have noted that servant leadership positively impacts mediating factors of individual and team performance, leading to enhanced organizational performance (de Waal & Sivro, 2012). De Waal and Sivro (2012) conducted a case study of about 120 managers and employees at a

medical center in the Netherlands. The study revealed no evidence of a direct positive relationship between servant leadership and organizational performance. However, the researchers conclude servant leadership influenced factors in a high-performance organizational framework across various departmental levels (de Waal & Sivro, 2012).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior involves voluntary or discretionary actions performed by employees within a company that benefit others in the organization and the overall company (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Panaccio et al., 2015). Research supports OCB as an outcome variable of servant leadership (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Hunter et al., 2013; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Servant leaders strive to set an excellent example that followers want to emulate, including voluntarily helping others, resulting in subordinates engaging in OCB (Amir & Santoso, 2019; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). Amir and Santoso (2019) conducted a study on servant leadership's effect on OCB based on sample data from about 300 respondents across various organizations in Indonesia. The researchers examined different servant leadership dimensions, including empowerment, standing back, forgiveness, courage, authenticity, and humility. The researchers conclude only standing back and authenticity affected the OCB of the individual follower (OCB-I), and only empowerment and standing back influenced the OCB at the organization level (OCB-O). Some reasons for these results include the (a) employees wanted to engage in helping their coworkers achieve mutual success when they saw their leaders stepping back to allow them opportunities to succeed; (b) subordinates sought to contribute to prosocial deeds when they saw their leaders exhibiting "true self" behaviors; and (c) workers wanted to perform tasks voluntarily to maintain the organization's image when they felt empowered by their leaders (Amir & Santoso, 2019). Chiniara and Bentein (2016) found that servant leadership satisfied the needs of autonomy,

competency, and relatedness, which led to improved task performance. The researchers also conclude that the servant leadership effect only on autonomy and relatedness needs mediated both OCB-I and OCB-O because servant leaders (a) seek to build trustworthy dyadic relationships with their subordinates and (b) create a psychologically safe climate for employees to feel empowered to be themselves, make decisions, and connect with coworkers (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). Newman et al. (2017) arrived at a different conclusion in their study of about 450 supervisor–employee dyads within a large Chinese state-owned entity. The researchers conclude that servant leadership positively influences OCB only via leader–member exchanges and not as much with psychological empowerment (Newman et al., 2017). Qiu and Dooley (2019) examined customer OCB based on a study in the Chinese hospitality industry. The researchers confirm that servant leadership was a strong determinant of customer OCB, in addition to employee trust and service quality (Qiu & Dooley, 2019).

Organizational Sustainability. Organizations are goal-directed social entities designed to accomplish desired goals in a manner that involves the coordination of people and resources. Organizations are structured to achieve the company purpose and to interact effectively with external stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, competitors, and government entities. Organizations are open systems that (a) receive inputs from their external environment; (b) add value through implementing change; and (c) provide products and services to customers (Daft, 2016). Organizational sustainability refers to firms' abilities to (a) continue to function in a rapidly changing global economy; (b) consider both short-term gains and long-term contributions; and (c) retain and satisfy employees (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). Servant leadership has been found to contribute to organizational sustainability in a few different ways. First, servant leaders focus on the personal growth of employees, enable their

achievements, engage them for the benefit of the organization internally, and motivate them toward higher performance (Abbas et al., 2020; Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). Second, servant leaders communicate and act upon a more compelling vision (Qiu & Dooley, 2019). Third, servant leaders act in the best interests of their group, ahead of their own leadership status (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019). Alafeshat and Tanova (2019) collected data from 300 employees in a private Jordanian airline company regarding the relationship between servant leadership and organizational sustainability from the perspective of staff retention and satisfaction. The researchers conclude that servant leadership positively affected employee retention and satisfaction (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019), confirming previous studies (Donia et al., 2016; Hunter et al., 2013).

Social Exchange Between Leaders and Followers. The social exchange between leaders and followers, or leader–member exchange (LMX), affects organizational commitment and performance. This exchange centers on the process of interactions between leaders and followers. The key emphasis is on leader–member relationships, in which leaders concentrate on developing high-quality exchanges with all their followers instead of a selected group of followers (Northouse, 2019). Servant leadership enhances LMX because of its emphasis on (a) putting followers first; (b) meeting the emotional needs of workers; (c) helping employees grow and succeed; and (d) providing staff with psychological contract fulfillment, which affords them more development opportunities and provides better quality leader–follower dyadic relationships (Bao et al., 2018; Panaccio et al., 2015).

Servant Leadership Influence on Organizational Culture

Diversity and Inclusion. Diversity and inclusion continue to receive more attention within corporations as they (a) deal with an increasingly diverse workforce; (b) seek to be more

socially responsible in their operations and employment practices; (c) recognize the value of diversity and inclusion from an HRD perspective (Mello, 2019; Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018). The perspective of HRD characterizes employees as human assets with value and worth. This perspective takes a more strategic view of human resources than the traditional position of human resources within organizations. When companies implement HRD as a strategic function, they consider human resources from an investment perspective, similar to how they regard physical and capital assets. One way organizations demonstrate this investment perspective is through embracing diversity and inclusion and implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives (Chapman et al., 2018; Mello, 2019). As mentioned, there is plenty of research on diversity and inclusion pertaining to HRD (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2015; Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018). However, the literature is quiet regarding leadership styles best suited to embrace diversity and inclusion (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; C. Hughes, 2016; Sims, 2018). Diversity and inclusion programs can be an effective way for leaders to demonstrate investment in their employees (Gamble et al., 2019).

Diversity. Diversity encompasses both visible (e.g., age, gender, and ethnicity) and invisible (e.g., personality, culture, values, and individual styles and preferences) qualities used to differentiate individuals and groups from one another (Catalyst, 2020; Global Diversity Practice, n.d.; Mello, 2019). Diversity involves (a) respecting and appreciating these differences; (b) understanding and accepting these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing setting; and (c) acknowledging the diverse contributions and the value they bring (Global Diversity Practice, n.d.). Diversity recognition and training initially existed within nonprofits and government organizations and hardly received any consideration within the private sector until the enactment of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited employment discrimination based on

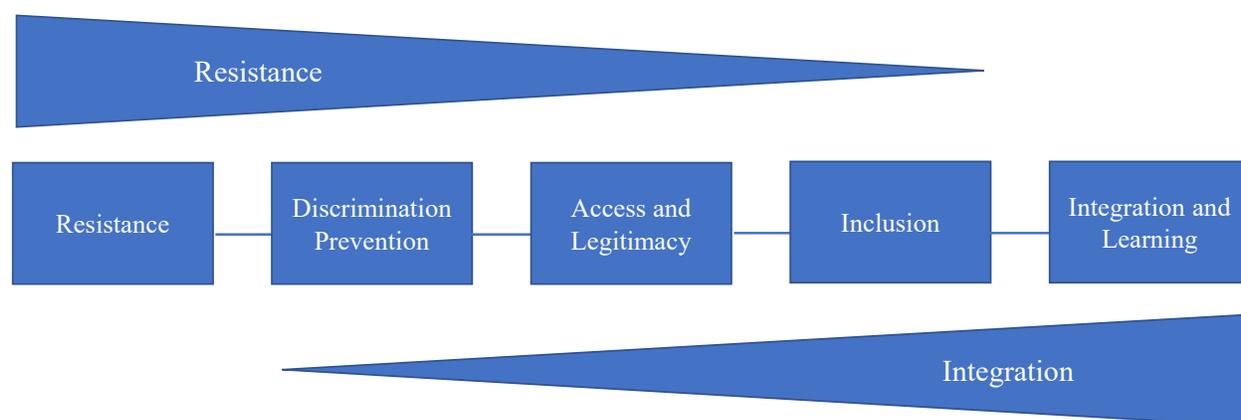
"race, color, religion, sex, and national origin" (Mello, 2019, p. 225). Diversity continues to receive attention within organizations and among researchers because of the workforce becoming increasingly diverse in age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, and disabilities (Mello, 2019). This growing interest in diversity focuses on organizations managing a diverse workforce and its associated benefits and challenges, as well as considering organizational culture and leadership to meet the goals of diversity (Sims, 2018).

Diversity – Human Resource Development. The theory and practice of HRD related to diversity consider more of a managing diversity position than simply complying with equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws. Regarding diversity, HRD intends to (a) ensure consideration of all diversity elements within an organization; (b) create a fluid and adaptive culture that considers a growing diverse workforce; and (c) integrate diversity programs within overall company strategy and objectives (Mello, 2019). When companies make diversity a top priority, they create an environment that acknowledges the importance of diversity and leverages all employee contributions (C. Hughes, 2016). Organizations demonstrate a commitment to diversity through HRD in several ways. First, leaders promote diversity and inclusion within the company's mission statement and strategic objectives (Mello, 2019). Second, organizations provide diversity training. Most organizations rely on training as the most common activity; however, evidence has indicated not all diversity training is useful, especially if it (a) lacks empathy; (b) centers on the legal and financial consequences of discrimination; (c) focuses on managing diversity; (d) does not include skill-building or front-end assessment; and (e) fails to address unconscious biases (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2015; Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018). Furthermore, HRD enhances training if it fosters diversity and inclusion. The approach can achieve this enhancement by (a) being an advocate for diversity; (b) assessing

perceptions of diversity through surveys and focus groups; (c) creating mentoring programs of underrepresented groups; (d) equipping supervisors and managers with the right tools to be effective in their role of ensuring inclusion within their groups; and (e) ensuring compliance with EEO laws (Mello, 2019; Russell, 2018). Third, companies implement policies and programs to reduce resistance to diversity and lead to the full integration of employees (Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018). More organizations strive to move to the right along the diversity continuum (Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018).

Figure 2

Resistance–Integration Continuum (Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018)



Diversity – Leadership. The topic of diversity within leadership theories has often gone unexplored; however, diversity, if addressed properly, has the potential to maximize leadership effectiveness (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Leadership styles that are conducive to promoting diversity include transformational leadership, LMX, and servant leadership (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; C. Hughes, 2016; Sims, 2018). Transformational leadership and LMX stress inclusive behaviors centered on (a) developing leader–member relationships; (b) inspiring followers to accomplish great things; (c) adapting to the needs and motives of followers; (d) articulating a clear organizational vision; and (e) empowering others to meet higher standards (Gotsis &

Grimani, 2016; Northouse, 2019). On the other hand, servant leadership focuses on the (a) importance of the personal growth of people; (b) need to create an environment of respect and trust; (c) consideration of ethical and altruistic behaviors; and (d) mindset of serving others (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; C. Hughes, 2016; Northouse, 2019; Sims, 2018; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). The ethical roots, motivational qualities, and service mentality of servant leadership can lead to an organizational culture in which diversity thrives (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Sims, 2018). C. Hughes (2016) developed a tool called Diversity Intelligence (DI) to help firms recognize the value of workplace diversity and guide the thinking and behavior of their employees in the diversity space. The tool can help leaders to increase their ability to (a) acknowledge and eliminate stereotypes; (b) accept protected-class individuals and ensure equal opportunities; (c) embrace the diverse learning and work styles of their staff; and (d) provide direction to ensure workplace equality (Sims, 2018). Sims (2018) concludes that DI and servant leadership correlate because DI readies leaders to act with compassionate love and leverage core behaviors of empowerment, authenticity, and stewardship. Gotsis and Grimani (2016) discuss an integrative framework that ranks diversity considerations in a continuum of selected contemporary leadership styles, including servant leadership. Regarding servant leadership, the researchers conclude that several servant leadership attributes could provide a climate that embraces diversity. First, servant leaders can empower followers to help them realize their true potential and enable new approaches. Second, servant leaders can demonstrate humility to allow subordinates to benefit properly from other team members' experiences. Third, servant leaders can exhibit authenticity to reveal their true intentions and commitments. Fourth, servant leaders can exhibit interpersonal acceptance through empathy and compassion toward disadvantaged

individuals. Fifth, servant leaders can emphasize stewardship by stimulating workers to act and behave for the common good (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016).

Inclusion. Organizations have evolved from being inhospitable to underrepresented groups to embracing diversity to improve value and enhance organizations and to redefining organizational culture that focuses on both diversity management and organizational inclusion (Mousa, 2021). Inclusion acknowledges diversity and incorporates programs that foster diversity and integration for everyone within an organization (Bourke & Dillon, 2016). Inclusion focuses on valuing differences and promoting unity (Catalyst, 2020) and involves efforts and practices within an organization that culturally and socially accept and welcome all individuals and groups (Global Diversity Practice, n.d.). Inclusion involves establishing a welcoming environment in which employees feel valued and respected and providing a safe workplace in which employees can share new ideas and feel empowered to grow and develop (Mello, 2019; Russell, 2018). These factors have significant implications for the success of teams within an organization. Inclusion is an effective way for companies to gain workforce acceptance of changes, including quality and organizational changes. Inclusion has three main elements: (a) respect and fairness of treatment and opportunities; (b) sense of value and belonging or social connectedness; (c) conditions that create confidence to speak up and motivation to excel in performance (Bourke & Dillon, 2016). Inclusion provides a work environment in which workers feel valued for their contributions, accepted, trusted, authentic, and psychologically safe to hold differing views, make mistakes without negative consequences, engage in dealing with challenging issues, and take risks (Russell, 2018; Travis et al., 2019).

Inclusion – Human Resource Development. The theory and practice of HRD related to inclusion involve establishing a welcoming environment in which employees feel valued and

respected and providing a safe workplace in which employees can share new ideas, feel empowered to grow and develop, and identify and mitigate biases (Mello, 2019). Regarding inclusion, HRD focuses on creating an inclusive climate in which a workplace (a) implements organizational inclusion; (b) fosters an environment in which all employees feel valued; (c) strives to meet the needs of vulnerable groups; (d) designs systems and structures to leverage the potential of a diverse workforce; (e) reinforces worker perceptions of being treated fairly and with respect and dignity; (f) embraces active inclusion in the workplace; (g) enables empowerment; (h) promotes accountability; (i) drives collaboration and consensus building; and (j) encourages creativity and innovation (Catalyst, 2020; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016).

Organizational inclusion involves the “effective participation and/or engagement of individuals in realizing their goals and those of their organization while feeling respected and appreciated” (Mousa, 2021, p. 124). Firms that seek to implement organizational inclusion may consider altering their vision, strategy, culture, human resource procedures and systems, and leadership styles (Mousa, 2021). Mousa (2021) conducted a study involving organizational inclusion based on questionnaire data from over 300 participants in three Egyptian universities. Mousa (2021) concludes that organizational inclusion is a good predictor of workplace happiness, which involves employee engagement, job satisfaction, and affective OCB. There is value in organizations providing diversity and inclusion training, which they can augment through equipping leaders, ensuring they have the proper tools and techniques to help them create an inclusive climate within their departments (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Mello, 2019).

Inclusion – Leadership. Researchers have found that leaders play a prominent role in creating an environment for inclusion (Bourke & Dillon, 2016; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016).

However, academia acknowledges that more research is needed regarding leadership adopting

certain styles that foster inclusion and focusing on the attributes and behaviors of minority status identities, which they refer to as inclusive leadership (Bourke & Dillon, 2016; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Inclusive leadership contains elements of transformational, authentic, and servant leadership (Bourke & Dillon, 2016). Deloitte sponsored a study on inclusive leadership based on the (a) evaluation of their experiences with more than 1,000 global leaders; (b) extensive interviews with 15 leaders and subject matter experiences; and (c) survey data from over 1,500 employees regarding their viewpoints on inclusion (Bourke & Dillon, 2016). The study revealed some significant conclusions. First, for leaders to manage diversity and inclusion effectively within their organizations, they must adapt to four diversity-related global market trends (diversity of markets, customers, ideas, and talent). Diversity of markets entails a shift in demand to emerging markets with a growing middle class. Diversity of customers includes a change in customer demographics and attitudes with a sense of increased empowerment. Diversity of ideas involves a disruption of existing business value chains due to innovation and technology. Diversity of talent contains a change in workforce age profiles, education, expectations of equality of opportunity, and work–life balance. Second, leaders need to understand the critical elements of inclusion regarding (a) creating an environment of fairness and respect by ensuring equality of treatment and opportunities; (b) providing a climate of value and belonging through the personalization of individuals; and (c) instilling confidence and inspiration by capitalizing on the thinking of diverse groups. Third, inclusive leaders exhibit six vital traits: (a) commitment – making a commitment to diversity and inclusion; (b) courage – challenging the status quo and exhibiting humility regarding their own strengths and weaknesses; (c) cognizance of bias – addressing personal and organizational biases and implementing policies, processes, and structures to mitigate these biases; (d) curiosity – seeking to understand other viewpoints and

experiences and accepting uncertainty; (e) cultural intelligence – deepening their knowledge of different cultures and engaging in cross-cultural exchanges; and (f) collaboration – empowering employees and building diverse teams (Bourke & Dillon, 2016). Some of these inclusive leadership attributes align with the transformational leadership characteristic of intellectual stimulation, which involves empowering employees to achieve higher standards, be innovative, and participate in shared decisions and activities, as well as individualized consideration that involves creating a work climate that allows workers to share ideas and concerns and to develop their skills, knowledge, and expertise (Bourke & Dillon, 2016; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Northouse, 2019; Park & Kim, 2018 ; Stock et al., 2017). Some of these inclusive leadership behaviors integrate with the authentic leadership traits of (a) demonstrating passion in their work; (b) understanding their values (e.g., diversity and inclusion) and acting in a manner according to those values; (c) committing to connect with others; (d) displaying compassion toward others; and (e) creating an environment of open communication and learning (Bourke & Dillon, 2016; Braun & Nieberle, 2017; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Some of these inclusive leadership actions assimilate with several servant leadership characteristics, including the empowerment and development of followers, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). In addition to the integrative framework on diversity mentioned above, Gotsis and Grimani (2016) also developed a theoretical model that captures the servant leadership's effect regarding shaping an inclusive climate. The researchers produced with some key posits regarding the servant leadership attributes of the empowerment and development of followers, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship. First, these servant leadership characteristics can help create an inclusive environment. Servant leaders accomplish this environment by (a) ensuring organizations incorporate HRD regarding

inclusion; (b) encouraging continuous learning and development opportunities; (c) promoting social responsibility; (d) integrating diverse employees in organizational processes; (e) building high-quality leader–follower relationships; and (f) establishing a psychologically safe climate.

The impact of this development is moderated by how much servant leaders embrace and celebrate diversity and support inclusive practices. Second, these servant leadership qualities can affect workforce perceptions regarding company practices as they relate to inclusion, such as the following: (a) the empowerment and development of followers conveys leaders' commitment to helping all team members grow and succeed; (b) humility sends a message that leaders value employees and acknowledge their beliefs, skills, and experiences; (c) authenticity demonstrates leaders' desire to implement fair and equitable processes and practices; (d) interpersonal acceptance reveals leaders' aim to reduce suffering among those who feel left out ; and (e) stewardship exhibits leaders' focus on socially responsible practices that improve societal welfare and equality. Third, these servant leadership qualities can meet employee psychological needs, including belongingness and uniqueness, by promoting fair, participative, socially responsible, and humane practices (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Leaders can create an inclusive workplace through a combination of DI and servant leadership because of the strength and motivation of compassionate love and the virtuous traits of servant leadership attributes, such as humility, gratitude, and altruism (Sims, 2018). The combination of DI and servant leadership (a) supports cultural sensibility, (b) builds trust among employees, (c) enables open communication, and (d) creates positive and productive interactions among a diverse workforce (Sims, 2018).

Employee Engagement. Organizations continuously seek ways to attain a sustainable competitive advantage, and one way is through employee engagement (Hooi, 2021). Employee engagement involves a positive attitude toward the job that leads to the (a) enhancement of

organizational performance, (b) effective achievement of company goals, (c) promotion of teamwork and job sharing, and (d) attainment of competitive advantage (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019). Engagement provides a means for employees to (a) be understood and appreciated for the quality of their work by someone in a position of authority; (b) know their work matters to others; and (c) measure their progress and level of contribution to the organization (Lencioni, 2007). Employees are more likely to strive to be innovative, increase job performance, remain committed to the organization, and not intend to leave the company when they feel engaged. Engaged employees (a) demonstrate proactive behaviors; (b) have a positive attitude toward the organization and its values; (c) perform better; (d) are more optimistic and energetic; (e) exhibit team-oriented, extra-effort, solution-oriented, and selfless behaviors; (f) are willing to share credit and accept blame; and (g) encounter less stress and have improved health and wellbeing (Society for Human Resource Management, 2019). Based on a study of 10 corporations, Hooi (2021) found employee engagement significantly contributes to company performance more than other variables, such as management development and HR systems.

Leadership affects the level of work engagement to achieve better individual and organizational outcomes (Esen et al., 2020). In recent years, there has been growing academic interest on more encouraging leadership styles, including transformational, authentic, ethical, and servant leadership, to improve employee engagement (Aboramadan et al., 2020). Servant leadership distinguishes itself from other leadership styles regarding employee engagement because of its (a) emphasis on motivational and aspirational aspects; (b) recognition of followers' need for psychological support and need satisfaction; and (c) orientation toward humility, empowerment, and stewardship that shifts the focus from the leader to the follower (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Eva et al., 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Servant leaders

enhance employee engagement through investment and resource development (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Alafeshat and Tanova (2019), in their study of a Jordanian airline company, found that servant leadership positively affects employee engagement because servant leadership attributes contribute to improved job satisfaction and increased staff retention. The researchers also note employee engagement was greater when leaders were considered servant leaders (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019). Aboramadan et al. (2020) conducted a study based on data from Palestinian higher education institutions. The researchers conclude that servant leadership positively influences work engagement, which is a similar finding to other studies in the business sector (R. Yang et al., 2017). Furthermore, intrinsic motivation, psychological ownership, and person–job fit mediate the relationship between servant leadership through servant leaders (a) demonstrating a nurturing behavior; (b) developing a sense of belonging among followers; and (c) providing more interaction and adaption opportunities for employees (Aboramadan et al., 2020). Sousa and Van Dierendonck (2017) examined the effect of humility and action-oriented behaviors of servant leaders on employee engagement. Based on a sample of over 200 people working in various companies in the Netherlands, the researchers conclude that the servant leadership aspects of humility, empowerment, accountability, and stewardship led to increased employee engagement. The study found that when leaders exhibited servant leadership characteristics, followers demonstrated greater vigor, displayed more dedication, and became more absorbed in their assigned tasks (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Alafeshat and Tanova (2019) note, in a separate study, that when leaders demonstrate servant leadership attributes, employees become more engaged, gain a greater sense of personal freedom, and see more meaning in the work they perform.

Employee Commitment and Trust. More companies are taking a strategic perspective on human resources, which involves investing in human resources as they do in physical assets. Firms demonstrate investment in human resources by establishing learning organizations, reward and incentive systems that align with a strategy, and diversity and inclusion programs (Gamble et al., 2019). Each aspect has positive implications for gaining employee commitment, building follower trust, and enabling firms to leverage their most valuable asset (Mello, 2019). Leaders recognize that trust is an essential antecedent to improved performance because credibility matters, as trust fosters collaboration and increases the likelihood that employees are engaged, attached, and committed to the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Several contemporary leadership styles appeal to employees because they enhance employee commitment and build employee trust. Transformational leaders emphasize company goals and objectives and strive to motivate workers toward a commitment to those goals and objectives (Hoch et al., 2018). Authentic leaders exude passion in their work and seek to connect with followers to increase commitment and trust (Braun & Nieberle, 2017). Situational leadership highlights both directive and supportive behaviors. Situational leaders utilize different directive and supportive behaviors depending on the level of commitment and competence (Wright, 2017). Interpersonal leaders use inspiration, insight, empowerment, and effective communication to build loyalty and trust (Northouse, 2019).

Servant leaders distinguish themselves from other leadership styles by raising the level of employee commitment and trust in several ways, especially as one of the critical attributes of servant leadership involves creating a climate of trust. First, servant leaders establish credibility and engage in morally right actions (Jaramillo et al., 2015). Servant leadership aligns with an ethical work climate because servant leaders accentuate personal integrity and trustworthiness,

focus on the needs of followers, and follow a solid moral compass (Jaramillo et al., 2015; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Greenleaf (1977) stresses the importance of servant leaders acting as role models, inspiring trust among their followers, and finding the right balance of accountability and care. Leaders acting with integrity have become more important in recent years because of major ethical scandals (e.g., Enron, WorldCom; Conrad, 2018; Liu, 2019). Jaramillo et al. (2015), in their study of supervisor and salesperson dyads within large Spanish firms, found that servant leadership behavior increased salesperson commitment and trust through behaving ethically and empowering employees by giving them opportunities to do their best. Second, servant leaders build rapport and long-term meaningful relationships with employees (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016) by (a) creating a positive work climate; (b) raising employee self-esteem through empowerment, listening, and building community; (c) sharing leadership through empowerment and delegation; (d) focusing on valuing and developing followers; and (e) implementing diversity and inclusion programs (Liu, 2019; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Sims, 2018). Third, servant leaders enable open communication to share insights and problem-solving approaches and resolve conflicts: “Good managers provide leadership in a way whereby employee productivity and collaboration increases; this helps decrease turnover and increase employee commitment” (Conzelmann, 2017, p. 161). Conzelmann (2017) states these leadership traits align mostly with servant leadership. Jaiswal and Dhar (2017) conducted a study based on a sample of about 50 supervisor–employee dyads in India. The researchers conclude that servant leadership influences the creative behaviors of employees because it fosters a trusting and healthy work environment. Fourth, servant leaders nurture a psychologically safe and fair organizational environment (Burton et al., 2017; Chughtai, 2016). Servant leaders form a trusting relationship with employees through interpersonal acceptance, empathy, and forgiveness, meaning employees can

make mistakes and still be accepted and feel emotionally linked to others (Burton et al., 2017; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). Fifth, servant leaders ensure the wellbeing of followers before themselves (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Sims, 2018; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Servant leaders prioritize the best interests of others within their organization (A. Lee et al., 2020). One of the key takeaways from the Chughtai (2016) study on servant leadership and organizational identification is servant leadership enhances firm performance because it raises the level of employee commitment and trust.

Servant Leadership Connection to Business Strategy

“Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2019, p. 5), which includes business strategy development and execution. Business strategy involves actions that management takes to meet organizational goals and objectives, keep employees focused on those goals and objectives, gain or sustain a competitive advantage, and achieve performance targets (Gamble et al., 2019). Business strategy development entails specific tasks that can help firms obtain a more robust relative position while cost-effectively creating customer value. Business strategy execution incorporates specific techniques, actions, and behaviors customized to the chosen strategic alternative and competitive scope criteria that executives believe will give their company a competitive advantage and allow them to provide superior value to their customers (Gamble et al., 2019). Contemporary leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, value-based leadership, and servant leadership, can impact the business strategy formulation and implementation process. However, researchers have acknowledged that more research is needed in this area (Do et al., 2018; Hayati et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; Park & Kim, 2018), and this literature review focuses only on servant leadership. This literature review explores the

role leadership plays in business strategy development, focusing on strategic leadership and strategy mindset shifts. This literature review examines the position some researchers have taken, in which strategy matters regardless of leadership style and preferences. The connection between servant leadership and business strategy formulation and implementation is analyzed in this review, and whether servant leadership actions or behaviors contribute to business strategy formulation and execution to help organizations gain or sustain a competitive advantage involves executing the formulated strategy (Gamble et al., 2019).

Leadership Role in Business Strategy Development and Execution

Leadership plays a critical role in business strategy formulation and implementation. The central task leaders perform involves business strategy development and execution (Rumelt, 2011). Strategy matters for companies to succeed, and this involves strategic leadership practices, strategic mindset shifts, and good strategy practices.

Strategic Leadership. Strategic leadership involves strategic thinking, strategic planning, and core competency advancement that can lead to a strategic competitive advantage (Hunitie, 2018). Strategic leadership occurs when individuals and teams “create direction, alignment, and commitment needed to achieve the enduring performance potential of the organization” (R. L. Hughes et al., 2014, p. 11). Strategic leadership involves several critical strategic-focused activities typically performed by senior executives. First, leadership needs to build its organization with the right people, resources, capabilities, and organizational structure. Collins (2001) mentions in his famous management book, *Good to Great*, that it is essential to have the “right people on the bus” to lead an enterprise, who can then “figure out the best path to greatness” (p. 47), including successfully achieving a competitive advantage. Senior management need to ensure they have (a) staffed the organization with employees with the

necessary experience, technical skills, and intellectual capital capable of implementing the strategy; (b) identified their available resources and capabilities along their entire value chain and taken any necessary actions to strengthen their organization through either internal development, acquisitions, or accessing through strategic alliances and partnerships; and (c) appropriately designed the organization to best fit the chosen strategy, such as functional vs. divisional vs. matrix organizational structure and centralized vs. decentralized authority decision-making (Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019). Organizational design affects the implementation of competitive strategies, including organizational structure, organizational goals, organizational strategy (broad or narrow), and organizational culture. Jun and Rowley (2019) found that competitive advantage was impacted by organizational structure, strategy, and capabilities implemented as part of organizational change. Second, management needs to allocate sufficient resources to strategy-critical activities, including operating expenses to implement strategic initiatives along the value chain and capital expenditures to improve capabilities, competencies, and value-creating processes (Gamble et al., 2019). Decision-makers need to ensure they have incorporated a budgeting process that considers the source of funding. Depending upon these strategy-critical activities, it may require funds from financing activities (e.g., equity or debt) beyond the net cash provided by operating activities (Blocher et al., 2019). Third, leaders need to implement strategic human resources or HRD practices, including (a) engaging their followers by involving them in the strategy implementation process and embracing diversity and inclusion; (b) building core capabilities and competencies through creating a learning environment; and (c) hiring and developing the right people, including those who work well in a team environment. Fourth, managers need to develop a strategic orientation regarding (a) customers and how to serve them, (b) competitors and how to overcome related challenges, and (c) costs and how to

manage them. Fifth, decision-makers need to promote new strategies as changes occur in the external environment, including shifts in market, competition, and economic conditions. Sixth, executives need to concentrate on effective strategy development and execution. Seventh, management needs to remain steadfast in being customer focused. Eighth, decision-makers need to avoid (a) becoming stuck in too much data; (b) relying on history as a guide, especially if changes occur in the competitive and customer landscape; and (c) falling into decision-making traps (Allio, 2015; Hunitie, 2018). Ninth, senior executives need to consider business integrity in strategy decisions, which involves (a) operating ethically (ethics), (b) contributing to the betterment of society (CSR), and (c) being a good steward of the environment (sustainability; Gamble et al., 2019; Li et al., 2018). Hunitie (2018) conducted a study on strategic leadership with a sample of hospitals in Jordan and concludes that strategic leadership is necessary for companies to engage successfully in strategic thinking and planning that can lead a competitive advantage.

Strategic Mindset Shifts. For leaders to advance from mid-level management to senior management, they need to make specific strategic shifts in their mindset. This shift can be difficult because managers often struggle in transitioning from day-to-day tactical thinking to broad strategic thinking about the overall business and impacts of critical long-term decisions (Detjen & Webber, 2017). Based on their studies of organizations, Detjen and Webber (2017) identified five fundamental strategic shifts that individuals need to make to move from middle management to strategic leadership positions and be more involved in formulating strategy. The first shift involves a change in perception regarding their ability to influence. Managers need to (a) identify their actual level of influence; (b) search for ways to expand their influence to impact the company positively; (c) be open to change; and (d) cultivate a desire for personal growth and

development. The second shift entails a change in their perspective of others. Leaders need to seek to understand the viewpoints and positions of others outside their secure network of influence by (a) asking questions, (b) appraising responses, and (c) studying other aspects of the industry. The third shift includes a change in their responsibilities. Managers need to look for ways to delegate and share tasks with their direct reports and to build alliances with people outside their organization to help them succeed at completing critical projects. The fourth shift involves a change in their leverage. Leaders need to search for a way to leverage their current resources and expand connections through (a) listening intently, (b) thoroughly analyzing ideas gathered from meetings, and (c) being a champion of change and innovation. The fifth and final shift involves a change in their organization. Managers need to be open to sharing new ideas with senior leaders and ensure their ideas are appropriately framed to explain the underlying value and associated issues and risks of a mitigation plan. Managers also need to be willing to seek feedback about their ideas from key stakeholders and to share any wins and lessons learned (Detjen & Webber, 2017).

Strategy Matters. Strategy defines leaders, who need to perform specific critical actions during the strategy formulation and implementation process. Strategy decisions significantly impact whether companies succeed or fail within their industry. Senior executives who understand that strategy matters recognize the importance of their strategic decisions, including (a) what products and services their company will offer; (b) how they plan to position their firm within the industry; (c) how they plan to develop and deploy resources and utilize capabilities and competencies within their organization; (d) how they plan for their enterprise to operate functionally; and (e) what performance targets they want their firm to achieve (Gamble et al., 2019): “Good strategy and good strategy execution are the most telling signs of good

management” (Gamble et al., 2019, p. 10). Allio (2015) concurs with this statement and adds it is not the leadership style that matters but good strategy and good fortune. He claims that for managers to endure and overcome uncertainties caused by macroenvironmental events, they must focus on adopting the right strategy, such as Porter’s industrial organization model (Allio, 2015; Porter, 1980). Good leaders harness sources of power for effective strategies, such as the powers of leverage, design, focus, and advantage. These powers have some common themes, including (a) an anticipation of customer and competitor behaviors; (b) an acute awareness of pivot points or events most critical in a given situation; (c) a strong emphasis on proactive and planned strategy instead of being reactive; (d) focused attention on the development of a well-coordinated design of actions, including identifying strategic options and actions, assessing potential outcomes, and evaluating possibilities of events; (e) concerted effort to coordinate and apply policies, resources, capabilities, competencies, and value chain activities to an appropriate target; (f) concentrated focus on a specific strategic goal or few goals, rather than pursuing multiple strategic objectives; and (g) a thorough understanding of what value-creating changes they need to make, such as building on an organization’s strengths and skills and strengthening isolating mechanisms that keep competitors from replicating products and services (Gamble et al., 2019; Rumelt, 2011).

Servant Leadership Impacts to the Process of Business Strategy Development and Execution

In contrast to the position that Allio (2015) espouses, several contemporary leadership styles exist, including servant leadership, that academia has recognized as impacting the process of business strategy development and execution (Do et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019). One significant reason for the increasing importance of servant leadership regarding strategy formulation and execution is that servant leadership focuses on putting employees’ and

other stakeholders' needs first, which can benefit them and society-at-large. Another major reason is that servant leadership can lead to improved citizenship behaviors within the organization, which can build social capital (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018), especially as companies address growing social and environmental challenges (Do et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Kincaid, 2012). Linuesa-Langreo et al. (2018) came to these conclusions on servant leadership based on their study of survey data from over 350 workgroups spanning almost 200 hotels in Spain. A third critical reason is that servant leadership, in addition to values-based leadership and ethical leadership, has strategic implications (e.g., moral visioning, developing and empowering employees, accepting accountability for strategic decisions, and being acutely aware and receptive to change; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019). However, the studies mentioned above also acknowledge more research is needed regarding servant leadership and business strategy formulation and execution.

Business Strategy. Business strategies involve “plans of action that describe resource allocation and activities for dealing with the environment and for reaching the organization’s goals” (Daft, 2016, p. 21). Such strategies include (a) reducing costs, (b) improving quality, (c) providing better services, (d) enhancing economic performance, (e) increasing productivity and profitability, and (f) controlling the external environment (Daft, 2016; Edvardsson et al., 2020; Gamble et al., 2019; Paro & Gerolamo, 2017). Business strategy includes strategy formulation and execution based on an assessment of internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats (Gamble et al., 2019). Business strategy defines how firms plan to achieve their goals, which can include various techniques and models and appropriately responding to opportunities and threats in their external environment (Gamble et al., 2019; Porter, 1985). Internal factors consist of resources, capabilities, and competencies within a

company regarding operations, product lines, marketing, customer interface, and financial position. External opportunities and threats include PESTEL factors and competitive industry forces, such as key trends, market position, entry barriers, the tempo of rivalry, and the bargaining power of customers, suppliers, and distributors (Blocher et al., 2019; Gamble et al., 2019; Prori Vitaliano et al., 2019). The acronym PESTEL (political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal) refers to the strategic relevance of six macroenvironmental components, such as fiscal policy, general economic situation, societal values (Gamble et al., 2019).

Business Strategy Development. Business strategy development involves (a) setting a firm's direction with strategy; (b) formulating a strategic vision, mission statement, set of core values, and goals and objectives; (c) selecting a strategic approach and establishing a competitive scope of operations (Gamble et al., 2019). Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and senior executives are responsible for business strategy development. These executives base their business strategy decisions on (a) their overall corporate strategy, mission statement, core values, goals, and objectives; (b) an assessment of both internal and external environments; and (c) the prioritization of drivers or levers they can pull to lead their organization to competitive success and desired outcomes, such as increased market share (Gamble et al., 2019; R. L. Hughes et al., 2014). Evaluating the external environment is critical because of the uncertainty and risks that external factors cause, which management needs to consider during business strategy formulation (Ivančić et al., 2017). Strategy decisions significantly impact whether firms succeed or fail within their industry because they drive how firms (a) create their products and services; (b) position themselves in the industry; (c) develop and deploy resources; and (d) operate functionally to gain or sustain a competitive advantage and satisfy stakeholders (e.g., employees,

customers, suppliers, distributors, shareholders, and the community-at-large; Gamble et al., 2019). Senior leaders take different approaches when developing and communicating business strategies. Transformational leaders use emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals to change and transform individuals (Northouse, 2019; Park & Kim, 2018; Stock et al., 2017). Transactional leaders do not consider the needs of followers and apply a contingent reward and management by exception approach (Northouse, 2019). Authentic leaders rely on exhibiting passion and being genuine to get workers to buy into their strategy (Braun & Nieberle, 2017; Northouse, 2019). Situational leaders utilize both directive and supportive behaviors based on employee commitment and competence (Wright, 2017). Interpersonal leaders incorporate inspiration, insight, empowerment, and effective communication to sell their strategy to the workforce (Northouse, 2019). Ethical leaders prioritize ethical considerations in strategy development (Wang et al., 2017). Values-based leaders focus on a universal set of moral values, including trustworthiness, respect for others and the environment, responsibility through accountability and excellence, fairness, and citizenship to comply with laws and regulations, which can profoundly impact strategy formulation and implementation (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019). Servant leaders accentuate the importance of serving their followers, which includes engaging them in the strategy development process.

Business Strategy Execution. Once senior management has crafted a business strategy based on the (a) evaluation of their internal and external environment; (b) choice of strategic approach; and (c) decision on competitive scope, it moves to business strategy implementation. Business strategy execution involves implementing specific techniques, actions, and behaviors aligned with the chosen strategic alternative and competitive scope criteria to (a) gain or sustain a competitive advantage; (b) provide superior value to customers; and (c) incorporate ethical

components, such as business ethics, CSR, and sustainability (Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019; Mello, 2019; Spector, 2013). Senior leaders accept responsibility for business strategy execution and ensure their firm utilizes specific techniques, actions, and behaviors aligned with their chosen strategic alternative and competitive scope criteria to achieve a competitive advantage and deliver superior value to their customers (Gamble et al., 2019). According to Bossidy (2002), former CEO of Honeywell International, “Execution is a specific set of behaviors and techniques that companies need to master in order to have competitive advantage. It is a discipline of its own. It is the critical discipline for success now” (p. 29). Management leads business strategy execution through (a) staying on top of the implementation process; (b) placing useful pressure on the organization; and (c) activating corrective action, as necessary (Gamble et al., 2019). Leadership accomplishes these aspects through dignity, respect, encouragement, stretch objectives, continuous improvement mindset, motivation, and compensation incentives (Gamble et al., 2019). Some leadership styles are more effective than others at applying these techniques and actions, such as transformational, authentic, interpersonal, and servant leadership. Transformational leaders rely on charisma, emotion, and vision, whereas authentic leaders depend on passion and connection. Interpersonal leaders utilize insight, empowerment, and effective communication, whereas servant leaders focus on putting others first as part of the strategy execution process (Braun & Nieberle, 2017; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019; Park & Kim, 2018; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015).

Servant Leadership and Business Strategy Development and Execution

Servant leadership stresses the importance of leaders serving their followers by (a) helping them with their personal growth and development; (b) empowering them to be involved in making decisions; (c) building a community in which they feel safe and connected to others

within the organization; and (d) demonstrating stewardship through providing direction, implementing CSR and sustainability programs, and holding them accountable for activities they can control, which can lead to achieving strategic goals (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Northouse, 2019). Uzonwanne (2015) concludes that participatory leadership significantly impacts the decision-making process due to facilitating the involvement of employees in making decisions. Servant leadership is a participatory leadership style because servant leaders focus on empowerment and collaboration and provide opportunities for their staff to participate in the decision-making process (Coetzer et al., 2017; Overbey & Gordon, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). Employee involvement in decision-making provides management with diverse opinions and insights, fosters personal growth, and leads to better quality decisions, greater acceptance of decisions, less resistance to change, increased accountability, and heightened satisfaction with the leader (Overbey & Gordon, 2017).

An effective way that leaders, including servant leaders, engage employees in business strategy involves participating in appreciative inquiry discussions, which is part of a strategic shift in thinking that moves from focusing on negatives and eliminating failures to emphasizing positives and repeating successes. Appreciative inquiry involves employees participating in strategy planning discussions via open-floor discussions, focus groups, interviews, or questionnaires. Appreciative inquiry centers on answering three critical questions that focus on identifying (a) activities done well, (b) the reasons these activities create success, and (c) how to replicate this success in other activities (Davis, 2020). Enterprises also engage employees through participation in teams to make workers feel included and to leverage creativity and innovation stemming from collaboration and teamwork (Starbird & Cavanagh, 2011).

A group of Australian researchers (Eva et al., 2018) evaluated survey data from over 300 direct reports of CEOs, general managers, and managing directors to understand whether a strategic fit exists between servant leadership and organizational structure and strategy. The researchers drew a few conclusions. First, servant leadership is more effective when leaders do not select a low-cost leadership strategic approach. Second, servant leadership is more effective when leaders design an organizational structure with lower formalization levels. The main reason for these two conclusions is that managers typically have to exhibit tighter control over workers when focusing on reducing costs. Third, no positive or negative relationship exists when leaders select a broad differentiation strategy, contrary to their hypothesis. The researchers suggest one reason for this result is that employees might not necessarily need servant leadership characteristics demonstrated by their bosses to think creatively and be innovative. However, the researchers acknowledge that more research is needed to understand employee outcomes better from servant leadership behaviors. Fourth, servant leadership is most effective when creating conditions of low centralization and low differentiation. The main reason for this conclusion is that in these conditions, employees can sense a lack of challenge and direction, which causes them not to be engaged and committed, and because servant leadership traits in leaders can change this mindset via a clear vision, intrinsic motivation, and self-efficacy (Eva et al., 2018).

Servant leadership affects business strategy formulation and implementation in several ways. First, servant leadership encompasses practices that establish a higher purpose vision and strategy with the intent of (a) creating value for society as a whole instead of only for shareholders; (b) satisfying customers and other stakeholders; (c) creating a continuous learning environment; and (d) considering the triple bottom line of economic, social, and ecological implications (Coetzer et al., 2017; Peterlin et al., 2015). Servant leaders utilize (a) foresight,

which includes the ability to predict future implications based on past and current trends and to embrace a longer-term strategic view; (b) stewardship, which involves the capacity to act as stewards of what has been entrusted to them and to influence followers to do the same; and (c) healing, which entails the capability and desire to focus on positively impacting others, including workers, customers, and other stakeholders, and to consider the social dimension of business (Peterlin et al., 2015).

Second, servant leadership enhances social capital by putting employees' and other stakeholders' needs first in three dimensions: structural (links among team members), relational (quality of interactions among team members), and cognitive (extent of a common understanding of goals and visions of an organization), which positively affects business strategy development and execution (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; Panaccio et al., 2015). Servant leaders accomplish this enhancement by establishing a positive organizational culture that empowers employees, encourages learning and development, embraces collaborative decision-making, improves corporate identity, and emphasizes ethics, CSR, sustainability, and service, which advances the achievement of strategic initiatives (Overbey & Gordon, 2017). Ethics, CSR, sustainability, and service have grown in importance due to the rapidly changing socioeconomic environment and recent corporate scandals (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017; Liu, 2019). Servant leaders implement business strategy to benefit both workers and society and to increase employee capability and commitment through (a) setting an example of serving others; (b) demonstrating humility; (c) active listening; (d) creating a sense of community and caring experience; (e) focusing on employee engagement; (f) facilitating shared direction, alignments, vision, and trust; and (f) realizing they are stewards of what has been entrusted to them (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Maxwell (2011) states that, "if you go out

of your way to care about others and help them, then they will go out of their way to help you when you ask them to” (p. 75).

Third, servant leadership promotes quality management initiatives (Nogueira et al., 2018). Companies use various strategic quality management improvement methods for strategic renewal to achieve outstanding performance, gain a competitive advantage, and enhance financial performance (Blocher et al., 2019; Plenert, 2012). Firms incorporate quality management initiatives in both strategy development and execution to help them strive for continuous improvement in processes and activities (Gamble et al., 2019). One of the more common tools is the Lean approach, which focuses on a “systems” approach and considers everything as a process flow. The purpose of Lean is to help companies do more with less (e.g., human effort, equipment, time, and space) and focus more on providing products and services that customers want (Starbird & Cavanagh, 2011): “Lean is concerned with the management of processes and operations and is uniquely combined with a focus on people, culture, and leadership” (Solaimani et al., 2019, p. 109). Lean engages the entire workforce at all levels of the organization to improve capabilities that lead to a competitive advantage (Pakdil & Leonard, 2017). Lean aligns with an organizational culture that embraces inclusion and empowerment, implements engaged performance teams, aims for perfection, and strives for continuous improvement (Gaiardelli et al., 2019; Plenert, 2012; Starbird & Cavanagh, 2011). Servant leadership has been found to affect Lean implementation positively because servant leadership entails empowering followers, which enables them to grow and develop and gives them the autonomy to complete tasks, foster talents, and collaborate with others (Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). A. Wong et al. (2018) conducted a study on the correlation between servant leadership and Lean based on data from over 100 customer

service teams in China. The researchers conclude that teams were able to work together more effectively and coordinate efforts, as well as maintain better customer relationships and service (A. Wong et al., 2018). Nogueira et al. (2018) examined different contemporary leadership styles, including servant leadership, which they refer to as empowerment leadership. The researchers conclude, based on questionnaire data from 65 Portuguese manufacturing and services firms, there was a positive correlation between servant leadership and Lean implementation success. Nogueira et al. (2018) note that only a directive leadership style (the opposite of servant leadership) was not conducive to a positive transformation to Lean. However, the researchers suggest that the power of leadership has a greater impact than the power of the leadership style, as they revealed no dominant leadership style related to the success of Lean adoption. Pursuing continuous quality improvement and enhancing customer service, such as delivery, returns, and repairs, are two ways companies can craft a strategy that differentiates themselves from competitors (Gamble et al., 2019).

Fourth, servant leadership mediates the hierarchical relationship between strategic initiatives, employee creativity, and innovative capacity, which can lead to effective business strategy execution. Servant leadership provides this link between strategy, creativity, and innovation through guidance, sacrifice, and ethical values, leading to respect, loyalty, and commitment to execute strategic initiatives and goals (Do et al., 2018; Hernández-Perlines & Araya-Castillo, 2020; Northouse, 2019). Do et al. (2018) confirmed the servant leadership connection with strategy and creativity in a study of questionnaire data from 56 firms in the Vietnamese service sector. The researchers found that servant leadership mediates management initiatives and employee creativity, leading to increased firm innovation and improved market performance (Do et al., 2018). Hernández-Perlines and Araya-Castillo (2020) came to a similar

conclusion in their study of survey data from 85 managers from nongovernmental and nonprofit entities in Spain. The researchers found that servant leadership positively influences innovative capacity, which can lead to improved performance (Hernández-Perlines & Araya-Castillo, 2020).

Anticipated and Discovered Themes

Anticipated Themes. Based on the review of professional and academic literature, the researcher anticipated some themes that could arise from the research study. These themes were hypothesized as follows. First, leaders interviewed from companies recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership conveyed servant leadership characteristics that scholars have studied extensively, including compassionate love, humility, stewardship, empowerment, accountability, building community, vision, creating an environment of trust, conceptualizing, and helping followers grow and succeed (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Coetzer et al., 2017; Heyler & Martin, 2018; Hunter et al., 2013; Jaramillo et al., 2015; Northouse, 2019; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018).

Second, servant leaders prioritize helping subordinates grow and succeed due to their emphasis on (a) putting the needs of others ahead of their own; (b) exhibiting a genuine interest in their employees' career progression, goals, and ambitions; and (c) providing opportunities for staff to enhance their skills and develop new talents (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Franco & Antunes, 2020; Liu, 2019; Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck, 2011). When the researcher first heard the term "servant leadership," it was in the context of putting others first and helping followers to grow and succeed.

Third, there is a strong link between servant leadership and business ethics and CSR because servant leadership (a) provides an ethical and transparent working climate (Jaramillo et

al., 2015); (b) emphasizes behaving ethically (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018); (c) promotes morality-centered self-reflection (Hunter et al., 2013); (d) guides leaders to their primary calling to assist and care for those around them (Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); (e) highlights treating others the way they want to be treated (Marques, 2018; Molano, 2019); and (f) encourages CSR and acting in a socially responsible manner (Kincaid, 2012; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Fourth, national culture plays a role in how leaders lead their organizations, including servant leaders, since leaders can use national cultural dimensions to match their values and behaviors to the culture of the place where they engage in business activities (Perez, 2017). Furthermore, employees from diverse cultures can have different perceptions and levels of openness and receptiveness to how leaders, including servant leaders, lead them (Bao et al., 2018; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; R. Yang et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2021).

Fifth, servant leadership can positively impact organizational culture regarding diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, and employee commitment and trust due to the increase in research in recent years on the practical application of servant leadership through (a) serving followers; (b) creating a climate of growth in which workers can develop and improve their potential; and (c) focusing on providing learning, encouragement, and affirmation for their followers (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Hunter et al., 2013; Liu, 2019; Neubert et al., 2016; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Sixth, servant leadership affects business strategy formulation and implementation from the perspective of greater employee involvement and the social dimension of business consideration because servant leadership emphasizes empowerment, stewardship, and putting

employees and other stakeholders first (Heyler & Martin, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Furthermore, servant leadership can lead to improved citizenship behaviors that can build social capital (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018), especially as companies address growing social and environmental challenges (Do et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Kincaid, 2012).

Discovered Themes. The in-depth interviews provided numerous themes aligned with the existing literature. First, leadership styles correlated with servant leadership. Several of the leaders interviewed emphasized the importance of leaders being servants and tied this to servant leadership attributes. The leaders mentioned (a) empowering employees, (b) stressing accountability, (c) demonstrating humility, (d) practicing stewardship, (e) building a sense of community, (f) focusing on the growth and success of followers, (g) creating an environment of trust, and (h) communicating a vision with transparency (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Coetzer et al., 2017; Heyler & Martin, 2018; Hunter et al., 2013; Jaramillo et al., 2015; Northouse, 2019; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018).

Second, empowerment and accountability go hand-in-hand. All the leaders agreed on the need to empower employees and hold them accountable. However, the leaders noted that these aspects are tied together for both to work within their organizations to (a) increase productivity, (b) improve the decision-making process, (c) enhance morale, (d) reduce turnover, (e) build stronger relationships, (f) heighten trust levels, and (g) encourage stewardship (Mulinge, 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017).

Third, building a sense of community leads to greater employee engagement, commitment, and trust. The leaders believed that creating a sense of community is critical to

increasing employee engagement, loyalty, and trust. The interviewees stated one of their key roles is to create a caring, supporting, encouraging, and collaborative environment (Coetzer et al., 2017; A. Wong et al., 2018). The leaders mentioned (a) spending quality time with their subordinates; (b) looking for ways for staff to have fun at work; (c) holding team-building activities; (d) making themselves available for their team members; (e) publicly recognizing workers for their accomplishments; (f) empowering employees; and (g) encouraging workforce participation in community service opportunities (Hunter et al., 2013; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Fourth, priority to helping the workforce grow and succeed with the intent to improve organizational performance. All the leaders interviewed mentioned that helping their employees grow and succeed was a major priority for them; they regarded this as crucial for improving individual and team performance. They mentioned several ways they demonstrate this priority, including (a) focusing on employee development; (b) creating learning environments; (c) exhibiting a coaching mindset; (d) empowering and holding staff accountable; (e) maintaining an open-door policy; and (f) incorporating quality management initiatives, such as Lean (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Franco & Antunes, 2020; Hunter et al., 2013; Liu, 2019; Northouse, 2019; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Fifth, business ethics is a must and links to servant leadership. All the leaders emphasized the importance of ensuring an ethical work climate with integrity from everyone within their organizations. The interviewees mentioned (a) leading by example; (b) holding to strong ethical standards with all stakeholders; (c) sticking to their core values and setting boundaries for strategic decisions; (d) striving to act morally and humbly and to treat others the way they want to be treated; and (e) encouraging CSR (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Conrad, 2018; Daft, 2016;

Do et al., 2018; Kincaid, 2012; Marques, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Sixth, national cultural dimensions slightly affect servant leadership. The leaders acknowledged they consider national cultural dimensions, especially as several had worked and led departments in various locations globally or had employees from different culture clusters. None of the leaders elaborated on the specific national cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity, or long-term–short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001). However, they mentioned the importance of (a) being cognizant of these national cultural dimensions in how they lead their diverse teams; (b) respecting different social norms and customs; (c) remaining steadfast in holding to company values; (d) maintaining proper business ethics; and (e) demonstrating flexibility in the way they empower, develop, and engage employees and hold them accountable (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Northouse, 2019; Perez, 2017).

Seventh, there was a significant emphasis on diversity and inclusion and CSR. Most leaders had plenty to say regarding diversity and inclusion, and they discussed how their companies were taking diversity and inclusion seriously by (a) promoting diversity and inclusion as part of their strategic objectives; (b) providing diversity training and direction to ensure equal opportunities; (c) taking a more strategic human resources approach (HRD); and (d) creating a psychologically safe work environment (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Mello, 2019; Russell, 2018; Sims, 2018). The senior leaders interviewed explained that CSR or ESG have increased in importance regarding business strategy and dealing with all stakeholders and the environment (Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019; Kincaid, 2012; Mello, 2019; Spector, 2013).

Eighth, business strategy and decision-making involve employees and consider the social dimension of business. There was general consensus that senior management makes high-level corporate strategic decisions. However, the leaders discussed how they engage employees at various levels in business strategy and decision-making. The leaders mentioned how they focus on empowerment and collaboration and seek opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making (Coetzer et al., 2017; Overbey & Gordon, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). The leaders stressed the importance of social responsibility and their commitment to impact positively the communities in which they conduct business and society-at-large (Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019; Kincaid, 2012; Mello, 2019; Spector, 2013).

Summary of the Literature Review

Leadership involves influence, and certain leadership styles are more effective depending upon specific contexts and situations. In recent years, there has been increased attention on the relationship between leaders and their followers. Therefore, several leadership approaches have been studied, including transformational leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, and team leadership (Northouse, 2019). Servant leadership stands out because of its emphasis on ethical and caring behavior based on teamwork, community, the personal growth of people, and the mindset of serving others (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Servant leadership includes several notable attributes, such as compassionate love, humility, stewardship, empowerment, accountability, community, vision, trust, conceptualization, and growth of followers (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Heyler & Martin, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Servant leadership aligns with business ethics from the perspective of (a) providing an ethical and transparent climate; (b) practicing integrity; (c) promoting more morality-centered self-

reflection; (d) concentrating on the interest and development of subordinates; and (e) encouraging CSR (Bao et al., 2018; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2018; Haldorai et al., 2020; Hunter et al., 2013; Jaramillo et al., 2015; Kincaid, 2012; Marques, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015).

National cultural dimensions and clusters affect servant leadership in several ways. First, servant leadership is better suited to low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance cultures because these cultures are more likely to embrace humility, empowerment, and accountability (Bissessar, 2018; Hale & Fields, 2007; A. Lee et al., 2020; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Second, servant leadership adjusts more to high individualistic cultures because these cultures are more likely to allow servant leaders to equip, encourage, and empower followers (Hale & Fields, 2007; A. Lee et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Third, servant leadership adapts better to high femininity cultures because these cultures are more likely to allow servant leaders to listen actively to employees, build stronger leader–follower relationships, and create a sense of community (Zhang et al., 2021). Fourth, servant leadership aligns better with long-term orientation cultures because these cultures are more likely to endorse stewardship and vision (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Finally, servant leadership endorsement differs across various culture clusters for all elements other than moral integrity (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012).

In recent years, more research has been conducted on whether servant leadership can positively impact organizational performance and organizational culture in the private sector, as it has in the Christian and nonprofit sectors (de Waal & Sivro, 2012; Harwiki, 2016; McNeff & Irving, 2017). Researchers have acknowledged more studies are needed across different businesses and industries. However, scholars have made several critical conclusions regarding the connection between servant leadership and organizational performance and organizational

culture. First, servant leaders can improve individual and team performance through (a) empowering employees; (b) sharing a compelling vision; (c) offering training and development opportunities; (d) creating a sense of belonging; (e) providing a psychologically safe environment; (f) practicing integrity; and (g) emphasizing service (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Brouns et al., 2020; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Eva et al., 2018; Hunter et al., 2013; Jaramillo et al., 2015; Sims, 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Second, servant leaders can increase OCB by setting a positive example for followers and developing trustworthy relationships with their employees (Amir & Santoso, 2019; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Third, servant leaders can contribute to organizational sustainability through (a) helping followers grow and develop; (b) sharing a vision in a way that employees buy into; (c) acting in the best interests of others and their group (Abbas et al., 2020; Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017; Qiu & Dooley, 2019). Fourth, servant leaders can develop better quality leader–follower dyadic relationships with their followers due to their desire to focus on their employees’ personal and professional growth (Bao et al., 2018; Panaccio et al., 2015). Fifth, servant leaders can create a positive culture that embraces diversity and inclusion, engages employees, and enhances workforce commitment and trust through (a) demonstrating the servant leadership attributes of empowerment, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship; (b) adopting a strategic view of human resources that aligns with servant leadership’s focus on followers; and (c) creating an ethical work climate (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Eva et al., 2018; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Jaramillo et al., 2015; Sims, 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015).

Proper business strategy development and execution are critical for companies to achieve a competitive advantage and outstanding firm performance (Gamble et al., 2019). Academia has acknowledged the importance of senior management recognizing the importance of strategic leadership, acknowledging strategy matters, and considering adopting contemporary leadership styles, including servant leadership; however, more research is needed. Servant leadership aligns with some of the current trends in strategic literature intended to support the process of strategy development and execution. Based on the literature review on servant leadership and business strategy, servant leaders are more likely to (a) align with strategic human resources' emphasis on developing, empowering, and engaging employees in strategy formulation and execution; (b) incorporate business ethics, CSR, and sustainability initiatives in the development and implementation of strategy; (c) promote quality management initiatives that affect business strategy decisions; and (d) engage in behaviors that connect strategic initiatives, employee creativity, and innovative capacity, which can lead to effective business strategy execution (Do et al., 2018; Hernández-Perlines & Araya-Castillo, 2020; Nogueira et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019; Peterlin et al., 2015; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). Collins (2001) states in his famous management book, *Good to Great*, that great leaders (Level 5 leaders) “look out the window, not in the mirror, to apportion credit for the success of the company – to other people and external factors” (p. 37). This factor has much to do with superior organizational performance and effective strategy development and execution and is something servant leaders do.

Transition and Summary of Section 1

This Foundation of the Study section served four purposes. First, this section presented a problem statement and research questions regarding the failure of organizations to consider

adequately the cultural context of servant leadership and its potential impact on organizational performance. Second, this section included a conceptual framework that describes selected concepts or theories and how they correspond to the research questions. Third, this section reviewed the professional and academic literature on (a) servant leadership characteristics; (b) national cultural conditions impacting servant leadership; and (c) servant leadership's link to organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture and business strategy. Finally, this section introduced the next section, which addresses the research method and design, population and sampling, data collection and analysis, and reliability and validity.

Section 2: The Project

The Project section includes the research design and method used to complete this research study. The research design and method involved a qualitative multiple case study approach that focused on the four research questions. First, this study explored the cultural context of servant leadership style and its influence on organizational performance. Second, this research studied the connection between culture and servant leadership and its link to business ethics. Third, this study investigated the relationship between servant leadership and organizational culture, specifically concerning diversity and inclusion initiatives and approaches to increasing employee engagement, commitment, and trust. Fourth, this research examined the linkage between servant leadership and business strategy development and execution.

The Project section addresses the critical components of a research study, including the (a) role of the researcher; (b) appropriateness of a qualitative multiple case study approach; (c) incorporation of triangulation; (d) identification of participants; (e) discussion of population and sampling; (f) collection, analysis, and coding of data; (g) use of instruments; and (h) reliability and validity of the data.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study and its multiple case study design was to explore the cultural context of servant leadership attributes and to understand whether these actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. Plenty of evidence supports the practical application of servant leadership in the Christian and nonprofit sectors (McNeff & Irving, 2017). However, there is a need to explore further whether servant leadership can have the same effect within the private sector, especially as more organizations adopt a more caring

leadership style (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Saleem et al., 2020; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). This study sought to (a) describe how culture mediates servant leadership and its effect on organizational performance; (b) investigate how culture provides further insight into servant leadership and its connection to business ethics; (c) identify whether servant leadership can positively change organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion and positively change organizational culture to one that improves employee engagement and increases employee commitment and trust; and (d) analyze whether servant leadership actions or behaviors contribute to business strategy formulation and execution that helps organizations gain or sustain a competitive advantage.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher applied qualitative research principles and techniques to this study and performed several critical tasks. First, the researcher identified and contacted participants. The researcher selected participants that included organizational leaders, direct reports, and human resource managers from selected companies within the oil and gas sector, recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership that agreed to participate in this research study. Second, the researcher developed interview questions focused on (a) leadership approach; (b) organizational culture; (c) diversity and inclusion initiatives; (d) employee development, engagement, and commitment; and (e) business strategy formulation and execution. Third, the researcher conducted interviews with the agreed participants. The researcher held these interviews primarily via Microsoft Teams or Zoom, considering COVID-19 precautions; however, some interviews were held in person. The researcher planned these interviews to last for no more than 45 minutes to respect the time and commitment of the agreed participants. The

interviews averaged 45 to 50 minutes. Fourth, the researcher administered surveys, using the SLQ as the survey instrument. Fifth, the researcher collected, analyzed, and coded the data in accordance with qualitative research principles and techniques learned during the doctoral coursework. The researcher employed validation and reliability constructs in qualitative research to ensure accuracy, including triangulation, disconfirmation, reflexivity, feedback solicitation, participant collaboration and rapport, and thick and rich description (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Sixth, the researcher reviewed publicly available information on the selected companies and peer companies, such as annual reports, company profiles, 10-Ks, investor/analyst presentations, company news articles, ESG reports, and scholarly journals covering the organizations and businesses. The researcher gathered data from this publicly available information related to employee growth, diversity and inclusion initiatives, business strategy, and anything else that could indicate why these companies are recognized for servant leadership. The idea was that such information could corroborate the qualitative data from the interviews and surveys. Seventh, the researcher anticipated potential ethical issues and addressed them throughout the study. The researcher did not (a) conduct the research without proper approvals and permissions, as required; (b) deceive participants or treat them with disrespect and without dignity; (c) manipulate data, findings, and conclusions; (d) disclose inaccurate or harmful information; (e) betray the confidentiality and trust of participants; (f) plagiarize; (g) engage in activities that could be perceived as a conflict of interest; or (h) compromise values (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Eighth, the researcher presented the findings clearly and concisely as prescribed within learned qualitative research principles and techniques.

Personal biases negatively impact the validity and reliability of qualitative research.

Personal biases could have affected this study by asking participants leading and poorly

articulated questions, distorting participant responses, gathering only selective documents, and manipulating the observed events (Yin, 2018). Two of the more common personal biases or traps a researcher can fall into are the confirming-evidence trap and the framing-decision trap. The confirming-evidence trap happens when the analysis and interpretation of data are based on information that supports an existing instinct and excludes any contradictory material. The framing-decision trap occurs when data analysis and interpretation are severely influenced by how a problem or question is framed. Both these traps involve individuals seeing only what they want to see and considering personal preferences and experiences that can influence how data are collected and interpreted (i.e., more weight given to supporting data than conflicting information; Hammond et al., 1998).

The researcher incorporated bracketing to avoid personal biases. Bracketing is used in qualitative research to “mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby increase the rigor of the project” (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 81). Bracketing reduces the cumulative effect of emotionally challenging material and facilitates deeper reflection levels throughout the qualitative research process (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The researcher performed the following to ensure proper bracketing: (a) setting aside assumptions and not letting personal experiences and cultural factors obstruct the process; (b) staying focused on being open and receptive to the information from the respondents; (c) making every effort to provide a safe environment for participants to express their genuine opinions and establish parameters to preserve their anonymity and confidentiality; (d) creating straightforward interview questions; (e) treating the participants with respect and gratitude; (f) maintaining a positive attitude throughout the research process; (g) utilizing a credible survey instrument, such as the SLQ; and (h) incorporating validity and reliability

constructs, as mentioned in the previous paragraph (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fischer, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Yin, 2018).

The researcher endeavored to follow guidance from authoritative qualitative research sources, such as Creswell and Poth's (2018) textbook on qualitative research and Yin's (2018) textbook on multiple case study design, to ensure the appropriateness of the study, avoid personal biases, and anticipate potential ethical issues. The researcher, as a Christ-follower, strove throughout the research process to maintain integrity and "seek the respect of their [his] colleagues for the quality and integrity of their [his] work" (Keller, 2012, p. 209). Paul addressed this issue in his letter to the Colossians: "whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23 NIV).

Research Methodology

This study's research methodology was a flexible design and a multiple case study method. Case study research design involves an in-depth investigation of a real-life contemporary phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Case study design enables a researcher to explore an issue or problem bounded within certain parameters, such as specific individuals or organizations, particular events or processes, certain locations, and defined periods (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A flexible design was appropriate for this study for a few reasons. First, flexible design is conducive to a pragmatism research paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Johnson et al., 2016). Pragmatism concentrates on human actions, situations, and consequences, as well as the relationship between knowledge and action (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Goldkuhl, 2012). This study focused on the human actions, situations, and consequences of servant leadership on organizational performance. Second, flexible design provides insight into and explores the

complexity inherent in a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study sought to gain insight and explore the real-life contemporary phenomenon of the cultural context of servant leadership and how it impacts organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy, rather than examining the cause-and-effect relationships between servant leadership and organizational performance. Third, flexible design allows for greater latitude during the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study incorporated data collection from multiple sources, including interviews, surveys, and a review of publicly available information. Fourth, flexible design works whenever the dependent variable is not quantitatively measurable (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study examined how national culture can provide a deeper understanding of servant leadership and its connection to business ethics, which is nonquantifiable. This study also considered how servant leadership can influence organizational performance by incorporating diversity and inclusion initiatives, engaging employees, and developing and implementing business strategies. This aspect is also not necessarily quantifiable.

A case study method is appropriate whenever multiple sources of evidence, such as interviews, observations, participant responses to research activity instruments, and documents and artifacts, are needed to distinguish the boundaries between a phenomenon and its context. This study strove to understand the connection between national culture and servant leadership and the linkage between servant leadership and organizational performance based on multiple sources of evidence (e.g., interviews, surveys, and documents). The case study method is applicable across numerous disciplines, including social sciences, education, medicine, and business (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Yin, 2018). This study researched servant leadership in the business environment. The case study method focuses on answering how and why a particular

phenomenon works in a contemporary setting in which a researcher has little or no control (Yin, 2018). The researcher had little or no control over how and why there may be a connection between servant leadership and organizational performance. The case study method enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of complex issues and to deal with large amounts of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Raffaghelli et al., 2015). This study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural context of servant leadership and how it impacts organizational performance.

Triangulation refers to using multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research (Abdalla et al., 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fusch et al., 2018). Researchers use triangulation to corroborate evidence that (a) checks and establishes validity in a qualitative study; (b) helps develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena; (c) mitigates bias; and (d) enhances reaching data saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fusch et al., 2018; Patton, 2015). Two of the more common triangulation types are data triangulation and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation involves gathering data from different sources in different periods to (a) attain a richer and more thorough description of phenomena, (b) gain multiple perspectives, and (c) help validate the data. Methodological triangulation entails using various methods for collecting data, such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, and a review of documents (Abdalla et al., 2018; Carter et al., 2014; Denzin, 1978).

The researcher incorporated triangulation to help gain an understanding of the relationship between national culture and servant leadership, as well as how servant leadership impacts organizational performance. The researcher utilized different methods of gathering data, including interviews, surveys, and a review of publicly available documents. The researcher relied on data from various sources, including in-depth interview responses and feedback, survey

results, and information collected from publicly available documents (e.g., annual reports, company profiles, 10-Ks, investor/analyst presentations, company news articles, ESG reports, and scholarly journals that cover their organization and business). The use of both data and methodological triangulation was appropriate for this study for a few reasons. First, utilizing diversified sources of data allowed for the comparison of individual points of view and experiences related to whether and how servant leadership affects diversity and inclusion initiatives, employee engagement efforts, and business strategy development and execution. Second, incorporating survey instruments was a way to support objectivity because they do not depend upon human perception. Third, employing a review of publicly available data promoted confirmability, reduced the effects of the researcher, and mitigated bias (Abdalla et al., 2018; Carter et al., 2014; Denzin, 1978; Fusch et al., 2018).

This research study on the impact of servant leadership on organizational performance was conducted as a qualitative design with a case study method and incorporated triangulation. The case study method with triangulation enabled the researcher to explore the cultural context of servant leadership and its impact on organizational performance through positively changing organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion, increases employee commitment and trust, and sustains a competitive advantage. The case study method with triangulation provided the researcher an approach to gather data from multiple sources within a business setting to examine whether servant leadership (a) improves organizational performance, (b) positively impacts diversity and inclusion, (c) increases employee engagement, (d) builds employee commitment and trust, and (e) affects business strategy formulation and execution.

Participants

The participants for this research study included organizational leaders, direct reports, and human resources leaders within selected oil and gas sector-related companies recognized for servant leadership (Fortune Media Corporation, n.d.) or promoting servant leadership. The researcher considered (a) senior management, (b) asset managers, (c) functional leaders, (d) direct reports of these individuals, and (e) human resources leaders who agreed to engage in interviews and complete the SLQ survey instrument. One reason these types of individuals were selected was they could provide a perspective on leadership approaches, including exhibiting servant leadership characteristics. Second, they could describe how national culture impacts servant leadership and business ethics. Third, they could define their company's organizational culture regarding diversity and inclusion initiatives and employee development, engagement, and commitment. Fourth, they could express whether servant leadership attributes and mindsets affect decisions related to diversity and inclusion and the tactics to develop and engage employees and build trust among their workforce. Fifth, they could explain whether servant leadership plays a role in business strategy and, if so, how servant leadership impacts business strategy formulation and execution.

The researcher did not include the names of the selected companies within the oil and gas sector nor the names of individual participants to protect their anonymity. The researcher addressed confidentiality with each prospective participant to assure them any data gathered from interviews and surveys would be held in strict confidence. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews using a semi-structured style with open-ended questions and then applied triangulation through the survey instrument of SLQ and a review of publicly available documents related to these companies. The research study included 26 organizational leaders

who agreed to participate in the semi-structured in-depth interviews. These leaders included CEOs and senior and mid-management leaders within operations, engineering, finance, and human resources. Each leader provided valuable insight into servant leadership's impact on organizational performance. The research study also included responses to the SLQ from 51 participants, including 16 of the 26 interviewees and 35 direct reports of the interviewees.

Population and Sampling

A significant aspect of the qualitative research process is choosing an appropriate sample that represents a defined population and can best inform the qualitative researcher about the specific research problem under examination. Effective sample selection is critical for qualitative studies to avoid inappropriate procedures that could affect the findings and outcomes. Qualitative researchers typically rely on small nonprobability sampling, which enables them to gain insight into the phenomenon they are studying (Blackstone, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

The population for this research study involved five companies within the oil and gas sector recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. that agreed to participate and then organizational leaders, direct reports, and human resources personnel from these companies were selected. The chosen companies are engaged in activities related to either (a) exploration and production; (b) engineering, procurement, and construction of oil and gas installations; (c) refining and marketing; and (d) oil and gas services. The population also included peer companies within the oil and gas sector, as it pertains to reviewing publicly available information on these companies.

Since this study was qualitative, the researcher applied nonprobability sampling techniques, which are appropriate for qualitative research projects in which the goal is to gain an

in-depth understanding of a phenomenon instead of a general understanding. Nonprobability sampling typically involves selecting a specific small group to examine a phenomenon (Blackstone, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Nonprobability sampling types include convenience, purposive, snowball, and theoretical.

Convenience sampling entails collecting data from conveniently available people because of access, location, time, and willingness to participate. Convenience sampling is an efficient and economical way for researchers to gather data. However, convenience sampling is not a preferred approach because (a) participants may not be information-rich sources, which could result in insufficient quality data or lack intellectual credibility; (b) groups may be under- or overrepresented; and (c) samples may not be representative of the population, which limits the ability to make generalizations of the findings or could lead to bias regarding the broader population (Blackstone, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; DeCarlo, 2018; Elmusharaf, 2012b; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

Purposive sampling involves researchers collecting data from people who meet specific criteria that researchers wish to examine. Purposive sampling allows researchers to choose participants intentionally who (a) meet narrow and particular criteria; (b) hold a required status or experience or possess special knowledge; (c) have desired characteristics; or (d) appear to represent the population. Purposive sampling increases the likelihood of gathering data from information-rich sources. Quota sampling and maximum variation sampling are two common purposive sampling strategies that researchers utilize. Quota sampling is when researchers predetermine the number of participants and characteristics they need to possess (e.g., age, gender, profession, and ethnicity). Maximum variation sampling is when researchers choose participants who allow them to identify common patterns across a wide range of variation

regarding dimensions of interest and conditions related to the phenomenon (Blackstone, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; DeCarlo, 2018; Elmusharaf, 2012b; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

Snowball sampling refers to researchers collecting data from a small number of people and then relying on those people to provide additional contacts, such as friends, relatives, colleagues, or others with the desired characteristics that fit the study. Snowball sampling is useful when a researcher wants to study a marginalized or stigmatized group or behavior. Snowball sampling, like convenience sampling, is efficient, but it is not necessarily preferred because researchers must rely on referrals from initial contacts for additional participants who may not represent the overall population being studied (Blackstone, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Elmusharaf, 2012b; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

Theoretical sampling involves researchers selecting participants based on their theoretical relevance. Theoretical sampling is typically used in grounded theory studies, in which researchers begin with a small homogeneous sample and expand to a larger heterogeneous sample to create a substantive theory. Theoretical sampling involves data analysis and sequential sampling, as data analysis guides what data need to be collected next. Theoretical sampling is a sampling process entirely controlled by researchers' emerging theories (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Elmusharaf, 2012b; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

The researcher utilized both purposeful and snowball sampling. The researcher chose participants based on required status or experience or who possessed special knowledge, as well as their willingness to participate. The participants were leaders within organizations recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The researcher also relied on initial contacts to provide additional participants. Purposeful sampling and snowball sampling were appropriate for this study for a few reasons. First, purposive sampling enabled the researcher to

collect data from individuals within companies recognized for demonstrating characteristics of the phenomena under investigation, which involved gaining an understanding of the relationship between national culture and servant leadership, as well as how servant leadership impacts organizational performance. Data collection involved gathering information from in-depth interviews, surveys, and a review of publicly available information. Second, purposive sampling enhanced the likelihood of collecting rich data. As mentioned above, the researcher incorporated triangulation to analyze a diversified source of data to compare individual points of view and experiences related to whether and how servant leadership affects diversity and inclusion initiatives, employee engagement efforts, and business strategy formulation and implementation. Third, purposive sampling increased the likelihood of having a sample that was more representative of the population. The researcher sought a broad base of respondents from organizational leaders, direct reports, and human resource personnel within companies recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The researcher did not depend entirely on snowballing because this technique can be prone to bias (Wilmot, 2012). However, the researcher mitigated potential bias through triangulation. The researcher relied on surveys and a review of publicly available information to corroborate data gathered through in-depth interviews.

Sample frames include lists of elements in a population used to select a sample. Researchers strive to develop a sample frame that approximates the target population to minimize errors that could be introduced into their study. Sample frames can either be existing frames or constructed frames. Existing frames usually comprise published records, such as registers or lists of specific events, circumstances, and surveys. Existing frames provide researchers with an ample list for investigation; however, the list or survey data may not be

designed with the current study in mind or may be affected by under coverage or response bias. Constructed frames include lists (a) created based on actual sampling and recruiting of participants; (b) developed through focused enumeration, which involves contacting potential participants, screening questionnaires, and attempts to obtain interviews; and (c) established through snowballing. Constructed frames enable researchers to prepare lists that fit their study (Krysiak, 2018; Wilmot, 2012).

The researcher developed a constructed frame based on actual sampling and recruiting participants from selected companies recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The researcher also engaged in snowballing to obtain a broader base of participants. The sample frame for this study centered on organizational leaders, direct reports, and human resources personnel from specific companies within the oil and gas sector recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The sample frame was appropriate for this study because these participants provided information-rich data. These data contained insight into how national culture can provide a deeper understanding of servant leadership and its connection to business ethics and how servant leadership can influence organizational performance through implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives, engaging employees, and developing and executing business strategies.

Typically, qualitative researchers begin a study without a predetermined sample size, unlike quantitative researchers, who identify a predetermined sample size to establish statistical significance. There are no specific criteria for determining sample size in qualitative studies and no rules that state when the sample size is too small or large. The number of participants is not as crucial as the richness of the data collected. However, the sample size should be sufficient to achieve the purpose of the study while considering the context of the study and the richness of

the data collected. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend a varied number of participants depending on the type of flexible design. The researchers suggest four to five participants for a case study, 10 participants for a phenomenological study, and 15 to 20 participants for a grounded theory study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Typically, qualitative researchers continue to sample until they are not obtaining any new information or insights, which is referred to as data saturation (Elmusharaf, 2012b; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 26 organizational leaders from five companies within the oil and gas sector recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The researcher believed data saturation was reached just before 20 interviews, as no new information was revealed. However, the researcher completed 26 interviews, as this was the number of participants who consented to be interviewed. The researcher received survey data from 16 of these 26 participants, as well as 35 responses from direct reports of the interviewees. The researcher reviewed publicly available documents pertaining to these five companies, as well as five peer companies. The publicly available documents included annual reports, company profiles, 10-Ks, investor/analyst presentations, company news articles, ESG reports, and scholarly journals that cover the organizations and businesses (i.e., data on employee growth, diversity and inclusion initiatives, CSR or ESG, business strategy, and anything else that could indicate why these companies are recognized for servant leadership). The researcher gained access to the sample through a “gatekeeper” at three companies and contacted the human resource department of the other two firms. The researcher had connections with three organizations but not at the other two companies.

This research study on the impact of servant leadership on organizational performance was based on in-depth interviews, survey instruments, and a review of publicly available

documents from five companies within the oil and gas sector recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The researcher constructed a sample frame based on actual sampling and recruiting participants from these selected companies through purposive and snowballing sampling. The researcher utilized purposive and snowballing sampling to choose the participants and incorporated triangulation (survey instruments and a review of publicly available documents) to explore the cultural context of servant leadership and how it impacts organizational performance through positively changing corporate culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion, increases employee commitment and trust, and sustains a competitive advantage.

Data Collection and Organization

Data collection and organization mark the beginning of the execution phase of a research study. Data collection focuses on gathering information to answer the research questions pertaining to a research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Krysik, 2018; Yin, 2018). Data collection is enhanced if researchers gather data from multiple sources, which enables triangulation (Abdalla et al., 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fusch et al., 2018; Schoch, 2020; Yin, 2018). The researcher collected data from in-depth interviews, a survey instrument, and a review of publicly available documents. These various data collection tools were appropriate for this multiple case study design because the researcher was able to (a) gather information regarding servant leadership's impact on organizational performance directly from leaders of organizations recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership; (b) incorporate an academically recognized survey instrument (the SLQ) to support objectivity, so the study was not entirely dependent upon human perception; (c) employ a review of publicly available data to promote confirmability, reduce reflexivity, and mitigate bias, since these documents were created

for reasons other than those being explored (Yin, 2018). Data organization involves steps and protocols to organize information for analysis, coding, and identifying themes. Furthermore, data organization involves establishing a database to keep information pertaining to the research study, such as field notes, interview transcriptions, survey results, narratives, and documents (Schoch, 2020).

Data Collection Plan

A data collection plan entails several critical components that enable the researcher to investigate a real-life contemporary phenomenon that involves the cultural context of servant leadership and its impact on organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. First, the data collection plan included identifying stakeholders or individuals to be involved in the study (Schoch, 2020). The participants in this study were organizational leaders, direct reports, and human resources leaders within organizations recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The researcher chose (a) executives, (b) asset managers, (c) functional leaders, (d) direct reports of these individuals, and (e) human resources leaders who agreed to engage in in-depth interviews and complete the SLQ survey instrument. Second, the data collection plan included contacting the selected firms to obtain a purposeful sample and a snowball sample (Blackstone, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Elmusharaf, 2012b; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). The researcher relied on a gatekeeper for three companies and contacted human resources representative at the other two companies. Third, the data collection plan involved gathering data from multiple sources to provide for triangulation (Abdalla et al., 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fusch et al., 2018; Schoch, 2020; Yin, 2018). The researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection tool and then incorporated triangulation by requesting the participants

complete the SLQ survey instrument and reviewing publicly available documents. Fourth, the data collection plan included developing an interview guide that focused on the four research questions for this study (Bird, 2016; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013; Wilson, 2014). The researcher asked various types of questions that (a) allowed the respondents to introduce themselves; (b) stimulated conversation centered on answering the four research questions for this study; and (c) encouraged the sharing of information to obtain insight into the participants' lived experiences and perspectives on servant leadership and how it might improve organizational performance, positively impact diversity and inclusion, build employee commitment and trust, and affect business strategy formulation and execution. The researcher applied a semi-structured approach for the interview guide, which involved a specific set of questions to ensure the research questions were answered while allowing for some flexibility to follow tangents, seek clarification of previous answers, and request elaboration for certain responses, as appropriate. Fifth, the data collection plan included setting-up interviews with agreed participants, expressing appreciation, and communicating intent for the interviews (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013; Schoch, 2020). As part of arranging the interviews, the researcher (a) briefly explained the purpose of the interviews; (b) obtained permission to use the information the participants provide; and (c) stressed that every effort would be taken to ensure privacy and their information would be kept confidential. Sixth, the data collection plan involved engaging in a pilot study (Yin, 2018) of three individuals who had been organizational leaders. The researcher used the pilot study to test a research protocol for gathering information via semi-structured interviews and the survey instruments. The researcher did not modify the semi-structured interview guide following the pilot study; however, the researcher gained insight into which questions could require more time than others. The researcher also used the pilot study to gauge whether any modifications or

additions needed to be made to the interview guide. Seventh, the data collection plan included conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013; Schoch, 2020; Yin, 2018), primarily through Microsoft Teams and Zoom, although the researcher conducted some interviews in person. The researcher made every effort to follow an interview guide, was respectful of the respondents' time, and kept the interviews close to 45 minutes in length. Some of the interviews were slightly shorter or longer based on the participant's responses to the open-ended questions and them having the opportunity to speak freely and express their thoughts and feelings. Eighth, the data collection plan included audio-recording the interviews and transcribing the data for analysis, coding, and identifying themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Elmusharaf, 2012a; Yin, 2018). The researcher utilized Otter to record and transcribe the interviews. The researcher sought approval from the participants to record the interview sessions. Ninth, the data collection plan included utilizing the SLQ survey instrument developed by Liden et al. (2008). The researcher received approval to use the SLQ survey instrument as one of the data collection tools. The researcher requested the participants, along with one or two of their direct reports, to complete the SLQ survey instrument. The researcher set up an electronic medium, Survey Monkey, to collect the SLQ survey data. Tenth, the data collection plan included gathering publicly available documents (Elmusharaf, 2012a; Schoch, 2020; Yin, 2018) from the selected companies to review, as well as from peer companies. The researcher reviewed annual reports, company profiles, 10-Ks, investor/analyst presentations, company news articles, ESG reports, and scholarly journals covering the selected companies. Eleventh, the data collection plan included member checking and follow-up interviews with some participants (Schoch, 2020). The researcher sought member checking; however, the research did not conduct any follow-up interviews. Twelfth, the data collection plan included organizing the information

gathered from the interviews, surveys, and the review of publicly available documents (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Elmusharaf, 2012a; Schoch, 2020; Yin, 2018). The researcher summarized the data collected to enable content analysis, coding, the identification of themes, and for reliability and validity. The researcher paid attention to both qualitative (e.g., interviews and review of publicly available documents) and quantitative data (survey data based on a Likert rating scale).

Instruments

The data collection instruments used for this research study were (a) a semi-structured interview guide, (b) the SLQ survey tool, and (c) publicly available documents related to the selected companies and peer companies. These instruments were utilized to help answer the four research questions. The in-depth interviews served as the primary source of data collection, whereas the other two instruments, the SLQ and the review of publicly available documents, served as additional sources to corroborate evidence gathered from the in-depth interviews and to provide triangulation.

Interviews. The first data instrument involved conducting in-depth interviews based on an interview guide that centered on each of the four research questions. The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A) that contained a list of high-level topics and questions covered during the interviews. The purpose of an interview guide is to help interviewers (a) focus and organize their line of thinking and questioning; (b) ensure required topics are covered in each interview; and (c) pace the interview and assist in staying on track during the interview (Bird, 2016). The researcher had a separate copy of the interview guide for each interview for data organizational purposes. This separate copy made it easier to keep track of each interview and ensured (a) an opening statement regarding the purpose and intent of the interview was adequately communicated to each participant; (b) consent was received from each

interviewee to audio-record the interview and use the information they shared as part of the research; (c) essential data were captured and recorded for each participant; and (d) information regarding data, time, place, setting, and interviewee's body language was captured (Yin, 2018). The separate copy also made it easier for member checking (Yin, 2018). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, which was an appropriate method for this study because it enabled the researcher to (a) ask open-ended questions; (b) have a mechanism to redirect conversations that digress from the critical topics tied to the research questions; (c) gather facts, attitudes, and opinions; (d) have some flexibility with the various interviewees and be able to draw broad comparisons across the interviews; (e) collect information on topics on which respondents could express items important to them; (f) address complex topics through probing and seeking further clarification and elaboration; and (g) link the interview information to archival data (Wilson, 2014). The researcher conducted the interviews in a manner that kept several critical points regarding semi-structured interviews in mind based on guidance from authoritative qualitative research sources that address data collection and interviews (Bird, 2016; Bryman & Bell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013; Schoch, 2020; Wilson, 2014; Yin, 2018). First, the researcher made every effort to keep the interviews within 45 minutes and respect the participants' time. The interviews all lasted between 40 and 55 minutes, other than one that lasted for 90 minutes. Second, the researcher ensured the respondents had plenty of opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings regarding leadership, culture, servant leadership, cultural impact on servant leadership, and servant leadership impact on organizational performance, organizational culture, and business strategy. All the interviewees were engaged and interested in discussing these topics and their leadership styles. Third, the researcher utilized funneling, probing, and paraphrasing interview techniques for

further clarification and elaboration on specific questions. Fourth, the researcher did everything possible to maintain a warm and nonjudgmental manner toward the participants and made sure the questions were asked in a balanced, unbiased, nonleading, nonthreatening, sensitive, clear, and consistent manner. Fifth, the researcher strove to display genuine respect to the participants and demonstrated this by (a) arriving on time; (b) having the interview guide, notebook, and recording equipment ready before the interview commenced; (c) anticipating and being prepared to answer any questions the respondents may have had; (d) adopting an active listening position; (e) honoring promises made to the participants; and (f) remembering ethical considerations during the interviews related to privacy, sensitive topics, and confidentiality of the information. Sixth, the researcher took field notes and recorded the interview sessions using Otter to ensure everything was captured verbatim. Seventh, the researcher transcribed the interview notes using Otter. Eighth, the researcher analyzed, coded, and identified themes from the interviews in accordance with the qualitative research principles and techniques learned during the doctoral coursework. The researcher employed NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, to help with data analysis. Ninth, the researcher engaged in member checking.

The Servant Leadership Questionnaire. second data instrument involved administering the SLQ survey tool developed by Liden et al. (2008; Appendix B). The SLQ includes 28 items to measure seven dimensions of servant leadership: conceptualizing, emotional healing, putting followers first, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, behaving ethically, and creating value for the community (Green et al., 2015; Liden et al., 2008; Northouse, 2019). The SLQ utilizes a seven-point scale that asks respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with specific statements regarding their leadership (Northouse, 2019). The SLQ includes four questions per dimension and enabled the researcher to gather information related to

the first three research questions because it obtains insight into the following: (a) What extent, if any, does servant leadership influence organizational performance?; (b) How does servant leadership link to business ethics?; (c) What does leadership do to improve employee engagement?; (d) What does leadership do to increase employee commitment and trust? The SLQ is an existing survey tool with proven reliability and validity. The SLQ is considered one of the six primary instruments commonly used to measure servant leadership. The questionnaire's authors (a) sought to establish three types of validity: face, convergent, and predictive; (b) administered the survey to different groups (e.g., undergraduate students and subordinates who rated their leaders); and (c) utilized both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (Green et al., 2015). The SLQ provides a measure for individuals to obtain insight into how servant leadership is measured and to explore where participants stand on various dimensions of servant leadership (Northouse, 2019). The researcher relied on the SLQ to help determine the presence of servant leadership within the selected organizations from the viewpoint of a sample of organizational leaders and direct reports. The researcher requested the participants, as well as one or two of their direct reports, to complete the SLQ and then summarized the survey information. The researcher received permission to use the SLQ for this study (Appendix C). The researcher performed several critical tasks related to administering the SLQ. First, the researcher utilized Survey Monkey to dispense the SLQ. Survey Monkey is an online, cloud-based survey data-gathering tool. Second, the researcher relied on the participants' electronic consent as the trigger for them to access the Survey Monkey survey site. Third, the researcher was the only one to manage the survey data collection process and access the survey data results. Fourth, the researcher apprised the respondents of the procedure for completing the questionnaire and assured them of the confidentiality and security of their responses. Fifth, the researcher requested

the participants use a code instead of their names to provide further anonymity, as well as protection against the disclosure of sensitive information. The SLQ data corroborated information gathered from the in-depth interviews and provided for triangulation.

Publicly Available Documents. The third data instrument involved reviewing archival data related to the selected firms and peer companies. The archival information was publicly available documents, including annual reports, company profiles, 10-Ks, investor/analyst presentations, company news articles, ESG reports, and scholarly journals that cover these companies. The researcher collected these documents for review from (a) company websites, (b) news articles, and (c) scholarly articles related to these companies. The researcher reviewed these documents to help answer the research questions and to complement the interview responses and survey data. According to Yin (2018), a review of documents is a critical data collection approach, as it corroborates and augments data from other sources. The researcher also reviewed these documents to understand why these companies are recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The researcher checked if there was anything evident in the companies' mission and vision statements, annual reports, 10Ks, or investor/analyst presentations that could (a) provide data on employee growth, diversity and inclusion initiatives, business strategy, and other items that could indicate why these companies are recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership; (b) suggest servant leadership attributes and mindset; (c) reveal cultural elements that enable servant leadership within an organization; (d) indicate an organizational culture that supports diversity and inclusion, prioritizes employee engagement, and emphasizes employee commitment and trust; (e) signify whether servant leadership actions or behaviors contribute to business strategy; and (f) support interview responses. The researcher also reviewed similar publicly available documents from peer

companies for comparison purposes. The researcher summarized the information gathered from these documents to analyze and identify themes regarding gaining insight into servant leadership's impact on organizational performance and substantiate interview responses.

Data Organization Plan

A data organization plan involves processes, procedures, and systems to manage data effectively and efficiently for data collection, generation, analysis, coding, identification of themes, and reporting (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Syracuse University, n.d.; Yin, 2018). The data organization plan involved several critical components that enabled the researcher to manage data collected from multiple sources to investigate the cultural context of servant leadership and its impact on organizational performance from the perspectives of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. First, the data organization plan involved creating a case study database that (a) included a key regarding the types of information collected and the data collection matrix; (b) provided a system for keeping track of field notes, transcribed interview narratives, survey responses, and publicly available documents; and (c) served as an evidentiary base for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Schoch, 2020; Syracuse University, n.d.; Yin, 2018). The researcher primarily relied on an electronic file system. Second, the data organization plan involved preserving the data in a confidential and structured manner, so there is an established chain of evidence that aligns the data, research questions, and conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Schoch, 2020; Syracuse University, n.d.; Yin, 2018). The researcher stored the information in the case study database in a cloud-based site, password protected the case study database, followed a straightforward file-naming convention, and established appropriate controls to access the data. The researcher also maintained the anonymity of the participants by masking their names in the data. Third, the data organization plan involved

employing qualitative analysis software to assist in data content analysis, coding, and identifying themes based on information gathered from the in-depth interviews and reviewing publicly available documents (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The researcher used NVivo, which is an academically recognized qualitative data analysis software package that aids researchers in organizing, analyzing, and coding non-numerical and unstructured data, as well as finding insights and themes within data gathered from interviews, open-ended survey responses, and reviews of documents (e.g., articles, social media, and web content; McNiff, 2016). Fourth, the data organization plan involved utilizing quantitative analysis software to analyze the SLQ survey responses. The researcher used SPSS, which is an academically recognized quantitative data analysis software package that aids researchers in statistical analysis for the social sciences (Morgan et al., 2013). This data organization plan was appropriate for a few reasons. First, this data organization plan incorporated the critical tasks necessary for managing data based on guidance from authoritative qualitative research sources that address data management (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Schoch, 2020; Syracuse University, n.d.; Yin, 2018). Second, this data organization plan enabled the researcher to manage the data in a meaningful and structural manner (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Schoch, 2020; Syracuse University, n.d.; Yin, 2018). Third, this data organization plan provided a system to employ reliability and validity constructs to ensure accuracy, including capturing thick and rich descriptions, triangulation, disconfirmation, and reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary of Data Collection and Organization

This research study on the impact of servant leadership on organizational performance incorporated a plan for data collection and data organization. The researcher collected data from in-depth interviews, survey responses, and a review of publicly available documents. The

researcher used a structured approach to data collection and organization to explore the cultural context of servant leadership and how it impacts organizational performance through positively changing organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion, increases employee commitment and trust, and sustains a competitive advantage. Some of the critical components of this structured approach included (a) following an interview guide; (b) employing a recognized survey instrument related to servant leadership; (c) reviewing a wide array of publicly available documents that allow for triangulation; (d) setting-up a case study database; and (e) utilizing established qualitative and quantitative data analysis software (Bird, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Schoch, 2020; Syracuse University, n.d.; Wilson, 2014; Yin, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves procedures to examine, code, categorize, tabulate, test, and recomb narrative and numerical data (Yin, 2018). According to Yin (2018), researchers typically pursue one of four general strategies and then apply specific techniques to analyze data gathered during case studies. The four general strategies are (a) depending upon theoretical propositions that shaped a data collection plan and set analytical procedures; (b) examining the data to explain outcomes of behaviors and events and for the emergence of relevant or innovative concepts; (c) developing case descriptions based on a descriptive framework; and (d) investigating rival explanations incorporated within one of the other three strategies. The specific techniques involve pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis. Pattern matching involves comparing case study findings with empirically based findings (predicted outcomes). Explanation building involves ordering a presumed set of causal sequences about how and why particular results have occurred. Time-series analysis involves tracking a relevant measure over time or analyzing trends. Logic models involve developing a

complex chain of events and cause-and-effect patterns based on the data collected. Cross-case synthesis involves analyzing and comparing or contrasting multiple case studies (Yin, 2018).

Data analysis involves developing a systematic approach and fluid process for examining the data collected. This approach has several critical steps. The first step is playing with the data to search for promising patterns, insights, or concepts to define priorities regarding what to analyze and why. Second, organize the data into different arrays or codes to identify themes and subthemes (topics, issues, similarities, and differences) that are revealed through (a) narratives gathered through interviews and focus groups; (b) field notes collected through observations; and (c) interpretations of narratives by the researcher. Coding allows researchers to organize in a structured way to make sense of the data, which can be large amounts depending upon the volume of interview transcripts, observation notes, and other materials. Coding enables researchers to start gaining an understanding of the emotions, perceptions, and actions of the participants. Coding involves assigning codes or tags that are nothing more than specific words or phrases related to nonquantifiable elements (e.g., events, behaviors, and activities) representing a particular theme or idea. Qualitative research software, such as NVivo, can help organize the data, including (a) grouping data into categories; (b) assigning codes; (c) retrieving coded themes; (d) capturing interview transcripts and observation notes; and (e) organizing codes into nodes. The third step is establishing a matrix of contrasting categories and assigning evidence accordingly within this matrix. Fourth, generate visual displays (e.g., flowcharts) to examine the data. Fifth, tabulate and capture the order and frequency of events. Sixth, write memos or notes to self while collecting and analyzing data. Seventh, dissect the data by (a) identifying themes; (b) detecting significant patterns and relationships; (c) deriving meaning from the data; (d) making comparisons across various themes and different cases; and (e)

constructing a logical chain of evidence. Most researchers apply content analysis to dissect the data and analyze the data early, which often enables them to gather ideas from the data itself. Content analysis involves evaluating patterns within the collected data (words, phrases, or images). Content analysis is highly beneficial; however, it is time-consuming and focuses on specific words or phrases as sources of code, resulting in possible loss of nuance in communication. Eighth, examine the data from different perspectives, including (a) seeking out what the literature says; (b) exploring alternative explanations for emerging concepts or theoretical frameworks; (c) evaluating rival ways of organizing and understanding the data; and (d) determining whether additional data are necessary to conceptualize themes. Ninth, summarize the data in a manner that (a) links the research findings to the research questions or hypotheses; (b) entails theming or drawing together codes to present findings in a coherent and meaningful manner; (c) provides a synthesis that explains the “big picture,” tells the story, and addresses the phenomena explored; and (d) delivers an understanding of differences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Dudovskiy, 2020; Patton, 2015; Schoch, 2020; Sutton & Austin, 2015; Swisher, 2017; K. Warren, 2020; L. P. Wong, 2008; Yin, 2018).

The researcher incorporated the critical data analysis steps mentioned above to ensure, according to Yin (2018), that (a) all evidence collected was attended; (b) plausible rival interpretations were investigated; (c) the most significant aspects of the multiple case study were addressed; and (d) familiarity with the prevailing thinking was demonstrated. The researcher conducted specific tasks to remain aligned with the data analysis steps mentioned above. First, the researcher utilized NVivo to help (a) organize data; (b) code data; (c) create a codebook that lists all the codes; (d) capture interview transcripts and field notes; (e) record memos; (f) assign attributes; (g) conduct searches of items or combination of items; (h) display visuals to help

explore and explain the relationships between documents, codes, and nodes; (i) study outputs to determine emerging meaningful patterns and themes during data collection and analysis; and (j) synthesize the data (McNiff, 2016; L. P. Wong, 2008). Second, the researcher read the interview transcripts multiple times, continually coded and themed the data, and considered what the respondents were saying and not saying, as well as long pauses and body language (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Third, the researcher coded the data shortly after all the interviews were transcribed and checked to minimize any potential memory bias related to nonverbal communication that may have affected data interpretation (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Fourth, the researcher strove to be consistent when coding and engaged in all three types of coding to ensure a wide range of themes, patterns, and relationships were identified. The three types of coding are (a) open or inductive coding – creating codes based on the raw data from interview transcripts, survey responses, and a review of publicly available documents in an attempt to make sense of them; (b) axial coding – interconnecting and combining initial categories of codes; and (c) selective coding – developing a narrative by linking categories (Dudovskiy, 2020; Medelyan, 2019; Schoch, 2020). Fifth, the researcher applied some of the more popular and effective methods of data interpretation, such as (a) scanning interview data for word and phrases repetitions; (b) applying triangulation through comparing interview data with survey results and a review of publicly available documents; (c) searching for missing information (i.e., expected comments that were not mentioned); (d) looking for similarities and differences; and (e) framing the codes in a flexible manner to maximize the results and their use in various contexts (Dudovskiy, 2020; Medelyan, 2019; Schoch, 2020).

Qualitative Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability is considered highly critical for quantitative research because reliability entails the accuracy of a measurement tool and the replicability or repeatability of results or observations (Heale & Twycross, 2015; Swisher, 2017). Quantitative researchers attain reliability through (a) consistent use of a measurement tool; (b) constancy of measurement over time; and (c) similarities of measurements within a specified period (Kirk & Miller, 1986). However, regarding qualitative research, reliability refers to the extent to which a study is repeatable under similar conditions, with similar procedures, and whether the research results can be reproduced (Yin, 2018). The key to reliability is consistency and transparency in the data collection and analysis procedures, such as (a) following an interview guide for each in-depth interview; (b) transcribing interviews and engaging in respondent verification and member checking; (c) applying rigor when measuring the survey responses; (d) comparing data continuously; (e) ensuring comprehensive data use; (f) including deviant cases; and (g) incorporating robust data analysis protocols, including coding, memoing, and using tables (Leung, 2015; Swisher, 2017). Academia is divided regarding the relevance of reliability for qualitative studies. Some scholars have posited that reliability as a quality concept is irrelevant for qualitative studies intended to generate understanding (Stenbacka, 2001). Others view reliability as necessary for the quality of qualitative studies from the perspective of consistency or dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015).

Validity

Validity is also considered highly critical for quantitative research because validity entails the degree to which a concept is accurately measured and the extent to which the measurement methods and the measurement tools (e.g., survey instruments) are measuring what

they are meant to measure (Heale & Twycross, 2015; Swisher, 2017). However, regarding qualitative research, validity refers to whether a study provides results that measure what it the study intended to measure (Yin, 2018). Validity relates to how accurately a method measures something. In other words, a method is valid if it measures what it claims to measure, and the results closely correspond to real-life values (Middleton, 2020). The key to validity lies in seeking four primary validation criteria within qualitative research: (a) credibility – researchers provide results that are an accurate interpretation of the participants’ meaning; (b) authenticity – researchers listen to different voices; (c) criticality – researchers conduct a critical evaluation of all aspects of the study; (d) integrity – researchers are self-critical and uphold ethical considerations (Whittemore et al., 2001). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), validity strives to assess the accuracy of the results from the perspectives of researchers, participants, and readers of the qualitative study. There are four types of validity: (a) construct validity – whether a test or measurement tool is appropriate for what it is intended to measure; (b) content validity – whether a test or measurement tool represents all aspects of a construct; (c) face validity – how suitable the content of a test or measurement tool seems to be on the surface; (d) criterion validity – how closely the test results correspond to the results of different tests. Construct validity can be obtained if the measurement method matches the construct it wants to measure, such as a survey instrument designed to measure a specific concept. Content validity can be achieved if the measurement method covers all relevant parts of the topic it aims to measure. Face validity is often considered the lowest form of validity because it is more informal and subjective than the other forms. However, face validity can help when initially developing a measurement method. Criterion validity can be attained if there is a correlation between the

measurement tool used for a particular study vs. an established or widely used test already recognized as valid (Heale & Twycross, 2015; Middleton, 2020).

Measures to Ensure Reliability and Validity

Regarding this research study on servant leadership's impact on organizational performance, the researcher made every effort to follow the data collection and analysis procedures mentioned above to ensure consistency as much as possible and transparency, as well as utilizing numerous measures to guarantee reliability and validity constructs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, the researcher kept records to (a) demonstrate a clear audit trail; (b) help remember and prevent skipping essential parts of the data collection and analysis process; and (c) ensure consistent and transparent interpretations of the data (Leung, 2015; Noble & Smith, 2015; Swisher, 2017). Second, the researcher accounted for any personal biases, acknowledged any biases in sampling, and ensured the sample size considered data saturation (Elmusharaf, 2012b; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013; Noble & Smith, 2015). Third, the researcher followed the interview guide in Appendix A for each in-depth interview to help ensure consistency of the interview process (Bird, 2016; Lopez & Whitehead, 2013; Wilson, 2014). Fourth, the researcher transcribed each in-depth interview and requested member checking, as appropriate (Leung, 2015; Noble & Smith, 2015; Swisher, 2017; Yin, 2018). Fifth, the researcher used a proven reliable survey instrument, the SLQ developed by Liden et al. (2008), and applied rigor when measuring the SLQ survey responses by (a) engaging in a data-cleansing process of the survey responses; (b) utilizing SPSS to examine the survey responses; (c) ensuring a proper audit trail exists; and (d) remembering the face- and content-validity criteria (Heale & Twycross, 2015; Middleton, 2020; Morgan et al., 2013; Swisher, 2017). Sixth, the researcher created a case study database and took advantage of the capabilities of NVivo for coding, memoing, and applying

nodes and attributes to help (a) ensure comprehensive data use, including outliers and deviant cases; (b) remain focused on continually comparing the data; and (c) maintain a proper audit trail of data analysis protocols (Swisher, 2017; L. P. Wong, 2008; Yin, 2018). Seventh, the researcher incorporated triangulation in the study by gathering corroborating evidence through multiple data sources such as interviews, survey instruments, and review of publicly available documents, which (a) helped develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena, (b) mitigated bias, and (c) enhanced reaching data saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fusch et al., 2018; Noble & Smith, 2015; Patton, 2015; Swisher, 2017). Eighth, the researcher sought similarities and differences across participants' accounts and looked for exceptions (disconfirmation; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Noble & Smith, 2015). Ninth, the researcher engaged in reflexivity, which is a process of ongoing self-awareness and introspection while collecting and analyzing data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Palaganas et al., 2017). Tenth, the researcher strove to build a rapport with the participants and treated them with respect and dignity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Eleventh, the researcher developed a thick and rich verbatim description of the participants' accounts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Noble & Smith, 2015).

Summary of Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are critical to a research study because of the importance of (a) consistency within the analytical procedures; (b) the integrity and application of the methods; and (c) the precision of the results accurately reflecting the data (Noble & Smith, 2015). This research study on the impact of servant leadership on organizational performance incorporated a plan for thorough data analysis, including steps to ensure reliability and validity. The researcher employed several validation and reliability constructs in qualitative research to ensure accuracy, including triangulation (in-depth interviews, surveys, and a review of publicly available

documents), disconfirmation, reflexivity, feedback solicitation, participant collaboration and rapport, and thick and rich description (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fusch et al., 2018; Noble & Smith, 2015; Patton, 2015; Swisher, 2017; Yin, 2018). Furthermore, the researcher utilized well-established qualitative and quantitative data analysis software (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Morgan et al., 2013; Swisher, 2017; L. P. Wong, 2008; Yin, 2018).

Transition and Summary of Section 2

This Project section served seven purposes. First, this section defined the purpose of the study, which was to explore the cultural context of servant leadership attributes and understand whether these actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. Second, this section outlined the role of the researcher and how the researcher applied qualitative research principles and techniques. Third, this section explained the research methodology used for the study, which was a flexible design and case study method incorporating triangulation. Fourth, this section described the study's participants, population, and sampling approach. Fifth, this section provided detail on data collection, organization, and analysis procedures. Sixth, this section stated the researcher's measures to ensure reliability and validity. Seventh, this section set the stage for the next section, which includes an overview of the research study, discusses anticipated themes and perceptions, presents findings, describes the study's application to professional practice, makes recommendations for further actions and studies, and shares any reflections from the research study, including from a biblical perspective.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice

The Application to Professional Practice section starts with an overview of the qualitative study, which explored the cultural context of servant leadership attributes to understand whether these actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspectives of corporate culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. This section then presents the findings, pertinent applications, and suggested recommendations from this qualitative study. The section concludes with reflections, including how the researcher grew personally and professionally from conducting this qualitative study and the implications from a biblical perspective.

Overview of the Study

This qualitative case study explored the cultural context of servant leadership attributes to understand whether these actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspectives of corporate culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. Most of the data gathered for this qualitative case study came from 26 semi-structured interviews with leaders from five companies within the oil and gas sector recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. These leaders included CEOs and senior and mid-management leaders within operations, engineering, finance, and human resources who could provide information on servant leadership's impact on organizational performance.

The researcher conducted these interviews primarily via Microsoft Teams and Zoom, considering COVID-19 precautions. The interviews averaged 45 to 50 minutes. The researcher focused the interview questions to understand whether servant leadership can have the same effect in the private sector as in the Christian and nonprofit sectors regarding organizational performance. These questions focused on (a) leadership approach; (b) servant leadership

attributes; (c) national culture; (c) organizational culture; (d) business ethics; (e) CSR; (f) OCB; (g) diversity and inclusion initiatives; (h) employee development, engagement, commitment, and trust; and (i) business strategy development and execution. All the interviewees were engaged and interested in discussing topics centered on their leadership styles and how they address organizational culture from the perspectives of diversity and inclusion and employee engagement, loyalty, and trust. None of the interviewees cut the interviews short. The researcher believed data saturation was reached just before 20 interviews, as no new information was revealed. However, the researcher completed 26 interviews, as this was the number of participants who consented to be interviewed. The researcher made every effort to (a) treat the participants with respect and dignity; (b) maintain confidentiality and not disclose any inaccurate or harmful information; and (c) avoid engaging in activities that could be perceived as a conflict of interest or compromise of values. The researcher incorporated bracketing to evade personal biases, including (a) setting aside assumptions and not letting personal experiences and cultural factors obstruct the process; (b) focusing on being open and receptive to the interviewee responses; (c) providing a safe environment for participants to express their genuine opinions; (d) establishing parameters to preserve their anonymity and confidentiality through assigning pseudonyms to each participant; (e) asking straightforward interview questions and following the approved interview guide in Appendix A; (f) treating the participants with genuine respect and gratitude, and making every effort not to interrupt them while they were speaking; and (g) maintaining a positive and inviting attitude throughout each interview. During and after each interview, the researcher (a) took field notes; (b) noted body language, tone, and mood; (c) audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews using Otter; (d) sought clarification when required; (e) analyzed, coded, and identified themes from the transcribed data; and (f) employed

qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) to help with data analysis. The researcher used NVivo to help (a) organize the data; (b) examine the data from different perspectives; (c) draw together codes to present findings in a coherent and meaningful manner; and (d) link the research findings to the research questions, the conceptual framework, and the literature. The researcher spent considerable time (a) reading the interview transcripts multiple times; (b) scanning the interview data for word and phrase repetitions; (c) searching for similarities and differences; (d) coding and theming the data based on the raw interview data, the interconnected and combined initial categories of codes, and the linked categories, such as servant leadership attributes to organizational culture, from the perspectives of diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, commitment and trust, and business strategy.

The researcher also collected survey data from 51 participants, including 16 of the 26 interviewees and 35 direct reports of the interviewees. The researcher used an academically recognized survey instrument, the SLQ developed by Liden et al. (2008), which contains 28 questions based on a seven-point Likert scale (see Appendix B). The researcher obtained approval to use the SLQ for this study. The researcher used Survey Monkey to dispense the survey, and the survey data were used for triangulation.

The researcher also reviewed publicly available information on the selected companies and peer companies to triangulate the data further, including annual reports, company profiles, 10-Ks, investor/analyst presentations, company news articles, ESG reports, and scholarly journals covering the organizations and businesses. The researcher gathered publicly available information about employee growth, corporate values, company commitment to employees and stakeholders, code of conduct, diversity and inclusion initiatives, business strategy, CSR, and ESG.

The researcher took several measures to ensure reliability and validity. First, the researcher kept records for each interview to maintain a clear audit trail and provide consistent and transparent interpretations of the data. Second, the researcher conducted enough interviews to reach data saturation. Third, the researcher followed the interview guide in Appendix A for each discussion to help guarantee the consistency of the interview process. Fourth, the researcher transcribed each interview and sought member checking, as appropriate. Fifth, the researcher utilized the SLQ, a proven reliable survey instrument, and examined the survey data using a standard statistical package, SPSS. Sixth, the researcher created a case study database and employed NVivo to code and theme the data. Seventh, the researcher incorporated triangulation into the study by corroborating evidence with multiple data sources, interviews, survey responses, and publicly available documents. Eighth, the researcher searched for similarities and differences across the participants' accounts and looked for exceptions. Finally, the researcher engaged in self-awareness and introspection while collecting and analyzing the data.

Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study and multiple case study design was to explore the cultural context of servant leadership attributes and understand whether these actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspectives of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. Plenty of evidence supports the practical application of servant leadership in the Christian and nonprofit sectors (McNeff & Irving, 2017). However, researchers have acknowledged the need to explore further whether servant leadership can have the same effect within the private sector, especially as more organizations adopt a more caring leadership style (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018;

Eva et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Saleem et al., 2020; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018).

The researcher conducted 26 semi-structured interviews with leaders from five companies within the oil and gas sector recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. These leaders included CEOs and senior and mid-management leaders in operations, engineering, finance, and human resources who could provide information on servant leadership's impact on organizational performance. The researcher followed an approved interview guide involving semi-structured interviews with these leaders. The researcher also collected survey data from 51 participants, including the interviewees and some of their direct reports. The researcher gathered the survey data and reviewed publicly available information on these companies for triangulation purposes.

This section is divided into four major segments. The first segment identifies the themes discovered. The second segment describes the interpretations of the themes. The third segment details a representation and visualization of the data. The fourth segment explains the relationship of the findings to the (a) research questions, (b) conceptual framework, (c) anticipated themes, (d) existing literature, and (e) problem statement. This section concludes with a summary of the findings.

Themes Discovered

The in-depth semi-structured interviews provided numerous themes aligned with the existing literature. In the literature review, servant leadership attracted growing research interest in organizational studies because its premise of putting the needs of others first can foster positive organizational outcomes (Liu, 2019; Saleem et al., 2020). The following eight major themes were evident during the in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Leadership Styles Correlated with Servant Leadership. First, several of the leaders emphasized the importance of leaders being servants and linked this to the servant leadership attributes. Some of the critical servant leadership attributes they mentioned were (a) empowering employees; (b) stressing accountability; (c) demonstrating humility; (d) practicing stewardship; (e) building a sense of community; (f) focusing on the growth and success of followers; (g) creating an environment of trust; and (h) communicating a vision with transparency. Second, several of the leaders mentioned they strive to (a) lead by example; (b) not micromanage; (c) approach decisions in a collaborative manner; (d) stick to core values; and (e) create a sense of community within their organizations. Third, several leaders regarded their roles more from a coaching mindset that focuses on (a) developing careers; (b) engaging employees; (c) gaining trust from the workforce; and (d) driving individual and team performance. Fourth, several leaders highlighted the significance of business ethics and CSR.

Empowerment and Accountability Go Hand-in-Hand. All the leaders agreed on the need to empower employees and hold them accountable. The leaders recognized that empowerment provides employees with the opportunity to complete tasks, foster talents, engage in independent problem-solving, participate in effective self-leadership, and have the freedom to manage stressful situations (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Northouse, 2019; Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). The leaders recognized the value in empowerment by (a) providing a sense of ownership and responsibility among workers; (b) the two-way sharing of information between leaders and followers; (c) coaching their staff and giving them the ability to practice power; (d) involving employees in essential managerial decisions; and (e) creating a culture of community and teamwork (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Hunter et al., 2013; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Sims, 2018; Van Dierendonck &

Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). The leaders acknowledged that with empowerment, they need to assume accountability through (a) providing transparency; (b) holding themselves and their workforce accountable for their actions; (c) setting clear expectations; and (d) frequent monitoring of performance (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011). The leaders noted that one must come with other for both empowerment and accountability to work within an organization to (a) increase productivity; (b) improve the decision-making process; (c) enhance morale; (d) reduce turnover; (e) build stronger relationships; (f) heighten trust levels; and (g) encourage stewardship (Mulinge, 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017).

Building a Sense of Community Leads to Greater Employee Engagement, Commitment, and Trust. The leaders believed creating a sense of community is critical for increasing employee engagement, loyalty, and trust. They stated one of their key roles was to create a caring, supporting, encouraging, and collaborative environment (Coetzer et al., 2017; A. Wong et al., 2018). Some ways leaders approach creating community within their organizations are by (a) spending quality time with their followers; (b) looking for ways for people to have fun at work; (c) holding team-building activities; (d) making themselves available for the people within their teams; (e) recognizing staff for their accomplishments; (f) empowering employees; and (g) encouraging workforce participation in community service opportunities outside of work (Hunter et al., 2013; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011). The leaders acknowledged these activities had become difficult in recent months due to the COVID-19 pandemic and employees working from home. However, the leaders noted some level of success by employing Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

Priority to Helping the Workforce Grow and Succeed with the Intent to Improve Organizational Performance. All the leaders conveyed that helping their employees grow and

succeed was a major priority for them. The leaders considered this aspect crucial to improving individual and team performance. Some of the ways the leaders mentioned they demonstrate this priority is through (a) spending more time focused on their employees' career progression, goals, and ambitions; (b) taking steps to maintain positive social interaction with their staff; (c) empowering their workforce and then holding them accountable; (d) creating learning environments within their organization; (e) providing more training and development opportunities; (f) exhibiting a coaching mindset; (f) maintaining an open-door policy; (g) doing more public recognition of workers; (h) promoting from within; (i) incorporating quality management initiatives, such as Lean; and (j) modifying their performance review processes (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Franco & Antunes, 2020; Hunter et al., 2013; Liu, 2019; Northouse, 2019; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Several leaders stated that emphasizing employee growth and development is a critical attribute for servant leaders.

Business Ethics is a Must and Links to Servant Leadership. All the leaders acknowledged they play a crucial role in creating an ethical work climate and demanding integrity from everyone within their organizations. They also mentioned the connection between business ethics and servant leadership through (a) leading by example in consistently striving to do the right thing in the right way, do what they say they are going to do, and exhibit a credible character; (b) adhering to strong ethical standards and expecting themselves and their staff to operate ethically among themselves and with stakeholders (e.g., customers, suppliers, shareholders, government officials, and society-in-general); (c) sticking to their values and setting boundaries for strategic decisions (i.e., not making strategic decisions that go against their core values); (d) striving to lead and act morally and humbly; (e) focusing on helping followers

grow and succeed; (f) trying to treat others the way they want to be treated; and (g) encouraging CSR (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Conrad, 2018; Daft, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Kincaid, 2012; Marques, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Van Dierendonck, 2011). The senior leaders referenced their companies' codes of conduct and the ethics training they provide to their workforce.

National Cultural Dimensions Slightly Affect Servant Leadership. Most of the leaders noted that national cultural conditions or differences and culture clusters can impact their organizations and how senior leaders run them. However, as several of these leaders defined themselves as servant leaders, they mentioned that national cultural dimensions only slightly affected their leadership approach. They recognized the need to be sensitive to the different social norms and customs across the various culture clusters. They also emphasized the importance of being mindful of the distinct cultures across the globe, while adhering to their company values and maintaining proper business ethics and integrity. They acknowledged that consideration of national cultural dimensions impacted how they (a) communicated these company values; (b) lead their organizations in various locations worldwide while considering empowerment, accountability, and employee development, engagement, commitment, and trust; and (c) treated and respected employees of diverse cultures and backgrounds (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Northouse, 2019; Perez, 2017). Several leaders stated the primary reason for national cultural dimensions slightly impacting the way they lead their organizations is that all people want to be valued and treated well regardless of culture. The leaders also mentioned their intent to utilize "local content" within foreign offices as much as possible and their efforts to promote diversity and inclusion across all their locations worldwide considering national cultural conditions or differences.

Significant Emphasis on Diversity and Inclusion and Corporate Social

Responsibility. Most leaders had plenty to say regarding diversity, inclusion, and CSR. All five companies took diversity and inclusion seriously and exhibited this through various approaches, including (a) promoting diversity and inclusion as part of their strategic objectives; (b) providing diversity training and direction to ensure equal opportunities; (c) taking a more strategic human resource approach by considering all diversity elements within their organization, creating a more fluid and adaptive culture to develop a diverse workforce, and integrating diversity programs within overall company strategy and objectives; (d) focusing on valuing differences while encouraging unity; and (e) creating a psychologically safe environment in which employees feel valued and respected, can share new ideas, and are empowered to grow and develop (Catalyst, 2020; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Mello, 2019; Russell, 2018; Sims, 2018). All five companies had made CSR (now commonly referred to as ESG) a greater priority within their organizations. The senior leaders interviewed explained that CSR (or ESG) has taken on increased importance regarding (a) formulating and executing strategy; (b) conducting business; (c) treating all stakeholders; (d) contributing to the welfare, interest, and quality of life within their local communities, as well as overall society; and (e) impacting the environment (Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019; Kincaid, 2012; Mello, 2019; Spector, 2013). The two largest of the five companies publish an ESG report available to their internal and external stakeholders and the general public.

Business Strategy and Decision-Making Involves Employees and Considers the Social Dimension of Business. The leaders acknowledged that senior management makes high-level corporate strategic decisions. However, leaders within these companies engage employees at various levels in business strategy development and execution. The leaders mentioned how

they focus on empowerment and collaboration and providing opportunities for their staff to participate in the decision-making process (Coetzer et al., 2017; Overbey & Gordon, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). They also described how they consider the social dimension of business, including how they can add value to society through CSR and creating a positive organizational culture. Several leaders mentioned their desire to be servant leaders as a driver to involve employees in decision-making, to establish a positive corporate culture, and to incorporate CSR and sustainability initiatives as part of an overall strategy.

Interpretation of the Themes

The eight themes align with key points addressed in the literature review, including (a) servant leadership attributes; (b) servant leadership's connection to business ethics and CSR; (c) national cultural conditions affecting servant leadership and its link to business ethics and CSR; (d) servant leadership's impact on organizational culture through diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, and employee commitment and trust; and (e) servant leadership's role in business strategy formulation and execution. The surveys and a review of publicly available documents used for triangulation supported the data gathered from the in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The themes suggest the interviewed leaders were generally servant-type leaders; they all broadly believed a more caring type of leadership approach could positively impact organizational performance. These leaders understood the various servant leadership attributes. They prioritized exhibiting these attributes within their teams, such as empowerment, accountability, humility, stewardship, sense of community, focus on increasing employee engagement, commitment, trust, and followers' growth and success.

The themes revealed some interesting points. First, several leaders immediately described themselves as servant leaders or incorporated several servant leadership characteristics in their description of how they lead their organizations. Second, they emphasized how you cannot effectively empower employees without holding themselves as leaders and their employees accountable. Third, they acknowledged the necessity of building a sense of community within their organization. Several leaders used terms that indicated an effort to construct close-knit teams and to seek positive work relationships with their staff to improve employee engagement, commitment, and trust. Fourth, the leaders stressed their desire to enhance individual and group performance and they believed realizing this improvement could be best accomplished by demonstrating a solid commitment to helping their workforce grow and succeed. Fifth, the leaders highlighted that business ethics is crucial for their companies, and there is a connection between servant leadership and business ethics. Sixth, they recognized that national cultural dimensions could impact servant leadership and how management leads organizations. However, several leaders expressed a desire to treat people appropriately and respectfully. Seventh, they all were quite familiar with diversity and inclusion and CSR due to the increased attention these topics have received in recent years. Eighth, the leaders recognized the value of involving employees with business strategy development and execution and incorporating the social dimension of business as a part of an overall strategy.

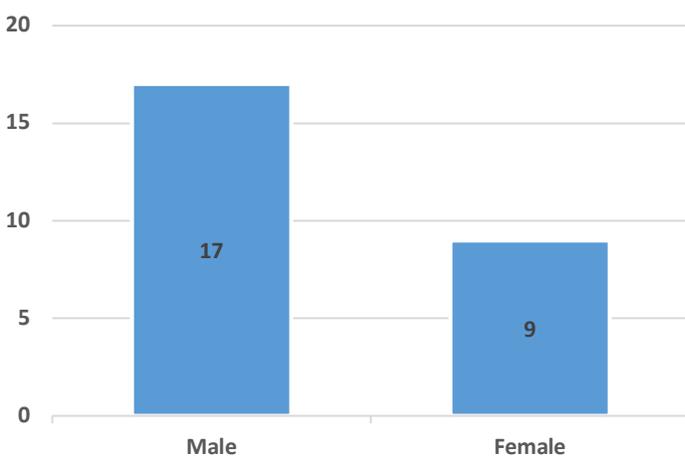
Representation and Visualization of the Data

Interview Data. The primary source of data was in-depth interviews with 26 participants from five companies. The interviewees were all willing to participate in the semi-structured interviews, and the interviews all lasted between 40 and 55 minutes, except one, which lasted 90 minutes. The participants were at various levels within their respective firms, including

organizational leaders, senior managers, and human resources leaders. The following graphs illustrate the demographics of the participants, including gender, country of origin, culture cluster, leadership position, and company.

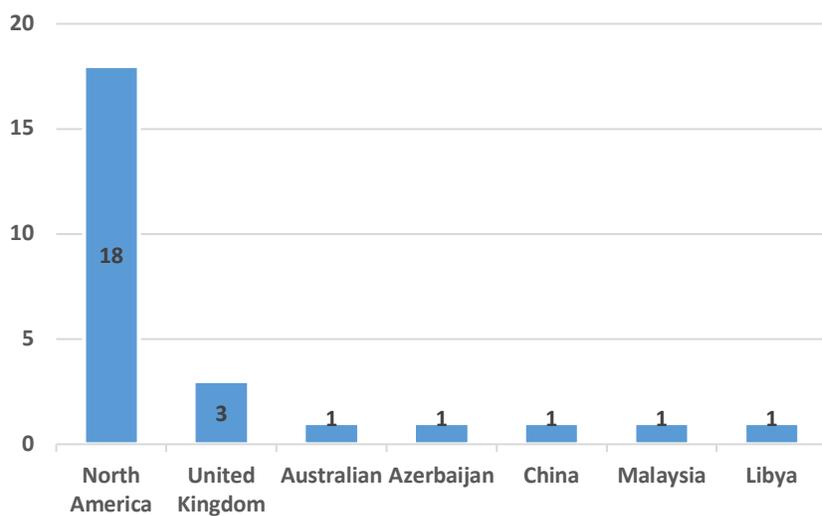
Graph 1

Gender descriptive statistics for interview participants



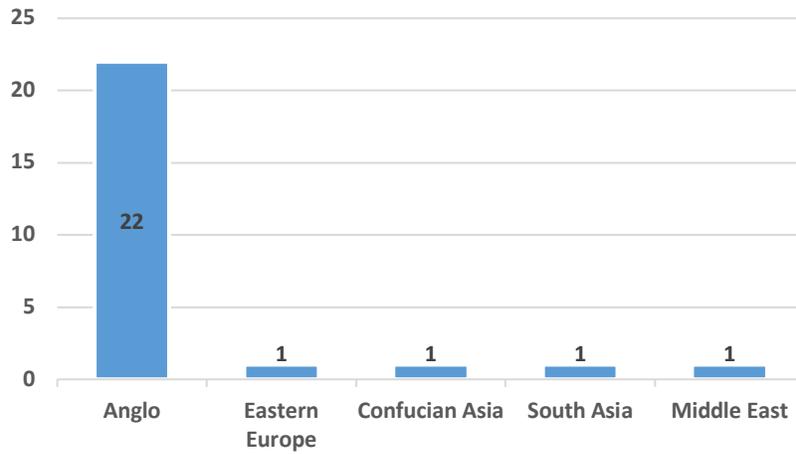
Graph 2

Country of Origin descriptive statistics for interview participants

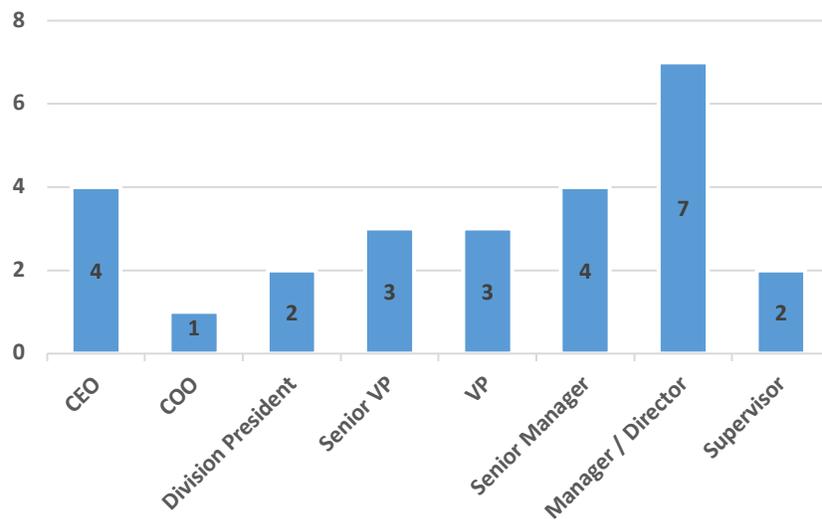


Graph 3

Culture cluster descriptive statistics for interview participants

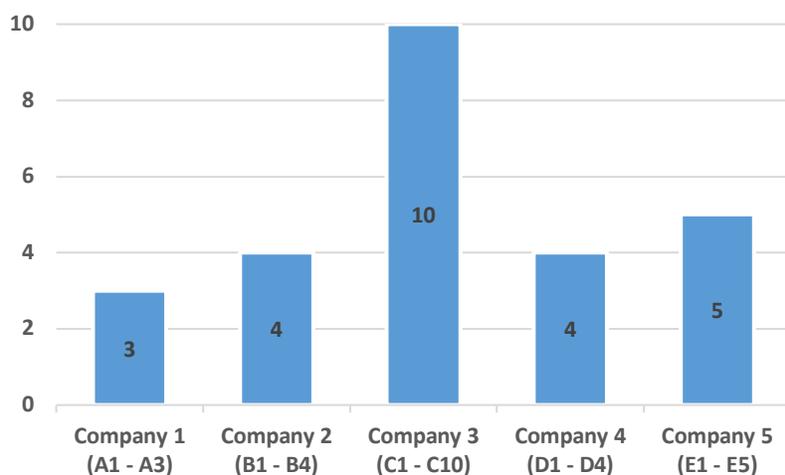
**Graph 4**

Leadership Position descriptive statistics for interview participants



Graph 5

Interviewee breakdown by company

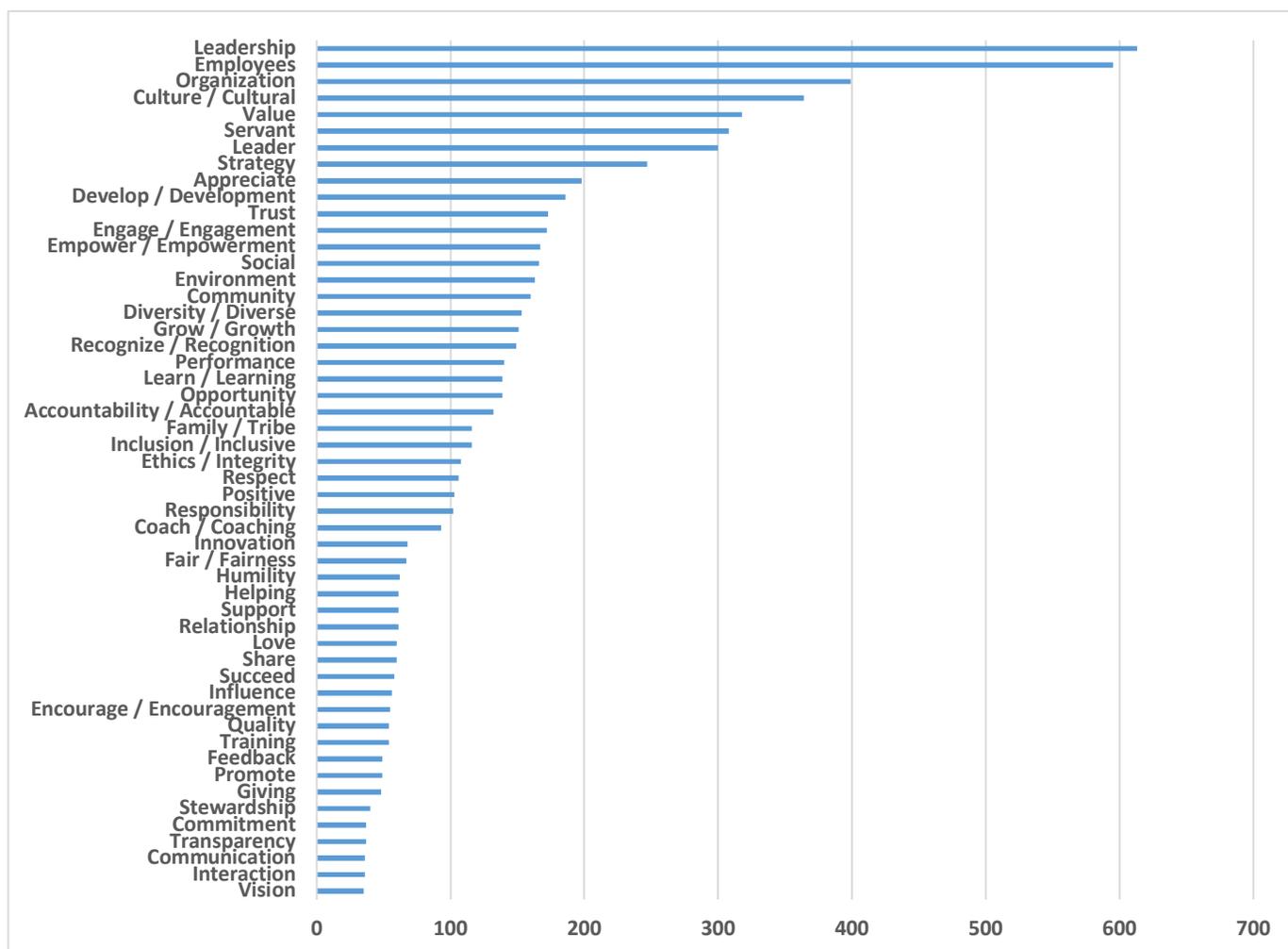


The themes came about by coding the interview data, which entailed looking at frequently used words and analyzing patterns within the transcripts of the interview data that relate to servant leadership attributes and the research questions. There are a few takeaways from the word count. First, as expected, the keywords of *leadership*, *employees*, *organization*, and *culture* had the highest word count. The interviewed leaders talked extensively about their leadership styles, workforce interactions, organizations they lead, and culture from national and organizational perspectives. Second, several leaders described themselves as servant leaders and acknowledged the importance of servant leadership and its role in organizational performance, which explains the high word count for *servant* and *leader*, which were roughly the same. Third, most leaders stressed the importance of company values and valuing their employees, which was surprising as the researcher did not expect *values* to have such a high word count. Fourth, the leaders shared information regarding various servant leadership attributes, such as *empowerment*,

growth, accountability, community, humility, love, and stewardship. Fifth, the leaders discussed organizational culture extensively from the perspective of *diversity and inclusion, engagement, commitment, and trust.* Sixth, the leaders expressed the importance of *strategy, consideration of the social dimension of business, recognition, helping and providing support to their workforce, and description of their organization as a family or tribe.*

Graph 6

Breakdown of keywords from semi-structured interview transcripts



Survey Data. The researcher collected survey data from 51 participants, including 16 of the interviewees and 35 direct reports of the interviewees. The researcher used the SLQ survey

instrument developed by Liden et al. (2008), which is an academically recognized survey instrument for ensuring validity and reliability. The researcher received approval to use this instrument (see Appendix C). The surveys were completely anonymous, other than indicating the survey on self or immediate supervisor or manager. The following are descriptive statistics based on the survey participants.

The following are population descriptive statistics by the survey participants based on a seven-point Likert scale:

Table 2

Mean descriptive statistics for survey participants

Participants (N=51)	Mean
Interviewee	6.241
Subordinate	6.016
Total	6.087

Table 3

Population descriptive statistics for survey participants (interviewees)

Interviewee Participants (N=16)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
P1	6.607	0.618	0.381
P6	6.500	0.567	0.321
P7	6.321	0.467	0.218
P11	6.250	0.911	0.830
P15	5.643	1.076	1.158
P25	6.464	0.626	0.392
P26	5.821	0.928	0.861
P29	7.000	0.000	0.000
P31	5.393	1.291	1.667
P32	5.893	1.080	1.167
P37	6.036	0.865	0.749
P38	5.750	1.056	1.116
P44	7.000	0.000	0.000
P45	7.000	0.000	0.000
P46	7.000	0.000	0.000
P49	5.179	1.167	1.361

Table 4

Population descriptive statistics for survey participants (subordinates)

Subordinate Participants (N=35)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
P2	6.357	0.854	0.730
P3	5.857	1.274	1.622
P4	6.571	0.562	0.316
P5	5.571	1.237	1.531
P8	6.143	0.742	0.551
P9	7.000	0.000	0.000
P10	6.929	0.258	0.066
P12	6.357	1.231	1.515
P13	5.607	0.976	0.953
P14	5.679	1.441	2.075
P16	5.964	1.401	1.963
P17	5.679	1.226	1.504
P18	6.071	0.923	0.852
P19	6.857	0.350	0.122
P20	5.643	1.008	1.015
P21	5.536	1.052	1.106
P22	6.429	0.942	0.888
P23	6.464	1.149	1.320
P24	3.464	1.592	2.534
P27	6.179	0.847	0.718
P28	5.500	1.018	1.036
P30	6.929	0.258	0.066
P33	5.679	1.167	1.361
P34	6.464	0.499	0.249
P35	5.286	0.839	0.704
P36	6.429	0.728	0.531
P39	6.036	1.451	2.106
P40	6.286	0.795	0.633
P41	6.500	0.866	0.750
P42	5.714	0.881	0.776
P43	6.000	0.964	0.929
P47	6.893	0.309	0.096
P48	4.036	0.186	0.034
P50	6.536	0.566	0.320
P51	5.929	1.067	1.138

The following are the survey results by question and population descriptive statistics by survey question and then split by item/key.

Table 5*Survey responses and population descriptive statistics by question*

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
Q1	0	1	0	1	1	23	25	51	6.353	0.882	0.777
Q2	0	0	0	1	7	20	23	51	6.275	0.769	0.591
Q3	0	0	1	1	5	19	25	51	6.294	0.870	0.757
Q4	1	0	1	7	5	20	17	51	5.804	1.268	1.609
Q5	0	0	0	1	1	11	38	51	6.686	0.610	0.372
Q6	0	1	2	8	7	17	16	51	5.667	1.278	1.634
Q7	0	2	1	12	6	14	16	51	5.510	1.391	1.936
Q8	0	0	1	1	2	10	37	51	6.588	0.821	0.674
Q9	0	1	0	3	6	19	22	51	6.118	1.041	1.084
Q10	0	0	1	2	5	17	26	51	6.275	0.930	0.866
Q11	0	2	0	8	5	17	19	51	5.804	1.299	1.687
Q12	0	0	0	2	3	14	32	51	6.490	0.776	0.603
Q13	0	0	0	2	2	16	31	51	6.490	0.751	0.564
Q14	0	1	0	11	9	14	16	51	5.627	1.236	1.528
Q15	0	0	0	1	0	11	39	51	6.725	0.563	0.317
Q16	0	0	0	3	3	26	19	51	6.196	0.793	0.628
Q17	0	0	0	2	3	20	26	51	6.373	0.766	0.587
Q18	0	3	0	16	7	14	11	51	5.216	1.391	1.934
Q19	0	0	0	1	1	9	40	51	6.725	0.597	0.356
Q20	0	0	0	0	1	6	44	51	6.843	0.414	0.171
Q21	0	1	1	16	3	18	12	51	5.412	1.301	1.693
Q22	0	0	1	1	3	17	29	51	6.412	0.844	0.713
Q23	0	2	1	7	14	17	10	51	5.431	1.225	1.500
Q24	0	1	0	7	1	19	23	51	6.078	1.152	1.327
Q25	0	1	0	1	3	22	24	51	6.294	0.914	0.835
Q26	0	0	0	4	0	17	30	51	6.431	0.846	0.716
Q27	1	0	1	11	7	20	11	51	5.490	1.274	1.622
Q28	0	4	3	19	6	10	9	51	4.824	1.478	2.185
Total	2	20	14	149	116	457	670	1,428	6.087		
Total	0%	1%	1%	10%	8%	32%	47%	100%			

Table 6*Survey responses and population descriptive statistics by question – Conceptual skills*

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
1	0	1	0	1	1	23	25	51	6.353	0.882	0.777
8	0	0	1	1	2	10	37	51	6.588	0.821	0.674
15	0	0	0	1	0	11	39	51	6.725	0.563	0.317
22	0	0	1	1	3	17	29	51	6.412	0.844	0.713
Total	0	1	2	4	6	61	130	204	6.520		
Total	0%	0%	1%	2%	3%	30%	64%	100%			

Table 7

Survey responses and population descriptive statistics by question – Empowerment

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
2	0	0	0	1	7	20	23	51	6.275	0.769	0.591
9	0	1	0	3	6	19	22	51	6.118	1.041	1.084
16	0	0	0	3	3	26	19	51	6.196	0.793	0.628
23	0	2	1	7	14	17	10	51	5.431	1.225	1.500
Total	0	3	1	14	30	82	74	204	6.005		
Total	0%	1%	0%	7%	15%	40%	36%	100%			

Table 8

Survey responses and population descriptive statistics by question – Helping subordinates grow

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
3	0	0	1	1	5	19	25	51	6.294	0.870	0.757
10	0	0	1	2	5	17	26	51	6.275	0.930	0.866
17	0	0	0	2	3	20	26	51	6.373	0.766	0.587
24	0	1	0	7	1	19	23	51	6.078	1.152	1.327
Total	0	1	2	12	14	75	100	204	6.255		
Total	0%	0%	1%	6%	7%	37%	49%	100%			

Table 9

Survey responses and population descriptive statistics by question – Putting subordinates first

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
4	1	0	1	7	5	20	17	51	5.804	1.268	1.609
11	0	2	0	8	5	17	19	51	5.804	1.299	1.687
18	0	3	0	16	7	14	11	51	5.216	1.391	1.934
25	0	1	0	1	3	22	24	51	6.294	0.914	0.835
Total	1	6	1	32	20	73	71	204	5.780		
Total	0%	3%	0%	16%	10%	36%	35%	100%			

Table 10

Survey responses and population descriptive statistics by question – Ethical behavior

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
5	0	0	0	1	1	11	38	51	6.686	0.610	0.372
12	0	0	0	2	3	14	32	51	6.490	0.776	0.603
19	0	0	0	1	1	9	40	51	6.725	0.597	0.356
26	0	0	0	4	0	17	30	51	6.431	0.846	0.716
Total	0	0	0	8	5	51	140	204	6.583		
Total	0%	0%	0%	4%	2%	25%	69%	100%			

Table 11

Survey responses and population descriptive statistics by question – Emotional healing

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
6	0	1	2	8	7	17	16	51	5.667	1.278	1.634
13	0	0	0	2	2	16	31	51	6.490	0.751	0.564
20	0	0	0	0	1	6	44	51	6.843	0.414	0.171
27	1	0	1	11	7	20	11	51	5.490	1.274	1.622
Total	1	1	3	21	17	59	102	204	6.123		
Total	0%	0%	1%	10%	8%	29%	50%	100%			

Table 12

Survey responses and population descriptive statistics by question – Creating value for community

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
7	0	2	1	12	6	14	16	51	5.510	1.391	1.936
14	0	1	0	11	9	14	16	51	5.627	1.236	1.528
21	0	1	1	16	3	18	12	51	5.412	1.301	1.693
28	0	4	3	19	6	10	9	51	4.824	1.478	2.185
Total	0	8	5	58	24	56	53	204	5.343		
Total	0%	4%	2%	28%	12%	27%	26%	100%			

Table 13

Reliability statistics of survey data

Case Processing Summary	N	%
Valid	28	100
Excluded	0	0
Total	28	100

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.957	51

Relationship of the Findings

The findings are primarily based on semi-structured interviews with leaders at various levels of their organization across five companies. The semi-structured interview questions were split into three categories. The first category was a series of questions related to the first two

research questions. The second category was a group of inquiries pertaining to the third research question. The third category was a set of questions related to the fourth research question. The findings are also based on survey data gathered from some interviewees and some of their subordinates. The results are also based on publicly available documents related to these companies. The research findings are discussed as they relate to the research questions, the conceptual framework, anticipated themes, the literature, and the problem.

The first research question concerned the cultural context of servant leadership style and its influence on organizational performance. The second research question focused on the impact of culture on servant leadership and its linkage to business ethics. The third research question concerned the connection between servant leadership and organizational culture, specifically related to diversity and inclusion, and the link between servant leadership and employee engagement, commitment, and trust. The fourth research question focused on the relationship between servant leadership and business strategy development and implementation.

RQ1: How does cultural context mediate any servant leadership influence on organizational performance?

RQ2: How does culture provide a richer understanding of servant leadership and any link to business ethics?

Several of the leaders interviewed stressed the importance of leaders being servants, and they linked this point to the servant leadership characteristics they try to exhibit. Some of these leaders mentioned they were servant leaders at the beginning of the interviews. These leaders described how a servant-type leadership approach can lead to positive behavioral outcomes at both the individual and organization levels (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). There were

several comments regarding how servant leadership influence led to (a) more excellent individual and organizational commitment; (b) better OCB; (c) higher levels of individual, team, and organizational performance; (d) a raised level of affective trust among the workforce; (e) more employee involvement in innovation; and (f) improved financial performance (Amir & Santoso, 2019; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Harwiki, 2016; Muller et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2020; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2016; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; J. Yang et al., 2017). The leaders stated they could accomplish this servant leadership influence by exhibiting servant leadership attributes, such as empowerment, accountability, humility, stewardship, sense of community, growth and success of follower focus, trust and respect, and vision with transparency. They also mentioned they could attain this servant leadership influence by (a) applying a coaching mindset; (b) sticking to core values; (c) striving to engage employees and gain their trust and commitment; (d) including the workforce in quality management initiatives; and (e) emphasizing business ethics and CSR. Some examples of comments from these leaders include the following:

Table 14

Interviewee comments related to leadership approach and servant leadership recognition

Interviewee	Comments – Leadership Style and Why Servant Leadership Recognized / Promoted
A1	Knock hurdles out of the way for others to get their jobs done. Servant leadership is raised where organization chart really should be flipped upside down. Leaders should never reach a point for anything that's beneath you and should wear many hats.
A2	Servant leadership at heart. Upbeat and can-do attitude. Ethics and CSR are highest priority and leaders need to walk the walk when it comes to ethics and CSR.
A3	Servant leadership is my leadership style. People, performance, and innovation are company's three pillars.
B1	Importance of leaders being servants. Don't do management, do leadership. Intensely focused on talent. Humility and openness are key. Important to build community within organization, demonstrate organizational citizenship behavior, show empathy, drive value for all stakeholders, conduct self-evaluation with humility, take personal accountability, focus on maintaining integrity. Emphasis on human capital, employee engagement, and customer focus. Paradigm shift leading focus on service and developing those they lead.
B3	Very collaborative. Servant leadership. Listen and focus on employee engagement.

C3	Fitting and inclusive. Coach on more complicated stuff. Do what's best for individual and for team.
D3	Servant leadership as this is one of company's core values. Believe importance of keeping both employees and customers happy. Have humility. Servant leadership is just in not one action it's a lifestyle and once you develop that lifestyle it makes it a lot easier to be a servant leader, but it takes time, and it takes effort, and it takes intention to do that day in and day out.
E1	Servant leadership as company is recognized for servant leadership and focus on sticking to core values and creating sense of community within company. Company believes pleasure in job puts perfection in work and job as leaders is to create an environment where people can see a purpose for what they are doing. Company has workplace where people go to work every day and make a contribution to something bigger than themselves. They learn something new there, they feel safe, and are protected by set of compelling values and go home happy that is part of total equation.
E2	Coaching mindset. Buy into community sense within company that is driven with caring attitude and building trust. Servant leadership right tone at top and CEO's leadership approach and philosophy push down idea of servant leadership and lives servant leadership through listening, practicing empathy, humility, and building community and trust.
E5	Servant leadership. People first mindset and believe taking care of people results will then follow. Create environment in which people feel empowered and purposeful. Be example to bring your best self to work in whatever level of creativity, responsibility, and accountability. Create and continuously nurture an environment in which people are able to do. Bring best talent forward to help achieve company goals. Right vision brings right people and contributions. Servant leadership mindset flows from top down. Integrity because as leader aware that putting everyone who you're coaching first. Important to recognize words really matter, alongside behavior. Notion of coach vs. supervisor.

One of the companies emphasized how they are on a Lean journey and how some of the Lean principles align with the cultural context of servant leadership. Lean engages the entire workforce at all levels of the organization to improve capabilities that lead to a competitive advantage (Pakdil & Leonard, 2017). Lean aligns with an organizational culture that embraces inclusion and empowerment, implements engaged performance teams, aims for perfection, and strives for continuous improvement (Gaiardelli et al., 2019; Plenert, 2012; Starbird & Cavanagh, 2011). Some of the Lean and servant leadership related comments from participants within this company include:

Table 15

Interviewee comments related to servant leadership recognition and connection to Lean

Interviewee	Comments –Servant Leadership Recognition and Connection to Lean
C2	Emphasis on Lean and lots of Lean concepts related to servant leadership.
C7	Company on Lean journey. Huge elements of Lean predicated on servant leadership model, leaders lead in a collaborative serving way and evolving more in this direction.
C8	Relates to Lean journey. Company identifies people as their biggest asset and create army of problem solvers, which allows for empowering people that is done by servant leaders and giving them flexibility, which requires empowerment, humility, and coaching mindset.
C9	Empower and focus on individual and team performance instead of only leader performance. Lean leadership as continuous improvement program that is very embedded with servant leadership model.
C10	Servant leadership is something that is very critical to Lean manufacturing and recognizes importance of serving employees.

Participant E3 mentioned a key component of social learning theory in which workers learn how to treat one another within an organization based on what they observe from their senior leadership. This interviewee stressed the importance of leaders asking themselves, “Am I a leader worth following?” and linked this question to the cultural context of servant leadership regarding how it sends a message that leaders (a) value employees; (b) care about workforce career development; (c) strive to build workforce trust and commitment; (d) want to know how to serve team members; (e) promote OCB; and (f) work toward a life of integrity. Servant leaders strive to set an excellent example that followers want to emulate, including voluntarily helping others, resulting in subordinates engaging in OCB (Amir & Santoso, 2019; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016).

The leaders acknowledged that national culture affects the perception and endorsement of servant leadership and its influence on organizational performance, impacting how they demonstrate servant leadership attributes and how senior leaders run their companies. The leaders recognized the importance of appreciating the different national cultural conditions and being sensitive to the diverse social norms and customs across the various culture clusters. They stated that national culture affected their leadership approach and their servant leadership influence on organizational performance, primarily regarding how they exhibited servant

leadership characteristics (Amir & Santoso, 2019; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). These leaders admitted that national culture mediated servant leadership's influence on organizational performance. They also stated that national culture can be a factor regarding servant leadership's effectiveness and its association with business ethics through how servant leadership is portrayed and received within organizations slightly because these leaders desire to (a) communicate and adhere to company core values regardless of the cultural environment; (b) demand business ethics, integrity, and CSR across all operations worldwide; and (c) treat and respect employees of all cultures and backgrounds. Some of the national cultural dimensions and servant leadership-related comments from participants include the following:

Table 16

Interviewee comments related to national cultural dimensions

Interviewee	Comments – National Cultural Dimensions
A3	You have to be really culturally aware of social norms and styles, and here you can be very direct in commentary, you go to the Far East, and you can't be as direct, there's a just a different approach to say the same thing and get the same outcome but you have to take a different approach to it, so you absolutely have to be sensitive to the norms of the of the culture. You can still exhibit those same kind of servant leadership tendencies, but you can't say it in the same way. You have to approach it a slightly. No matter where you are, every human on this planet wants to be treated with respect, they want to feel relevant, and they want to be fairly rewarded the three R's, and as I travel all over the world, and I have talked to various people in all cultures, those three things hold true every time.
B4	I think it starts at the top, and in being able to respect all cultures and points of view, be open-minded enough to be able to realize that somebody on the other side of the world or somebody right here may have a totally different point of view and be able to respect that and that starts at the top as far as being, being inclusive environment, you have to permeate that attitude throughout the organization.
C1	Recognition of different people that are from different backgrounds and cultures, as you can see people have different backgrounds. It affects leading organizations giving diversity and inclusion equally for group dynamics. Business ethics and CSR are more complex in other countries.
C10	I think the company does a good job in country of appreciating that of welcoming the local employees to help make decisions. I think company does a really good job like moving people around. Company has done a good job of plucking talent from some of these places and moving them around, and it goes back to having those different skill sets, different experiences in there. Servant leadership would from the providing opportunities but just the consideration of the local. There's a lot of work done in-country from an ESG standpoint that is led by the local community of employees.

D1	We feel like that positively serves, or should I guess anybody, just be a nice human being. We definitely don't try to be somebody we're not to different people and I guess that could be good and bad. Servant leadership, absolutely to be fair, to be kind, to be respectful of any individual and any, anything that might could make them experience more into it.
D3	I think the more diverse you can be from a nationality standpoint, or race standpoint or gender standpoint, religion standpoint, I mean political standpoint, the better your organization is going to be. I think innovation is at its finest when you have people from different walks of life in different backgrounds. I think innovation is at its finest when you have a very diverse group of individuals so I'm intentional about trying to make sure that the company has a diverse culture. Different nationalities are going to bring a different perspective because they see life through different lenses.
D4	I take people as people, and I just do what the best for anybody out there, especially for individuals that work for us, our customers that come through to see us. I really don't see through that lens, a person's a person, and I'm going to treat everybody the same as I would want to be treated, basically because of their different cultures that you, that there would be some level of respect for certain traditions or social norms or, or anything like that. I respect anybody's cultural beliefs, anybody's religious beliefs, anything. I'm not going to shun somebody for having a different belief than I do. I'm going to adhere to whatever they have going on and look at both sides. I'm very neutral, very transparent, and I love to see other sides of people where they came from, who they are, what their background is. I love to get to know the individual, and I just want to hear your story.
E1	I think that cultural behaviors that you have to be aware of, I mean that's the way that people communicate. What we really look at is, each of us if we live our values as an organization, consistently across all of our geographies, then those values will help us do what we want to do, which is respect the people respect what they stand for and create positive lasting memories in the relationships we have with them.
E2	We operate with a diverse group of people, all different cultures and backgrounds, and religions and so inclusivity is important to us. Learning how to work, cross-culturally, across the globe is important to us, and we train people when we conduct training to make sure that people und and what it means to the organization, what our expectation is of them.
E4	Whether you're from France or you're from China, or you're from America, or you're from Australia, or you're from Brazil, or company member, and we may not all speak the same language, we may not all have the same accent, we may look very different, but there's this commitment to kind of our values and our culture that has transcended all of the national boundaries that I've ever interacted with this company that is so powerful. I think that goes back to when we were talking about accepting kind of the unique value of all of our members, and that unique value may come from a diversity of perspective because of their national origin or kind of their beliefs and their customs of where they live, or it might come from their particular viewpoint to the world.

Several of the leaders recognized the importance of understanding Hofstede's (2001) five national cultural dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity, and long-term–short-term orientation) that influence thinking and action in predictable ways and have served as points of reference for many studies on world cultures (Hale & Fields, 2007; Northouse, 2019; Sulieman, 2017). None of the leaders spent much time discussing these dimensions at length but instead considered them more as a whole. The

interviewees emphasized the need for leaders to consider these national cultural conditions (a) when dealing with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds (e.g., employees within a business unit in the Middle East, clients from Europe, customers from Latin America, and supply chain partners in Asia); (b) as part of effectively leading their organizations; and (c) ensuring proper business ethics. Some leaders did not acknowledge these national cultural conditions, as they did not have experience working overseas or familiarity in dealing with distinct cultures.

Regarding the connection between servant leadership and business ethics, the interviewees claimed there was a strong link because leaders must (a) have a fiduciary responsibility to create an ethical work climate and demand integrity from all employees; (b) lead by example and consistently strive to do the right thing in the right way, do what they say they are going to do, and demonstrate a character beyond reproach; (c) hold to strong ethical standards for themselves and their employees among themselves and with all stakeholders; (d) adhere to their core values and set boundaries for strategic decisions; (e) act morally and humbly; (f) make every effort to help followers grow and succeed; (g) treat others the way they want to be treated; and (h) inspire CSR (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Conrad, 2018; Daft, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Kincaid, 2012; Marques, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Some of the business ethics-related comments from those participants who described themselves as servant leaders include the following:

Table 17

Interviewee comments related to business ethics

Interviewee	Comments – Business Ethics
A1	I don't even know how to describe it other than it's just, it's the right way to be, is to act ethically, personally and in business, so we talk about that, we make a big deal about ethics.
A3	There are some things that are just, and they have to be in place, so ethics are one of those that were uncompromising on; we do ethics training every year, so I say we have to have

	ethics, but it just is inherent in the process right you can't have respect and trust and all of the things that we've just talked about. If that isn't seated in ethical behavior. There's zero-tolerance.
B3	Business ethics and CSR mean, especially in supply chain. We're always constantly inundated as we should be with constant Code of Business Conduct ethical training. You have to be in this whole supply chain because everybody's trying to get the deal in. It's paramount, and one of the things I always do is I'm very transparent.
C1	Business ethics wise, I think what the company represents in that messaging as to what is the right way of doing things, what are the rules around ethics, company stance, it's pretty strong.
C6	Business ethics, it's critical. Zero-tolerance.
C9	All of that has just to be very transparent, and I think the company does that not just for its employees, but also its contingent workers. No company can really perform or survive without a basic level of ethics training. It's not just about Lean it's not just about values, it's how you link the whole sort of tapestry together. It's how you sort of take the lifecycle of an employee from sort of joining to exiting and making sure that it sort of lives up to your experiences, how do you experience the company as an employee, and most of that comes from leadership. Let's be honest because leadership sort of does set the culture and the tool and that's true, everything's set by the right tone at the top.
D1	Important business ethics. We want to be fair, we want to treat our employees and our customers and our partners as customers, they are all important. We are all here to support each other. We are here to support our employees in the field, not the other way around. We are very fair and transparent, and we expect our partners and our employees to be as well, so, should have high expectations for integrity.
D3	I would not tolerate somebody being in a company that did not have ethics. As a matter of fact, we've dropped a lot of very big names strategic partnerships because of business; that's all you have is your reputation.
E1	If you think about a business, it should reflect the people that you serve as customers, so, firstly, your ethics are a prerequisite. A lot of people talk when they talk about the values of an organization, they say, well, one of our values is where ethical. Well, if you're not ethical, you're not going to be in business long term, you're going to be shut out of business. So, our values are really important to us, and they help us establish a foundation of being ethical and inclusive and our values to hierarchical by the way our number one value is. We value doing the right thing, and number two value is we value creating positive lasting memories in all of our relationships; so, you would see that that value actually captures the responsibility that we have around diversity, equity, and inclusion because our role is to create a positive lasting memory.
E2	Business ethics are important and critical. It is a shared responsibility across the organization. We have an ethics committee.
E5	It's ingrained in how we treat our employees. It's ingrained in how we treat our end-users, our customers, our partners. It's such a big network to take into account.

These leaders also mentioned the link between servant leadership and CSR. Some of the CSR-related comments from participants who highlighted servant leadership involved a core principle or value for their company include the following:

Table 18

Interviewee comments related to corporate social responsibility

Interviewee	Comments – Corporate Social Responsibility
A3	So the community piece that's already kind of embedded in what we do and trying to give back to the community through different organizations and participate in that, but on the corporate side, we've been talking to our client base as we start to look at greener energy, and how do we take our current business and make it cleaner, and so we're in those conversations with them to say how what can we do to help them achieve their objectives in this transition in energy, because it's really interesting to hear the rhetoric right now and everybody's talking about oil and gas going away, but the reality is, almost every product that we all use has some kind of hydrocarbon derivative in it so for our lifetime and probably our children's lifetime, we're going to be dependent on hydrocarbons, but we can do it better. We can be cleaner, and we can reduce emissions.
B1	On the stewardship side, the whole of the industry, and oil and gas, in particular, has moved towards stewardship of the environment and so the whole biodegradability, all of those things that's a part of the DNA you need to succeed. Keeping caring is an innate characteristic. Can you know within a few minutes about talking to people if they do or they don't? They care about others, they care about customers, which is, and others do they care about the environment, and you want the person that has huge empathy for all the things that are associated with the company's success.
B2	I definitely think that we should try to get back into the community. When you look at what we do in oil and gas, we should be giving it back in every which way we think of as a case about what we do to try to make operations greener, more environmentally friendly. So, for us, it's that impact to the world around sustainability and making things better for cleaner air, water, and energy. You have to be dedicated to that and believe that I always let all that go and transcend his way through, through an organization, your investors, the community overall to the world if you do that.
B4	CSR or ESG is very important, although nobody could spell ESG a year ago. In our entire industry and it's always been important to be an environmental steward and a good social status and take care of our people take care of the environment, and care of society and the population as a whole has always been important to us. You have a responsibility to your employees and to your community as a whole, and that CEO put out, and our industry as a whole, so it all it all does work together. Being a good mentor, good leader, developing a good, good, safe, and environmentally responsible culture and that bleeds into just the fabric of the business owner and business but the people that they take on the community as a whole, so I guess there is a link there.
C6	CSR is a big deal here, and I think that a lot of that goes back to the ownership of the company as they have always taken that really seriously.
C8	I know social responsibility is huge,. This is ESG now. The company really prided itself with sustainability, and the company, I think, has been recognized for the last ten years as a socially responsible corporate citizen.
C9	If I look at the company values themselves, I think we kind of hold at the forefront, trying to be a good corporate citizen, but particularly as we work so deeply in the community and onshore, it's the landowners, mineral rights owners you've got to be accepted in the community and be a part of good. I think something that the company does really well is actually focused quite broadly on corporate social responsibility. So, I think that's another way in which we're kind of in, and we do a lot of corporate social investment in the community.
C10	It's amazing how much it has evolved over the past two years. When I was in planning at least over the past year, I bet 15 to 20% of the work I was doing was ESG, whereas before, maybe five. It's just the focus, the external focus has gotten huge, which has caused the internal focus to get huge, so it's an odd time because we've got a lot of VPs and directors and higher up, and throughout the organization who are focusing a lot on ESG, and I think that's good.

D4	CSR we're basically like for the communities in which you have your businesses and that kind of thing and just being good corporate citizens from a promo, from that perspective as well as just the buzz right now with everything being eco-friendly or environmental as well but really as far as the community. I think one of the biggest things we do is the foundation is giving back.
E1	Well, that's now called ESG, as you probably know, and it is really a recognition of risks that you need to be aware of and respecting all stakeholders in your business, and we think of stakeholders in our business.

RQ3: To what extent, if any, does servant leadership positively change organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion, improves employee engagement, and increases employee commitment and trust?

Diversity and Inclusion. All the leaders had plenty to say regarding diversity and inclusion, and there were different viewpoints across the spectrum. The leaders spoke at great lengths about how their respective companies are taking diversity and inclusion seriously, and they mentioned various approaches they have taken, such as efforts to (a) promote diversity and inclusion as part of their strategic objectives, including capturing diversity and inclusion as part of their ESG report; (b) provide diversity and inclusion training and direction to ensure equal opportunities; (c) incorporate strategic human resources position through considering all diversity elements within their organization, creating a more fluid and adaptive culture for a growing diverse workforce, and integrating diversity programs within the overall company strategy and objectives; (d) focus greater attention on valuing differences while encouraging unity; (e) establish a psychologically safe environment in which employees feel valued and respected, can share new ideas, and are empowered to grow and develop (Catalyst, 2020; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Mello, 2019; Russell, 2018; Sims, 2018). Some examples of the diversity and inclusion initiatives they mentioned are as follows:

Table 19

Interviewee comments related to diversity and inclusion initiatives

Interviewee	Comments – Diversity and Inclusion
A1	It's something that we have talked about as a leadership team, wanting to think about well, how do we create more diversity inclusion and how do we create what I would call affinity groups so that people have various subsections of the population, however you want to slice and dice it. I want to think that because we work so hard, and all the other things that are meant to be open door accepting, empathetic, etc., I send an email to every new timer ten business days after their hire, which is all about the practicalities of settling in like, was your laptop ready, did your manager know you were coming, did we have useful work for you to do you know, how was the onboarding experience practicality wise and then 60 days after they're here, then I send them a follow-up survey that's really more about settling in, like, are you settling in with a team, are you settling in with your project, do you feel like you have a best friend at work yet, it's more of those kinds of like, how's the environment for you, do you feel like you can voice a concern or question in a meeting, those kinds of questions.
B4	D&I all starts at the top, and we take our keys from our HR department. They really make sure we do all the boxes, check all the boxes, dot the I's, cross the T's, make sure we have our ducks in a row, and I do the same thing of the hiring process, making sure that people are selected on the merit, their qualifications, and that is all it's a fair playing field, and it really starts with our policies. An inclusive environment is approachability because it's just such a foreign concept may not include anybody, what I mean somebody's doing good job, no matter what their sexual orientation or the color of their skin or their religion or anything like that, it's doing a good job, it's just so foreign to me not to treat them all the same.
C1	Working toward being more diverse, such as more women in leadership and making a priority to promoting fairness.
C9	We set up three task forces, one of them looking at supplier diversity so how much money are we spending as a company with diverse suppliers, so from a supply chain standpoint, what more could we be doing to improve that and then also internally we had one on development of employee and so looking at development programs also mentoring in sponsorship kind of softer skills of how do you develop and then, also under recruitment, are we having, making sure that our candidate suites are diverse, our recruitment panels, who are doing interviews are diverse and in doing much more analysis on when we've been out in the market. I think tying some of that social responsibility to another of our values which is around diversity, inclusion, and equity.
E1	By living our second value, which is to create positive lasting memories in all of our relationships; so, again, recognizing that being a global company, so we get to benefit from the value of that diversity, and we really understand its value because we've lived with it for many years and then I think the other way is being open and transparent about communication being deliberate about wanting to create a positive lasting memory. We recruit for values first competency second. You've got to have the values that live our promise of a group of people who come together to protect and feed each other. It's just like more on a macro level, we don't have quotas, but in reality, when you look at our organization because of our global nature and because we've always respected the fact that diversity of opinion of culture is of a true value to us, we embrace it.

Some of the leaders mentioned how servant leadership, a display of servant leadership attributes, and adhering to core company values can positively affect organizational culture through diversity and inclusion:

Table 20

Interviewee comments related to servant leadership and diversity and inclusion initiatives

Interviewee	Comments – Diversity and Inclusion
A2	I think as far as inclusion that the respect with it kind of goes hand in hand with empowerment and how we feel the employees can communicate any way they want to. We get people to get fired up, and they're fired up about it because they are truly engaged, and they want to make things right, and so having the ability with this whole open-door policy.
C4	D&I focus groups combination senior leaders and lower-level employees trying to come up with ways to further develop D&I within the company. The company engages in listening and providing open and honest feedback. Servant leadership can impact through the importance of listening.
C7	I think servant leadership goes beyond unquestionably as it does have an element of inclusivity. We want people to be comfortable and engaged and feel welcomed in the place in which they work, but I also think it promotes good business management if we have a range of viewpoints.
D1	I think we're inclusive. I feel like definitely there is a diversity and sense of people of color and people of different genders that I worked with and alongside, and I don't feel like anyone has ever been treated differently from anyone else. It's important to CEO that people come from different backgrounds and different experiences because he doesn't want the same thinking all the time. He wants different things, he wants to learn from others and be more collaborative with people that don't necessarily think just like him or have the same background. I feel like the best thing that comes to mind is fairness treatment, just really tries to make sure that they know how much they're appreciated.
E3	Inclusion is something that's always been really important for us because we have this tribal community, so that's something that we think that we can leverage and expand upon. The journey we're on right now to where we're moving through it, and we're taking our time and we're talking to our tribe about it, and it's so far, it's been beautiful, it's been humbling, it's recognizing another opportunity where we can do better, it's about seeking out those pockets where it may not be so. There's always an opportunity for continuous improvement, regardless of what it is. Servant leaders can even be better servant leaders, and if they are, if they're as good as they can get, they can mentor somebody else who can.
E5	We have just actually completed an entire political listening tour on this exact subject D&I. I think it goes right back to that individual and us our coaching responsibilities of belonging, building that community, and making sure people do feel that they can be themselves within our four walls of the organization. I'm really happy that from a coaching perspective, they provide training on it, but there's education to it because there's a lot of unknown biases.

Two of the leaders emphasized the diversity of ideas and talents and discussed meritocracy and minimizing creating employee subsets while recognizing more can be done in the diversity and inclusion area and valuing and respecting all individuals. Despite this position, there was consensus regarding the need for strategic human resources by (a) viewing all employees as human assets with value and worth; (b) creating a learning and inclusive

environment; and (c) hiring and developing the right people. These two leaders offered the following comments:

Table 21

Interviewee comments related to more emphasis on diversity of talents and ideas

Interviewee	Comments – Diversity and Inclusion
A3	<p>The approach I've taken with this is we want to have the most qualified people and so I want to go out and we look across all spectrum our race, religion, gender, all of that. I must always focus on making sure I get the very best people with the best experience, so there's an openness. We certainly are looking for diversity, but I'm not going to do it at the expense of not having the most qualified person. I'm really looking for like diversity of talent and diversity of ideas because I am a firm believer that having, especially the gender difference within a project team, makes a better team because you just think about things differently. There's just a different approach to the work, and it absolutely adds value, but you got to have the right experience to be able to bring that and be participate in making that team as strong as possible. It's not singled out like we're going to take special care of you, but you're going to get exactly the same care and respect and trust and all the things that every employee in this company gets. I've talked to lots of leaders who are doing kind of creating subsets and they're giving them special opportunities or they're looking after them in a special way but all that does is make them more obvious to everybody else right to the absolute people who are not in that group and honestly, it might be, it helps in the short term, but in the long term, I think it's creating a bigger divide, and that's not what we're trying to accomplish. This is something we're trying to get embedded that stays for the longevity of our whole industry, and so making a special group and doing special things for them and I don't think actually achieves the objective.</p>
B1	<p>I don't believe in diversity at all. I believe in giving a fair opportunity to all people, and when you put someone in a job because of something when they're unqualified, you do a disservice to that entire group, and so you should never promote a non-qualified woman because she's a woman, or an unqualified African or an unqualified white, or an unqualified Puerto Rican because all you do is cause people to resent them by saying they got the job, not based on merit, but based upon some other criteria. I run a pure meritocracy, and, in my meritocracy, I've got Malaysians running sales, a woman chief of staff. I just could care less about their gender, or color, their religion. I'm blind to all that and focus on the good, great people, and the way that you ended up not diverse is when you don't demand that all qualified applicants are considered for a role. My obligation is not to sell diversity obligations, it is to create wealth. I promote diversity by promoting fairness and inclusiveness in the process of hiring. Inclusion is where you would see it is regardless of what they are, and you want to make them feel included in and respected in the roles they have.</p>

Employee Engagement, Commitment, and Trust. All the leaders also provided an abundance of information on the necessity of improving employee engagement and increasing employee commitment and trust. Many leaders mentioned the importance of servant leadership and the demonstration of servant leadership characteristics as paramount for increasing employee

engagement and gaining greater employee commitment and trust, which leads to improved individual and team performance, OCB, and social interaction. Servant leadership emphasizes the importance of personal growth and creates an environment of respect and trust that leads to greater employee satisfaction and retention (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018), which the leaders acknowledged.

Several points were evident during the discussions on employee engagement, commitment, and trust. First, it was the leaders' earnest desire to build a sense of community within their respective organizations as a critical way to raise the levels of employee engagement, commitment, and trust. The leaders believed one of their key roles is to create a caring, supporting, encouraging, and collaborative environment (Coetzer et al., 2017; A. Wong et al., 2018). One way the leaders thought they were accomplishing this aspect is by searching for ways to (a) spend quality time with their followers, (b) have fun at work, and (c) hold team-building activities. The leaders acknowledged this task had become more difficult in recent months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had forced them to be creative with technology such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. A second way they accomplished this aspect was by making themselves available for their teams by having an open-door policy and coaching mindset. One company was quick to mention that they refer to managers and supervisors as coaches. Another company stressed an open-door approach in which employees, regardless of level, have access to the leadership team, including the CEO and COO. A third way leaders are accomplishing this aspect is by recognizing staff for their accomplishments. The leaders mentioned how they seek opportunities to recognize workers in public forums, as they have found that when appreciation is made public, it is more meaningful. Public recognition aligns with the servant leadership

attribute of building community, which encompasses leaders regarding their organizations as groups that can have positive internal relationships, as well as externally with their customers and the people in the communities they operate in and society-in-general (Jaramillo et al., 2015; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). The following are some comments from the leaders on building a sense of community:

Table 22

Interviewee comments related to building a sense of community for employee engagement

Interviewee	Comments – Building Community to Employee Engagement
A1	We want people to have fun at work, and we don't want them to dread like driving into the parking garage in the morning. Many of us have made and working with lifelong friends made at work, so it is all about creating community. One of the things that we do is we use Microsoft Teams as our kind of communication platform for just about everything and what I mean, and a lot of people work have teams that are their actual workgroup teams, and there's always team chat and files that are saved in that and whatever. But we also have a team that is called the hall like it a throwback to like a Texas A&M reference because we have so many Aggies on staff and our CEOs in it but in the hall is the place where we always recognize new team members when they come on board, hey, welcome Larry he just joined he's going to work in the process department help everybody make him feel welcome.
A3	Business is driven by people. You can't commoditize the service. It is made up of individual experiences and knowledge and leadership, and teamwork skills, and the art of what we do is getting all of that blended together to make us better than we are individually, and that is why people are more, most important. You can't just bring them in, put them to work and then forget about them, it's about having a long-term relationship. So, we do a lot of team building, despite COVID, we have get together every four to five weeks where we just have social time, play games, do stuff for the community.
C2	There's little things you can do on teams where you can send these things called praise; specific teams so other people can see that you've acknowledged their work. The company also has a platform called Workplace, which is similar to Facebook for your company, and that we have a specific channel called Kudos, so anyone can post on there and give kudos to another employee for helping them.
C9	People used to have employee satisfaction surveys, and now obviously, it's kind of much more modern to seek employee engagement and people engagement. We actually are partnering with a company called Glint, and we're trying to work on something called a high performing employee experience and joint build on the continuum of being a great place to work a great employer, and how do we, where are we today and how would we get better and improve even further, so we're working a lot with Glint to try and design and roll out our first employee engagement survey across the whole enterprise we actually piloted it, and a little bit within my asset, and I look back, and we actually did use it more to do a little bit of culture work, but the tool itself and the questions themselves are driving it the things that you're seeing. How do we ensure that you know when people are feeling listened to, they feel like they can get their work done efficiently? There are decisions made, effectively are they compensated in a way that makes them feel valued, you can test things like recognition within there.

D3	You really have to make sure that they're engaged, that they're motivated, that they feel appreciated for their work and that they can have been more creative and innovative and coming up with ideas and a good way to just kind of reiterate that is one thing that we put into play, and I want people to work with us and work towards it, is we put it in some equity plays where once you go through certain growth.
E1	We focus on building community because belonging is one of the biggest desires we have as human beings. We've been working on employee engagement for 20 years because I worked out a long time ago that micromanagement wasn't scalable. I learned the power of servant leadership when I graduated with my master's degree in leadership, and I took what I've learned around servant leadership, and I started to execute it within the company, and that's what we've been doing, and I have a case to put that says, if you have a reasonably good strategy, and high employee engagement and culture over time, you will maximize the economic output of your organization.
E5	This balances with the other servant leadership attributes, ensuring that people know I'm here to support you, I've got your back like make your decisions for the same time, to make sure people recognize when they should and can go to their coaches for support. Leadership style includes ensuring that people know they can be themselves and they can truly be themselves because that then demonstrates belonging like that, you're able to be yourself and still be part that's to me, the core of community. There is a sense of belonging, we nurture that as leaders, and that really goes down to that individual acceptance perspective. So, engagement is one of the well-researched correlations to servant leaders. I think the last I had looked at it was maybe 70% of servant-led organizations can expect aboveboard engagement statistics. I think for us, one of the reasons why ours is so high is not only because of this servant leadership practice.

Second, it was the leaders' priority in helping subordinates grow and succeed to improve individual and team performance. The leaders believed one of their key roles is to engage in activities that focused on employee growth and development (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Hunter et al., 2013; Liu, 2019; Van Dierendonck, 2011). One way the leaders were achieving this aspect is by spending more time focused on their employees' career progression, goals, and ambitions. Some companies have even tried to revamp their performance review process, such as switching to 90-day check-ins instead of annual performance reviews, 360 feedback, and setting-up performance reviews to help employees to succeed. A second way leaders were achieving this aspect is by trying to maintain positive social interaction with their staff. Several leaders mentioned having good social interaction with their subordinates, which is something they regarded as essential to maintain. A third way is by empowering their workforce and holding them accountable, which is discussed further in the next section on empowerment and accountability. A fourth way is by creating learning environments within their organization.

Some leaders discussed how they treat mistakes as learning opportunities and provide encouragement. A fifth way is by providing more training and development opportunities. A sixth way is by exhibiting a coaching mindset, as discussed in the previous section, on building a sense of community. A seventh way is by maintaining an open-door policy. An eighth way is by offering more public recognition of workers. A ninth way is by striving to promote personnel from within. A tenth way is by focusing on innovation and incorporating quality management initiatives, which are discussed further in the section below on innovation and quality management initiatives. The survey data supported the importance of empowering employees; the mean score regarding helping followers grow and succeed was 6.3 on a Likert seven-point scale.

Table 23

Interviewee comments related to helping employees grow and succeed

Interviewee	Comments – Helping Followers Grow and Succeed
A1	Well, helping followers grow and succeed, that's what it's all about. The idea of command and control is very limiting for an individual in front of them. The point is to pass on knowledge and training and enable others and encourage them to have the opportunity to take on new tasks and grow and stretch themselves so that it frees me up to do new things. They grow in the meantime, and it just helps the whole organization grow and flourish and expand. Performance reviews are very focused on what's going well, what does this person really excel at, where they could use some improvement, and what do you see in the future for them. So, it's three very simple questions, and then there's a reference page of several different behaviors and attributes that we look at that we would say, here's some thought fodder for you. I have Monday morning check-in with my team, and it's always about what are your big three goals for the week, how do what last week go, what went well, what didn't go well, is there anything we need to change this week, and then next week, we check in again, how did your big three go last week. So, we're constantly moving forward, and then again, that's my opportunity to help them knock down hurdles, or knock them down for them or help them prioritize and think about the big picture and, you know, detail-oriented at the same time and prioritize and just grow and develop.
A2	Great social interaction with myself and my team. I would say that as an organization, we have younger leaders that are in charge of the staff that needs that coaching to establish that relationship with their employees. I try to provide that coaching. We actually have a meeting every Thursday with our department managers to talk about crucial conversations and if they had any during the week that we can put on in front of people and ask, alright, how would you approach this certain subject and, and again, everybody has their different personalities, we're all not perfect, some of us get upset, some of us shut down, some of us enjoy those types of conversations, so every person is different.

A3	Empowerment is important as we lay out those expectations and empower people to do what they need to do to meet those expectations. They are empowered to come to tell us we need this. Another part of it is about how they interact with their team; they are empowered to build their team up and set their dynamics around their team to meet expectations, but there is accountability which is huge. Three pillars of business first are people, and that is all about relationships and teamwork and all of that. Second is around performance, and that's this empowerment and accountability piece.
B2	Interactive with the group on a regular basis. Give employees the latitude to move around and make decisions and provide opportunities. Not micromanager. Focus on measurable deliverables. Develop careers along the way.
B3	We moved to stop doing yearly performance reviews, and we moved to 90-day check-ins, and it was incumbent upon you as an individual to set them up with your boss. So that began to separate out, who was truly serious about performance or truly a serious that's not the right word but truly engaged. You have to help people grow their careers, and sometimes that means helping them grow out of your organization and being absolutely okay with that and secure with that as a leader because you have to have confidence in yourself that you can repeat that again with the next person. We promote from within or allow people to pursue different roles and responsibilities that they can grow with and get additional training and receive opportunities to broaden their skill set. Owning up to mistakes and exhibiting empathy and forgiveness.
B4	Some examples that we do around here is promoting from within or allowing people to pursue different roles and different responsibilities that they can grow with and providing additional training where we, as needed, as folks show interest in a particular area so you would do whatever they can to try to give them the opportunities to be able to do something different and broaden their skill and knowledge base.
C3	Approachable with doors always open for people and all my guys.
C6	Helping followers grow personally and professionally is a priority of trying to develop the workforce. I think that is extremely critical that we keep stuff, business professional – focus on growth and development of subordinates. I have for certain key employees that I think have a lot of potential and a lot of future growth. I will go to great lengths to try and develop them and to find bigger and better opportunities for them, but it depends on the employee. Now, I cannot do it for 100% of the people, but I think as a manager, that's one of our big roles. If you don't actively work to get your better employees bigger and more important roles, they're not going to be your employee for long. I think respect is just fundamental through life. I think respect.
C8	Yes, give you the feedback, but I'm going to expect you to give me the feedback, so how do I become a better leader and I always ask that at the end of all my performance reviews that I did, I always ask that at the end because I want to know and want them, so they have the sense to be able to tell me. I think there's value in doing so because they also show that you actually are human and that you care to want to know you respect their opinion, you're asking them to tell you about you, so it gives that 360 feedback.
C9	That is something within Lean; you call it a leader as a teacher, so how do you, as a leader, teach employees and coworkers. Lean methodology to help them make improvements, but also within the company in terms of the competency of people, how do we develop our own talents, so how do we make sure you know you know we'd have a person's personal career goals. As a leader, and how do you provide them challenging and sort of spreadsheet tasks and assignments, and how do you have frequent conversations with them around their development needs, and also how do you then help them create a plan and that could include training, but we have the same as most companies have so 70/20/10 is 70% on the job 20% is mentoring, and sponsorship and 10% is formal training so that that model for how we develop people is something we stick to, but you as a leader, how do you help create a plan for somebody that leverages the 70/20/10 of how much they can do in their job. Connect with them with others to mentor them and help them improve.
D3	I have an open-door policy with anybody in my company.

D4	So as far as that goes valued and respected is, is making sure they feel that they're recognized for what they do, not just one on one, but also in front of the front of the peers and give them a public attaboy and let you know the small things they do mention the small things they do, so that's one thing we try to do.
E1	Absolutely, yes, social interaction is good, and it's very important. We believe the culture in an organization is a competitive advantage, and here's why. Just recently, the latest research that was done by the ADP Research Institute, over 1,900 companies around the world, 84% of people who are going to work at the moment are disengaged. COVID certainly hasn't helped that, so only 16% of people who go to work every day are actually engaged in, in doing meaningful work. This company we have a 93% engagement level we've been measuring it for many years, and why that's important, you can have the best strategy in the world, but if you don't have a high engagement level, we'll have the people to actually work towards achieving the purpose of the organization, then, the strategy will not be successful, and again, that's what we strive to do so, you know, our purpose. One of our values is to make it better than it is today. So, that captures all of your we can see the other side is taking the fear out of business. We don't make mistakes in the company; we do have, we call them learning moments, and a learning moment definition is a positive or negative outcome of any situation that needs to be openly and freely shared to benefit all people. So, by having a learning moment philosophy and a value that says, one of our values is we value making it better than it is today, then the mindset is about all those other things that it really tools to become more efficient or quality focused.
E3	Empowerment is really important. One of the company's commitments is people development. One of the ultimate outcomes of servant leadership is to help grow people to the peak of their performance potential. If not empowering them to take chances to share their ideas to make decisions and feel safe to do it think you will stunt their growth, and it will, unfortunately, leave too much power and authority with you. One of the goals of servant leadership is to give it away. So, engagement is one of the well-researched correlations to servant leaders. I think the last I had looked at it was maybe 70% of servant led organizations can expect aboveboard engagement statistics I think for us one of the reasons why ours is so high is not only because of this servant leadership practice, but I think it's a combination of that along with our leadership philosophy of helping people get an A and that requires constant ongoing dialogue between the leader and the tribe member. So, if I'm feeling well supported and I've got this close working relationship with my coach where we're in lockstep with one another, they und what my daily challenges are, they're, they're moving roadblocks for me, they're asking how can I serve you, what are you facing today do you need me, do you need my guidance or do you want to go on and on your own, how can I help you, how can I be there. I think it's the combination of that those two, it's that very close performance dialogue on an ongoing basis and that servant mindset together, so I think those two things together is really what explodes our engagement and brings it to the top, but if you don't even have that type of a performance philosophy that we do if it's just simply servant leadership, it's just a game-changer, it really is, and all the research is there.
E4	We have a pretty cool, compensation, transparency, job family kind of development dynamically can talk about that a separate topic that helps to facilitate a conversation with a tribe member about how they're seeing themselves in their performance, how the coaches seeing them, and their performance what the opportunities are, and then also the most. My favorite part of this whole thing is co-creating with the tribe member, like a development plan based on their goals and aspirations and so typically what I will do is have a conversation with the person, and it depends on what stage like there's certain people that I've been coaching for, you know, three, four years and so that conversation looks different than someone that I just took on, you know, for the first time but having a conversation about what their hopes and dreams and aspirations and goals are for themselves personally and professionally. I think of anchoring in like at the beginning of servant leadership right having clarity of direction and goal is really important, and that is something that all of the different levels of our strategy and getting clarity on both what we're trying to accomplish from our global strategic initiatives all the way down to the trading block level all the way

<p>down to the kind of the individual's role in their scope and what they need to accomplish is really important for enabling success and performance providing that clarity. And then I think the most important part or next ingredient to that is kind of the approach of active listening and being willing to. I guess it's part of this idea of coaching, but in my mind, it's even more than that, and it's being tuned in to what's working and what's not working and what your team or your people are saying and what maybe opportunities are to create clarity because there's no inevitably gray areas and being willing to partner with them on solutions, sometimes that looks like you actually having to escalate something and do something. Sometimes it just looks like being willing to invest more time with that person to kind of uncover what's behind something or what's driving their attitude or maybe what the perception is.</p>

Third, it was the leaders' emphasis on empowerment and accountability to drive employee engagement. They agreed on the need to empower employees while also holding them accountable. The leaders recognized that empowerment provides employees with the opportunity to complete tasks, foster talents, engage in independent problem-solving, participate in effective self-leadership, and have the freedom to handle stressful situations (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Northouse, 2019; Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). One way the leaders were accomplishing this aspect is by providing a sense of ownership and responsibility to workers. A second way is by the two-way sharing of information between themselves and their employees. The leaders mentioned their efforts to (a) communicate information frequently in a transparent manner, (b) listen, and (c) maintain an open-door policy. A third way is by coaching their staff and giving them the ability to practice power. A fourth way is by involving employees in essential managerial decisions. A fifth way is by creating a culture of community and teamwork. The leaders acknowledged that with empowerment comes accountability. They highlighted the need for leaders to (a) be fully transparent with their employees; (b) hold both themselves and their employees accountable for their actions; (c) set clear expectations for both themselves and their staff; and (d) frequently monitor performance. The leaders emphasized that one must come with the other to work within their organization to boost productivity, the decision-making process, employee morale, staff

retention, team relationships, worker trust levels, and personal stewardship. The survey data supported the importance of empowering employees; the mean score on empowerment was 6.0 on a Likert seven-point scale.

Table 24

Interviewee comments related to empowerment with accountability

Interviewee	Comments – Empowerment with Accountability
A1	Empowerment is about going to a person directly instead of through a chain. Accountability is what we do; take personal ownership of what I've committed to.
A2	If you don't hold that accountability to yourself, then guys that are looking up to you to provide that experience and to act like they should act, then they are not going to hold themselves accountable and probably not going to consider your feedback to them is important. They live by your standards and holding yourself at a spot where you hold others is super important, not only as a leader but also as a person.
B1	You don't have to empower good people. The principal job of the CEO is the selection of people and then resourcing it to empower them to do their jobs.
B2	Empowerment is you set a framework so that they feel that capability right, so they know what they're able to do. There's a clear runway, and they know expectations, where they can go and do things and empower them to make those decisions that really driver ownership and drive teamwork. Empowerment shows trust in the employee. I like to hold people accountable to measurable expectations and to hold the team accountable to each other and that when we meet, how we conduct our meetings, and how we conduct business high level of integrity and accountability. Accountability is not a burden but an opportunity to overcome and really take the next step. Accountability automatically opens up pathways for results and ties in with empowerment. My core message around our vision, mission, expectations, and stuff is going to be the same because we're still going to drive accountability, safety, metrics, deliver KPIs, how going to be judged on performance, and my coach to developing individuals in the organization, all of these going to stay same. You got clear accountability, defined roles, ways of motivating, communicating, and rewarding, and coaching through bad parts.
B3	Leaders need to create an environment to get people to go beyond saying you're empowered to facilitate an ongoing culture of empowerment; they have to be safe in making those decisions. Avoid being abusive or aggressive but recognize accountability because the worst thing in empowering situation as a leader is to keep empowering people who keep making bad decisions and have to step back and ask maybe they're just not capable and need to coach them, develop them, make them better, or use sound judgment and say they are not wired to handle that level of responsibility. Not coming back and hammering employees in an abusive, aggressive manner but holding them accountable.
B4	You have to empower people and allow people to do their jobs. You have to hold them accountable and be fair. Recognize they will make mistakes and acknowledge all being in that position. Important to show empathy and forgiveness but at the same time be stern and hold them accountable.
C1	Accountability still lies with me. Accountability must be achieved along with responsibility for doing it and making sure person gets recognized for work that we have done as well.
C2	A leader is still accountable even if they allow employees to make certain decisions on their own. Without accountability, one could question why a leader is there.
C8	As you empower folks, one of the biggest things is to hold them responsible but truly believe that as you empower individuals, they accept that. They accept it when they're

	empowered because they realize that they're part of that; they came up with the idea, so there is an accountability factor because the buck stops. There's a perfect synergy because if you empower them, you allow them to solve the problem because you did not tell them what the solution is, way to get commitment and agreement from the team. If I have this mindset where I empower folks, I create a structure, operating system, environment where they can speak their mind and not be afraid, best conducive environment. So, trust becomes super important as having an opportunity to build teams based on trust. The company believes in this value.
C9	Empowerment relates to how the company utilizes Lean on servant leadership. Empowerment is more aligned, having the tools, the behavior of having the courage to improve a situation, and it is all about how can I go and solve that problem rather than ship the problem. Empowerment fits into company competency of demonstrating courage and giving direction to people, but also within Lean it's around making problems visible, feeling empowered to view a problem and have opportunity to make it better, process improve; think you want people to feel empowered to make positive changes. Shared or mutual accountability is needed to avoid silos and gain alignment across the team to make sure assets are improving and delivering. Requires a level of trust amongst leaders.
C10	If anybody's going to do the job and live up to their capability, you have to empower them. When you restrict people, you can hinder their development and capabilities. Removing roadblocks is empowerment. Diff than leadership when came out of MBA school that leaders are decision-makers and person sitting there saying go do this, go do that command and control. It started that way as it was comfortable but matured and as moved up, realized can't do everything and saw the benefit of empowering people to make their own decisions. You've got to basically be able to let folks do their thing, and they are going to be more engaged because they will take ownership and learn better. Accountability is where I say you go and make these decisions but say I'm going to hold you responsible accountable for your decisions and I am going to take responsibility and accountability for their decisions, even if they make a mistake and say upward that it was our workgroup and how we are going to fix it. Make an effort to shield them from the scrutiny of higher-ups when they make mistakes and coach them.
D2	Once you've empowered, you switch to accountability. Servant leadership is holding people accountable.
D3	Empowering the workforce to be able to execute work and applies to everybody in the organization, not just leaders. Buy into concepts, and they're not going to do that unless you've empowered them and given them some type of ownership over it.
D4	I love to empower other people and watch them grow. Whatever I can do to help them grow and evolve as a person. Accountability, not only do I have to hold myself to a higher standard and be accountable for my own actions. I have to hold other people in this company accountable for their actions. More of teaching approach instead of preaching kind of guy as strict enforcement isn't a huge thing about what we do we love to teach and train and learn from mistakes and just get better.
E1	It's about both treating people and creating a net sphere of trust and holding each other accountable for that.
E3	Empowerment is really important. One of the company's commitments is people development. One of the ultimate outcomes of servant leadership is to help grow people to the peak of their performance potential. If not empowering them to take chances to share their ideas to make decisions and feel safe to do it think you will stunt their growth, and it will, unfortunately, leave too much power and authority with you. One of the goals of servant leadership is to give it away. I don't want to be one retaining all authority. I need to delegate it and distribute it across my team, even if it means allowing folks to make mistakes. It's important to make mistakes since failure is a hallmark of success; you've got to fail in order to move forward next time, and so empowering folks to feel confident and comfortable to make a decision, take a risk, fall, and rise again is really important.
E5	Accountability is ensuring that people can expect from me is I do what I say I do, demonstrating that first and foremost in every single element of my position, but will also

go back to the humility of will I do it incredibly perfect and create perfect doesn't exist, but you will always know that I'm trying and will always know that I'm there for you and that's where I think those two actually work really well together.
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Fourth, it was the leaders' focus on maintaining integrity, leading by example, and creating a psychologically safe environment to build employee commitment and loyalty. They recognized the value of earning the trust and loyalty of their workforce and believed they need to exhibit proper business ethics, lead by example, and provide a psychologically safe environment. The survey data strongly supported the importance of maintaining integrity and demonstrating proper business ethics; the mean score on ethical behavior was 6.6 on a Likert seven-point scale.

Table 25

Interviewee comments related to maintaining integrity, leading by example and creating psychological safe environment

Interviewee	Comments – Maintain Integrity / Lead by Example / Create Psychological Safe Environment
A1	Approach taking is keeping people informed and not hiding anything and taking hard questions and trying to deal with them has been a sign of trust because they feel safe to do so and making an effort to create a psychologically safe work environment.
A3	It is about creating that environment where it feels safe for them, and they realize there isn't going to be retribution for bringing up bad things, but I think we're getting there because I am getting feedback on things we need to get better, so you know I'm not going to take out 100% but we are continuing to work on that where people feel completely safe to let us know what's happening. It's the only way you know you can tell people you're safe, but they have to feel it, so that's about getting the culture right it actively demonstrating it, so it's visible to people talking about it when we do uncover something that talks about it and let them see like nothing bad happened so it is really walking the talk because you can't just say it and you have to do it, and they have to experience it because safe is a feeling, it's an aura around you, so you got to create that so that they're not going to believe it otherwise.
B1	Focus on maintaining integrity. Paradigm shift leading focus on service and developing those they lead. It is really important to me the culture of the company and get fit and say, doesn't matter how well you do. Integrity here, it trumps that right, so you try to teach people let's make the right decisions.
B4	Yes, on psychological safety and building climate of trust absolutely negative that goes both ways, from a management standpoint when you say do what you say you're going to do and being honest with everybody, even during the bad stuff, don't sugarcoat it, tell him what's going to happen. We have all hands on deck, and we create a safe environment for people to know and own it, and that you lead with I owned a mistake I've made. Owning up to mistakes and making it work exhibiting some type of empathy and forgiveness. Sincerity is being upfront, developing a sense of intimacy, and creating a psychologically safe work

	environment. Maxwell said leadership is about becoming your authentic self and being safe in a public place.
C4	Important to work and conduct business with integrity and follow the code of conduct.
C8	It goes back to that integrity part actually, if you do that, you truly gain people's trust.
D1	Lead by example; don't just say but actually do. Focus on recognizing employees and serving them. Recognize that people are the company's culture. We are very fair and transparent, and we expect our partners and our employees to be as well, so should high expectations for integrity.
D3	Lead by example and then that filters down, layer by layer, into your organization. Important to create a psychologically safe work environment.
E1	The company believes pleasure in the job puts perfection in work, and the job as leaders is to create an environment where people can see a purpose for what they are doing. The company has a workplace where people go to work every day and make a contribution to something bigger than themselves. They learn something new there, they feel safe and are protected by a set of compelling values and go home happy that is part of the total equation.
E4	Psychological safety to continue to thrive and work together.
E5	Servant leadership mindset flows from top down. Integrity because as leader aware that putting everyone who you're coaching first. Important to recognize words really matter alongside behavior.

Fifth, it was the leaders' push toward innovation and quality management initiatives to stir employee creativity and engagement. They recognized the importance of innovation and the implementation of quality management programs because these can encourage the creativity and engagement of their workforce. The leaders from one company elaborated on how they had been on a Lean journey for the past 10-plus years and how Lean relates to servant leadership principles and practices. Another company has innovation as one of its three pillars, in addition to people and performance. They believe that once the people and performance are right, then innovation will follow.

Table 26

Interviewee comments related to innovation and quality management initiatives

Interviewee	Comments – Innovation and Quality Management Initiatives
A1	So, if there's a way that you can improve something that we're doing or improve something out of the world because we have value to offer, then innovation can help with the big leaps and technological advances but can also be just tiny tweaks that just improve over time, and a year later you look back and wow, look how far we've come. Certain kinds of innovation and, like I said earlier, everything's beta, so we're always open to that, and would you say that you are personally. As a leader of these leadership qualities and you will have probably liked some of these like that.

A2	The leadership team shows appreciation and having faith in employees and giving right to perform certain tasks. Creating culture from people, performance, and innovation, and we're not afraid to tackle any project, so there is this open line of communication from employees to the leadership team. Maintaining our culture around people performance and innovation is key; it is our lifeline.
A3	So, in our purpose statement, we put our values, trust, respect, accountability, and innovation, but trust and respect were just paramount for me to be in our purpose statement and our underlying value proposition.
B4	So, motivate and encourage innovation, make employees more engaged because I encourage you to listen to them, and when they have a good idea, you write, you try to. Obviously, we're all here for the same thing as the better this company in to try to, to turn to you know be as profitable as possible, and you just want to have a good idea you listen to it when it does bear fruit, you let folks know and let them take credit for that opportunity. So, really just communicating, that is, if they're not going to get rewarded for their hard work or their innovation.
C3	Employee creativity and innovation, as a company, we're pushing this vision quite heavily when we're looking at how we can use technology to reduce costs, how we can improve our closed process and financing, and we've got the dashboards by ourselves.
C6	Lean is more about a lot of the things that we're talking about here is just kind of a consistent methodology that we use to try and solve problems and then implementing those in a way that does it tie up a lot of resources and then it's very consistent, but at the same time, you want always to be reflective on it and see if there's ways that you can improve things.
C7	Lean and innovation, I think having a risk tolerance, whereby people can try things in a controlled space, and not be afraid of failure. We're the companies that get, set up to understand, look, there's a chance that this thing might not work, we're going to let person x try it, we're not going to hang out around our necks if it doesn't work, and we're going to celebrate, actually, not just the success, but the failure of it because even in failure, if you learn something and how do we take that info and then do the next thing and try and learn from that. Lean definitely plays a role. I think it's beyond that as well, allowing folks to explore.
C9	We have a number of Lean tools that we use in the planning process on breakthrough actions; we try and give direction to our employees and ultimately drive results, which at the end of the day hitting our bottom line and to be the best performer and the best-performing energy investment over a sustained period of time. Lean methodology to help them make improvements, but also within the company in terms of the competency of people, how do we develop our own talents, so how do we make sure you know you know we'd have a person's personal career goals. I think the company has tried to focus heavily on is innovation.
D2	Innovation is allowing is promoting creativity, facilitating the need to facilitate a creative environment; you need to facilitate that and don't shut down ideas even if you don't think it's a great idea. You have to facilitate an environment that facilitates creativity, and if you're shutting stuff down every time people bring it to you, they're not going to be, they're not going to innovate, or if you do what I'm really bad about and you just jump in and handle it for them.
D4	Innovation through education, real big into self-education. I read a lot of books. I listen to a lot of books. I spend a lot of time doing that, just trying to make myself better so that I can make my team better around me moving forward. I hire the person based on their skill, their cultural fit, and then I give them free rein just to do what they do best, and they're happy to show it to us their mindset free here, there's no change on it, then what you wanted to innovation.
E4	We have a black belt Six Sigma person on the quality team, and they actually helped us re-engineer our process to try to make it better than it is today on our innovation group because you specifically asked about innovation, we have a kind of a core team that includes a member of our quality group and so that from the very beginning of product development

we've got that eye on quality and what is needed in terms of, you know, delivering the product or certifying a new supplier or whatnot to help us in terms of the integrity of what we would be bringing to market. We have now a chief digital officer who's helping to connect those dots across the globe; we've got our supply chain team who is going through probably the biggest innovation process that they've had to tackle because of all of the different supply chain disruptions associated with COVID, which has really challenged us and them in particular, in partnership with other functions like our R&D group. Our quality group and our marketing group do things differently and do things better than we've been able to do in the past and so in a way like each department owns for their respective kind of subject matter expertise or area what innovation looks like in that context. Yes, it does because the attributes of servant leadership cultivate an environment that allows innovation to thrive. If you're not okay, if you're not acting in that way, you can very easily squash innovation without even knowing that it was a potential. You've got people who aren't comfortable enough in their environment to share a risk of having a new idea or putting together a test that might fail because they'd be worried about what that could look like for them or how that might be perceived. I think the best tool that the company has in our arsenal that stems from kind of our servant leadership approach is this idea of learning moments that we don't make mistakes; we have learning moments.

Sixth, it was the leaders' placement of importance on OCB. They discussed encouraging employees to help each other, as well as the workforce participating in community service opportunities outside of work, such as (a) providing COVID-19 relief efforts; (b) supporting the American Cancer Society; (c) participating in days of caring within their local communities; (d) maintaining an employee emergency fund; (e) allowing employees to donate vacation time to coworkers experiencing difficult family or other circumstances; (f) setting-up foundations and taking specific actions as a company to support organizations within their local communities; and (f) engaging in Junior Achievement. The survey data slightly supported the importance of OCB; the mean score regarding creating value for the community was 5.3 on a Likert seven-point scale.

Table 27

Interviewee comments related to organizational citizenship behavior

Interviewee	Comments – Organizational Citizenship Behavior
A1	It is important to us to engage in the community that we're in, and as a small business, there's only so much we can do, so the things that we're doing so far are maybe not as impactful as some people might think, but we are engaged with things that make sense for us from a, from a business perspective and from a personal perspective. We're committed to

	that, and that's a personal connection from corporate social responsibility, and if you connect that back to things like how we create our benefits program, we think we have a responsibility to our employees and people in the community, and we try to offer the very best programs we can for them, and we have kind of built a whole wellness program that's physical, financial, and mental wellness. So, education and financial health, finding physical health are kind of two ways that we try to take care of our own folks, as well as certainly get involved in the community.
A3	So, the community piece that's already in kind of embedded in what we do and trying to give back to the community through different organizations and participate in that.
B2	I definitely think that we should try to get back in the community. When you look at what we do in oil and gas, we should be giving it back in every which way we think of as a case about what we do to try to make operations greener, more environmentally friendly.
C2	Employees helping each other, I think that goes back to like the recognition, the kudos, the praise that you can send through teams in through workplace. We have excellence awards, which is like it's actually really fun. It's like a little Oscars-style awards ceremony every year where peers can nominate each other for the work that they've done, and a lot of that work could be voluntary. Honestly, like it doesn't have to necessarily be your primary job function to be nominated, so I think recognition is pretty big in the company, and besides that, I think it's very well recognized when you not just from a communication standpoint but from a talent management and a talent pipeline standpoint when you help others like, and you make it known to management that you're helping others. Acknowledge when you help others and try to get because if you're doing something voluntarily, that's where your passion is, there's no reason for you to do it, maybe it does not just help your colleagues, but it's also because it is something that you enjoy doing so you're willing to put in extra time for it and so they recognize when you do that and try to match your job to your interest because that's a way for them to be able to demonstrate their focus on your personal growth and development.
C9	If I look at the company values themselves, I think we kind of hold at the forefront, trying to be a good corporate citizen, but particularly as we work so deeply in the community and onshore, it's the landowners, mineral rights owners you've got to be accepted in the community and be a part of good, and I think something that the company does really well is actually focused quite broadly on corporate social responsibility.
D1	We have employee emergency fund. We encourage employees to like just voluntarily take actions that benefit other employees; I think to be able to volunteer and benefit others outside the company but just thinking about, just like going above and beyond kind of thing within the organization. We definitely encourage employees to take voluntary actions that help other employees.
E1	Well, of course, and then the society is our stakeholders. So, whether it be our philanthropic activities which we have a foundation that is led by a group of our tribe members, and we have our Helping Hands which is the way we help the community.

Researchers have acknowledged the need for more research regarding how servant leadership impacts organizational effectiveness and employee engagement, collaboration, and trust over an extended period (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019). One company interviewed discussed how they put in place measures to create a sense of community within their organization over 20 years ago. They noted significantly high employee satisfaction rates and improved financial performance. Another company interviewed pointed out how they were

revamping their employee surveys to understand better the steps needed to build employee engagement, commitment, and trust.

RQ4: How does servant leadership impact business strategy formulation and execution?

The leaders acknowledged that high-level corporate strategic decisions are made at the senior level, but their companies engaged employees at various levels in business strategy development and execution. The leaders mentioned how they focused on empowerment and collaboration and providing opportunities for their staff to participate in the decision-making process (Coetzer et al., 2017; Overbey & Gordon, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). The leaders also described how they consider the social dimension of business, including how they can add value to society as a whole through CSR and creating a positive organizational culture. Several points were evident through the discussions concerning how servant leadership affects business strategy development and implementation. The leaders mentioned their desire to be servant leaders as a driver for involving employees in decision-making, establishing a positive organizational culture, and incorporating CSR and sustainability initiatives as part of an overall strategy.

First, the leaders stressed the importance of sticking to their core values and only making strategic decisions that stay within the boundaries of these core values. Second, they highlighted the value of engaging employees at various levels and different capacities in decision-making and implementation and accomplishing these through empowerment and collaboration. The leaders mentioned how this engagement of personnel creates a sense of ownership and increases buy-in. Third, they emphasized the necessity of incorporating a social dimension of business in their strategic decisions to impact positively their organizational culture, as well as benefiting the

local communities in which they operate and society-at-large. The leaders elaborated extensively on CSR and ESG efforts. Fourth, the leaders mentioned the significance of quality management initiatives to support business strategy and decision-making, and that this is more effective when there is greater involvement of employees across the organization.

Table 28

Interviewee comments related to employee involvement in business strategy

Interviewee	Comments – Employee Involvement in Business Strategy
A1	<p>Annually, we go through a process where for probably a couple of months, we have weekly meetings with really all of our managers, and they end up getting put into different workgroups based on what their affinity or interest is, but they all have access to the conversation at the very least of like, okay, here are the things that we've done, here are the things that we've said we wanted to do, do, we still want to do that, where are places that we can grow from here, and it's a very iterative process, and then we assign a champion to each strategy, and anyone who's interested in a given strategy is welcome to join in on kind of the workgroup to develop that strategy, but there's always like one champion that kind of pulls it all together and like put together the white paper or whatever is warranted to either present the strategy as a proposal or to clarify the strategic plan. Once we've said, yes, we're going to do this now, how are we going to do it when we get into the tactics. So, each champion is responsible for taking that further into the organization, and so people contributed at various levels, but at the very least, managers and probably their kind of go-to people within their department, probably they're up and comers or high potentials, certainly get more access into that, and probably helps them to find like, who would be good to contribute to this, but the managers generally or the level that is targeted as kind of leading those strategies.</p>
A2	<p>So, as an engineering company, we are not afraid to tackle any project, and so there is this open line of communication from the employee to either myself, the CEO, the COO, and even to our BD guys; let's talk about our business to talk about how great. So, giving the responsibility and even saying hey, look, you are responsible for giving each employee that responsibility to bring it up and to openly talk about it is again like you said it makes this open environment very important in the growth of the company.</p>
A3	<p>It's interesting because we just did this in the fall; we started in the fall and finished the first of the year. So, what we did was we set a strategy task force together; we brought it as it was more of senior staff, but we brought it outside of our executive team there were or team people. So, about 10% of the company that we sat down, and we just brainstormed different ideas, and then we assigned leader for those strategic initiatives. They involve other people in the organization to come up with the game plan of how we would tackle this, what kind of resources do we need, how much onions are going to require. So, I'll tell, I would say about probably 30% of the company got actively involved in developing the strategy and the strategic plans and then what we did, once we got that done and we agreed funding is in these small group sessions, we walked everybody through, here's our strategy, here's what we know why we picked this way and how much we're going to invest in it, timeframe for implementation, etc. so we walked everybody through all that answered questions and then we have a regular update on that every other session we give an update on initiatives, and again, I want everybody thinking about, what I'm doing today, what, how can I take that modify it, or augment what we're where we're headed, because I think of a vision of where you're headed, it changes what you do today. I tell them all the time we are here to execute</p>

	<p>projects individual bodies of work, but the bigger thing we're here to do is to make a long-term sustainable company, and that takes every single person working together, so it is more than a job. I do want them to feel ownership because I do as well want them to feel ownership in this business in the direction of the business that how we execute our work, even, who works here, I want their opinions on staff as well. So, it is an ownership overall ownership of the bus. We truly was completely open-minded around where's the strategy where are we going to take the company, and I wanted, and we got our staff to come in and give us that input, we put a lot of different things on the board, and some of them proved out some of them, we went through the exercise and realized that wasn't a sound strategy, but they were inclusive in that and so that's where I feel like we've got the best strategy possible. If I did that with my executive team and me, I'm sure we would have a different answer; so, but I think this is a better answer, and I got the ownership now of the folks who brought those things to the table; they're owning, they're driving. Servant leadership absolutely made a better strategy, no doubt in my mind, and this is the thing it's why I left my previous company because of the culture. If you stay true to your purpose and approach it, servant leadership doesn't have a scale to it, but it has to come from the top. You have to believe it, and you have to you have to live it, not just say it and then when the and when you don't do that, it all breaks down it goes back to the traditional business models, but that that's the fallacy I think our business right now is they don't think it works at scale and, and I disagree with that. I absolutely believe that I have seen it demonstrated over and over; whatever the belief and approach from the top, it permeates all the way down. So, if you tried to use servant leadership from the middle, you'd have some success, but it won't permeate through the organization; it really has to come from top-down.</p>
B1	<p>People want to be heard; it's like that when I talk about the board; if you can't influence the decisions that are being made, they try to get them all involved in as much as I can so that they understand how the company operates. People that report to me I manage what they do, and the board manages their career; what good are you, so you should be trying to influence every decision as best you can for the betterment of the company. It's a case of I've managed what they do, and they manage their career.</p>
B2	<p>I really like to have my team involved, but I like to do it in a certain way to where we've had our I've had an aware we're I think we've like I said, is what I would have my team is like I have an idea, good idea of where we want to be ten years in some near term, we've got to do in the next 18 months, and what are some tactics, we've got to take in that process to show success in that driving in that goal, and kind of put a framework out there, so I have that in my mind, and then I like to set up kind of an open-ended discussion with my team for an hour, hour and a half and say, we got to think about this, how does it look to you. Let's shoot some holes in it, let's figure out what was this something you would do, or how does this work and, and then at the end of our challenge and say hey, you can do something different or in alignment with this or something.</p>
C6	<p>By asking their opinion, by when I can be transparent on why am I asking this question and what is, what do you think is the best, what do you think is the best course. I may not ultimately be able to choose that, but I would like to know your thoughts on the best way we can do this and by when I can be truthful about why I'm asking the question.</p>
C7	<p>Involvement of employees in strategy, such as drilling spacing units in North Dakota. Get to a good business decision and then be where the individuals are brought forward still feel like they owned what it was that was okay.</p>
C8	<p>Yes, on employee involvement in bus strategy, actually we borrowed quite a bit of from the actual Lean structure that we implemented, and we call it catch ball. So, what that means is that when you develop a strategic business plan, all of those plans, they come from the individual teams; if you will, they cascade. They really roll up to the total strategic business plans for the company, so it's a bottom-up and top-down approach, and catch balls is when you reconcile that with your team members when you build those strategical plans, so you engage the whole team you get together.</p>
C9	<p>I do feel the strategy is still set at the highest level. I think employees have more of a sort of seeing to shape, but I see the strategy being set by our operating committee and the board. I don't feel that they push that down too deep into the organization. I'll be honest with you,</p>

	<p>my opinion, no that's different to why so we're, but like you put there would be some strategy may be that at the high level the big corporate strategy but are their strategic decisions or implementation of a strategy that does get pushed down and involve employees at various levels. I think certainly each year we do a session called catch ball where you know you're taking the plan, you're taking that vision of what you're trying to achieve, and you're turning it into action through involving the whole entire the entire asset the entire leadership team of the asset and that goes very deep, I mean you're talking going down to anybody who's a supervisor and they're part of that catchable session, and we've got to share each other's plans and allow each other to challenge our thinking or help, problem solve or critique to improve the product, and to make sure it's more efficient, and as you probably know from a Lean perspective this whole thing about, you know don't ship junk. I think there's a lot of depth in how we put the strategy into action.</p>
D1	<p>Yes, facilitating the involvement of employees in making decisions. I think again that also contributes to that trust factor, the fact that leadership, do your thing and bring those ideas and then they're actually implementing ideas they're not just doing them just to hear him or just make people feel included, they really aren't including them in earning that trust because yes they're actually taking that builds that climate of trust, and psychologically safe work environment where people are afraid to express that.</p>
D2	<p>You have to involving people in decisions. It's important to inclusiveness.</p>
D3	<p>I think my personal mission is bigger than the company. If that's probably the only vision I've ever had in my life that just hasn't been very clear as to my purpose in life, but I do think that part of it, for me personally and I think other people is where we're put here to be as impactful as we can possibly be and leave the world a better place which is a cliché statement but if the reality of that is if you pass away tomorrow or I pass away tomorrow, there's a lot of people in the world, that probably won't have been impacted by your life or my life and so I think that while we're here, the connections we make it is our job to try to do it through servant leadership and build folks that are around us the right way and that way when we do when our time is done, our kids, our friends, whoever it is, you can impact them in a way that lives on for literally centuries and centuries and the best example I can give you this is my grandfather. So, my grandfather was the ultimate servant leader. I think that our job to society is to be as impactful as we can be, so I guess that would be my goal is to try to develop our staff and our people, personally and professionally, where they make an impact and, thus, I've made an impact, and I've done my job.</p>
D4	<p>So, we have a meeting every Monday, it's a program that we've enrolled ourselves in because we want to have a more structured meeting it times us, but it gives everybody an opportunity. Different departments have meetings, and they have a spot that they can enter what we call issues, but they're brainstorming exercises basically what they are, and we're all able to sit there and speak and on things that a lot of folks, it's just not part of their department, it's not, it's not in their department, and we want to hear what they have to say about it. You take ideas from somebody that might not even be in that department, but they just stroke them to something that the, you know, change the whole aspect of what we're looking at or what we're trying to get accomplished, and I think that's what gives us the competitive edge. We have all these different folks, all these different ideas floating around everybody's talking everybody's throwing something out there and it just, it creates a conversation, collaboration, and then leads to our final outcome.</p>
E1	<p>We believe culture in an organization is a competitive advantage, and here's why. Just recently, the latest research that was done by the ADP Research Institute, over 1,900 companies around the world, 84% of people who are going to work at the moment are disengaged, and COVID certainly hasn't helped that, so, only 16% of people who go to work every day are actually engaged in, in doing meaningful work. This company we have a 93% engagement level we've been measuring it for many years, and why that's important, you can have the best strategy in the world, but if you don't have a high engagement level, we'll have the people to actually work towards achieving the purpose of the organization, then, the strategy will not be successful, and again, that's what we strive to do so, you know, our purpose. If you look at our why statement, our purpose, we, here's what it says, we exist to create positive lasting memories. I think that we don't have all the answers; the three most</p>

	<p>important words I ever learned were, I don't know. So, I think what we have to do as leaders if you think about servant leadership, the leader, the leadership part is yours, do you have a clearly defined strategy; do you have a business model that can be successful, and you've got to share those and the rationale around those with the tribe and when you've done that, as the lead is at that timer at the top of the pyramid. After you've done that, you turn it a bit upside down, and the leaders go to the bottom. They're there to cheer on those to help us get to their challenges, so I think, people, not everybody has the information or the knowledge to be able to contribute to the strategic development early openly and freely shared, so everybody knows where we're going.</p>
E2	<p>We refresh our strategy; our long-term strategy will pull together about 30 to 40 leaders across functions and so, again when you call a leader, a leader doesn't have to be just a VP or director; it just could be somebody within a function, who is an up and comer who knows strategy or has that ability to help and we put them together, we go, and we look at our trends our beliefs, our assumptions and know what's the current situation but doesn't matter, and all these folks, play a critical role in developing the information and also then talking through what the refresh of our strategy looks like and why. So, it's very collaborative; it's very inclusive. We'll bring in pockets of people at a time, and we build a strategy with the buy-in of that leadership group. Then that leadership group's job is to bring it to the next level of folks within the company, so we certainly bring folks into our conversations into our strategic planning into decision making; that way, we create what we call our must-win battle teams. So, when we land on our critical strategies and the critical areas of focus, we mobilize these, you know what we're playing our teams around the critical areas of our business. I think there is this idea of, of the coaching we do, and there's an idea, there is a mindset of empowering people to make decisions.</p>
E3	<p>First of all, one of our beliefs and our leadership practice is about, like I mentioned before, this deep, deep commitment to talent development, so, as the leader, adopting a Socratic methodology and how you develop folks it's about asking the difficult questions asking them for their insights, delegating decisions and not being seen as the book of answers, but being seen as a resource for others to grow their own perspectives. So, when we think about the opportunity for others to contribute in business decisions, we embrace something called a ride-along where we bring developing child members with us to a meeting into a conversation or leadership team brief in say, listen, I just had this complex employee relations challenge, let me confidentially let me share with you what the issues were, what the views were, what the options were, what the plan is going forward and what do you think about that, what do you think might be the message, what are we missing you know what the blind spots are and, and how do you think it may go from here and well I'll check in with you in three weeks and bring you along, so it's about giving them opportunities to be exposed to the business. They have a safe place to, I guess, to hypothesize or pontificate what might be going on, and it's a chance for them to grow their thinking, even though they may not have accountability for it. So, we're always looking for those opportunities to mentor to develop those micro-moments. It doesn't have to be a formal plan; it can just be a moment where I'm going to bring you in and help you grow and develop. So, as we bring employees more and more into the decision-making process for business outcomes are at stake. It won't be a brand-new experience for them, we're not going to make a decision, because now they've already been through coaching, they've been delegated to they've participated in discussions and meetings where they und how the decisions are made; we have decision-making methodologies in our organization, and as I mentioned to you our values are always at the center of those. It's about consulting my neighbor before I make a decision; who else should I talk to about this what perspectives, am I missing, who might be an advisor for me, and how much accountability, do I want you to know is this more than I'm ready for is this more than I feel comfortable taking on, and all of those types of discussions come out in the one on one performance dialogues that I mentioned to you those happen on an ongoing basis. So, tribe member development, bringing folks into decision making, we try to push decision making down to the lowest level in the organization if there's a decision I don't need to make. I owe it to them to give them that development because it's just going to reinforce what I already know when no one's getting the benefit of</p>

	that learning. Also, and we just can't tell you sometimes when I am feeling swamped, and that's the first thing I look at is, where am I hoarding the work, why am I not, where am I holding on to things because it's maybe something I prefer to do, or I think I can do it best, and I'm not giving somebody else an opportunity to learn and grow.
E4	I'm going to separate those two things, they think there's an element of decision making, that's also about empowerment, and then there's an element of like the strategy creation and involvement in that process, but our strategy development, at least in my experience for the Americas is extremely collaborative, and one of the reasons for that is because, bringing in the knowledge of what's happening on the front lines of our business, with our customers; effective strategic decision making and so we've definitely kind of brought that into a more formalized process that senior management has really led this over the last few years formalizing the way that we approach that, and the way that we track our trends who all has access to it and visibility to it and participates in it and then think decision making. There are diff levels of decision making, and there are some kinds of decisions like, are we going to change our strategic priority from x to y, which absolutely needs to happen at a senior leadership level, but then there are decisions like, hey, this thing isn't working, let's pivot to this and see if we can get better engagement, for example, and we try to take those levels of decisions that really kind of materially need to happen in real-time with the best information of the context of what's happening to the level that's executing against those decisions and I think that is part of what Foster's higher levels of engagement and it's something that I actively try to cultivate within my team, even when there's not explicit clarity like looking at something and saying could step on make this decision or could my direct report make this decision instead of kind of hoping to facilitate that and pave that path, also moving forward and so far it's been working really well.
E5	So, we have a season; I've set up strategy reset every year, and it starts in January and ends well culminates in the board directors report out in May, where you're just hearing is a lot of listening, there's a lot of structured listening I would call it the last structure listing to see what's working, what's not working, what do we need to do differently, what is the changing landscape, externally, where should we be putting more of our energy or placing our bets. Those conversations happen with multiple people multiple leaders who are also then responsible for being a representation for their areas of influence and impact. So, I would say that that's a really good example of a very highly collaborative strategic approach, which of course, at the end of the day, there are times when a decision does need to be made, and it has to come from the top, but I would say that doesn't happen very often because it's usually a collective und on why we want to do what we do. You are kind of always resetting and refinements. I think we've been building a message, though, of how to do that as more of a collective unit as opposed to a couple of key leaders making these calls, so that's also been of benefit to it. When you talk about that individual development as well as like we're all involved in the strategy from the building of it to the deployment of it, so that's another key benefit.

Table 29*Interviewee comments related to social dimension in business strategy*

Interviewee	Comments – Social Dimension in Business Strategy
A1	It's probably largely geared towards the sustaining competitive advantage and really focused on that kind of the hard nuts and bolts of the business, but we do look at the broader landscape of what's going on socioeconomically or socio-politically and say, where is our industry or the industries we are adjacent to and where are they headed and what are the places that we could play. So, knowing that hydrocarbons are probably going to play a significant part of the mix for some period of time, but there is there's a lot more in energy that is cleaner, and various opportunities are out there that we're not that we're not in that yet

	<p>and so that's actually some of our stories for this year is looking at renewables and other things, but that still falls squarely in the business. It's largely focused on current business and like the socio-political environment like where's that headed and is there opportunity for us to engage with it. One of the things we talk about often is that we are here to deliver completed projects for clients and create value for them, so we're not a man hours received just because they gave us a budget of 1,000 man hours doesn't mean you have to spend all 1,000 man hours if we can do it cheaper for them or, fewer man hours and deliver the finished product, that's what we want to do, because we're all about creating value for them or solving their problems, and so from a servant leadership standpoint, we don't want to be a company that just milks people for man-hours because we can win and we can just pacify them. We can make a case for them we can just build until the cows come home, but we want to add value to our client's business and be seen as a trusted partner, not as a vendor.</p>
A2	<p>We place emphasis on service mindset to community and moving in the direction of greener.</p>
A3	<p>When we looked at strategy, we did talk about energy transition quite a bit, as we touched on earlier, and so one of our initiatives is around green energy and how do we become a more active player in clean energy, whether that's in solar or nuclear or hydrogen or all the different permutations that are out there right now, so, we are looking into that. We actually taken a stance of getting involved in that, so that we don't just stick with our traditional market so, so people brought that to the brainstorming session, and there was interest, and we felt like it would help our business, and by diversifying and getting involved in that. People bring it with them when we brainstorm. I didn't care what they put on the board; quite honestly, I was really intrigued to see what directions people thought we ought to take, and this came up, and it's certainly driven by what's out there in the media and the social culture right now. I think that the angle on that is business strategy is about growing and diversifying our business, de-risking it. So, when we're asking people to own this business when we're looking at strategy, it is about how do we make sure we're the strongest business possible which then gives them job security, gives them advancement opportunities, and more leadership opportunities. So, those stronger and bigger are businesses, the better it is for them, and others that we bring to them, so that's the connection point I think between the employees and their connection in this strategy is that that's what I want them to see is this is going to make us a better business, a better business is better for you in all of these ways, whether it's job security, leadership, or you know just all those opportunities that come with being a bigger stronger business.</p>
B2	<p>Our integrated description of servant leadership, but you're serving, like as a kind of a triangulated calls right there's a shareholder aspect, there's your team's aspect, there are the overall goals of strategy organizations that the shareholders are wanting to see, and you have to kind of balance that in the middle and do it that way. Absolutely on positive organizational culture as one thing I put for CEO was a complete revamping of our mission and vision statements. We've just kind of completed that we're rolling out those are there on our current investor base and because that's oh man I said, as an organization, we're foundationally around intelligence cutting it you know technology, chemistry, and things of that nature. I said we need to look at open up the broad aspects of the strategy; we don't need to just talk about oil and gas, it's because if things play across a broad spectrum industries professional chemistries, data analytics, and stuff and let's look at it that way, so for us it's that impact to the world around sustainability and making things better for cleaner air, water, and energy and because we need those things right, the growth, whether it's going to be solar, whether it's going to be when fuel sale chemistry plays a role in all that whether it's semiconductors and whatever and for us to look at it that way the impact we can have on the world for my kids, their kids and their kids after that and to me, that's an aspirational vision to do that and make use of the talent to do those types of things.</p>
B4	<p>I would say they contribute to pretty much every aspect of our business. We've got to get the team here, but if we don't work together don't have good leadership, you're not going to be able to execute strategy, and you're not going to be able to function and perform at a high level and he aspects, our business okay. The company was green before green was cool,</p>

	we've been green for a long time, and then it completely went away, and now the ESG deal is bringing it to the forefront, so we're glad to see it because it fits who we are.
C1	There is consideration for giving back to the community. The company is seriously involved in social projects in North Dakota and Houston.
C8	It's the stakes of a game and then a positive environment. We call it leaving a positive impact in the communities we do the business; that's how company phrases that one, best partner best choice based on operator of choice. If I'm not going to be that there are those entities not going to do business with me. If I don't do this way, then nobody's going to do the business with me, so in other words, it's, it becomes like a business decision not that good to have it's like a must have. It's one thing to come up with a strategy where I'm going to add value to the shareholders, and because really at the end of the day, the company is like most companies in the sense they want to add value to shareholders right, drive up that stock price and do all that kind of stuff and generate cash flow and all that's all honest and aboveboard and all that but the point about being the operator of choice, the stake in the game. Create a positive impact on them in the community. What I do, the business community won't like to have me anymore in the future, and that's just not prudent. So, it's tied to the business, so it's not; it's like you can't become isolated anymore. If we don't create the good footprints when we did the business, we may not do business again; so, it becomes one of the same, it's, that's how you run the business, you create the positive impact in those environments, you create a lot of local content involve the local labor but back to the core principles you operate based on your core principle where you came from. If you adopt those principles right, a servant leader, I call it a coaching mindset; if you truly become as a coach, you know you start behaving really the same way new way of life, and I have seen a lot of positive things out.
C9	I see things like the investment we make. CEO, I think is a big believer and we need to do our bit for as an oil and gas company who still create lots of emissions, and we're monitoring we're doing our ESG responsibility, but we're also investing in companies that you know maybe can come up with a more creative way of capturing carbon, it's kind of a more kind of biotech type company. So, I see us doing things that are not just detailed to our own industry. I see a sponsor and things for more than the common good of the planet, but also, I think locally. We do a lot, I think, for society in education. I think education is something that CEO has a strong belief in, and I think we're trying to do a lot of scholarships, and we're doing a lot of investment into some of them, let's call them the worst-performing schools that are in the Houston area, where can we help. Servant leadership definitely does from the minute you join has to mark sort of his values, and, and to our his way of working, and the sort of Lean culture, this, the whole servant leadership model is, is absolutely ingrained in all of, all we do and, and I think our requirements of any of our leaders they view themselves as servant first is kind of our way of thinking so know that whole model, and, and also as a leader, you are there to help your team discovered answers for themselves.
C10	I feel like we're in our infancy of how do you balance that business performance strategy with that ESG strategy. As I talked about spending 15-20% of my time on ESG related items, so that just shows you the shift that we're going through as a company and as an industry of focusing on ESG and asking that exact question in the boardroom, obviously, but even at the functional at the operational level is, how is what we're doing, affecting these things and I mean the real obvious ones to look at are flaring and VOCs and what not because North Dakota for instance, we've got specific limitations that we can't go beyond, we've got regulations, you've got, and wherever you operate it depends. We're in Guyana, and there are flaring restrictions there, so that forces us to ask those questions, but then there are the softer aspects of it too, the D&I aspects how's our strategy working there, and that's a harder one to deal with, but I guess where I'm going with this is I am seeing a big shift over the past two to three years and more of an ESG focus but ESG influence and strategy discussions. And with that softer stuff that's always trying to make sure that you have a positive organizational culture where employees feel empowered, where employees feel engaged, they have a higher level of commitment and trust and all that, that all that stuff that

	you want to have that right organizational culture, maintain your values, maintain your core values.
D1	CEO mentioned that as well in terms of when especially when it comes to dealing with employees and younger employees and how we want to be a great first employer we want to make them a better person that goes out into society and then works at other companies. We want to impact society, and we can do that through how we work with people and by doing so that it creates value to society because they go out into society into other roles and into communities, and it's in reality that's all part of that positive organizational culture that would affect business strategy. We can't have those things without that because you recognize that really human, that the workforce is really the company's greatest asset, because you can't make any money without those people actually doing the right thing, and the trick is to teach people how to change the world. The ability to get emotional intelligence is definitely important to us and to what we are to hire and to grow within the company.
D2	It is absolutely part of the execution whenever we do things. It is what drives CEO is promoting providing opportunities for people, and so we have a crazy growth plan, and we do have high expectations, and we ask a lot of our employees, but we also let them know like hey this is, if you want growth, we have opportunities for anybody that are willing to that want and are willing to work for growth; we want hardworking people that mesh well with our culture, and there's going to be plenty of opportunities for that, but you're going to work hard for it I did, and I don't have a problem with that, I enjoy it, and that's what makes it easier so business decisions. It's part of our expectations that they maintain a positive culture. Servant leadership is part of the business model; it's one of our four core values.
D4	We want to give back to the communities in which we operate in and even outside those communities as well when we talked about developing and empowering employees and employing creativity and innovative capacity; we talked about all of those kinds of things. Servant leadership around culture, treating people like I want to be treated, allowing them to have free range to be them and change things the way they want to.
E3	Yes, organizational culture, not only that, but who wants to show up to a place every day where it's miserable, it's competitive, it's confusing, where they're always hiding the ball and never know what's expected of me. We try to be the opposite of that, role clarity is huge, and if I feel like I'm at least clear on what's expected of me, then I can settle into this place of comfort, and a lot of satisfaction comes from that, but positive regard is really huge, we like to regard one another with positive interactions. Using our values is one part of strategy because it's part of who we are, and it's how we get our business done. We operate within the context of our demonstrated values and the behaviors that go along with it, and servant leadership is sort of the foundation of the house, you've got to frame it up, and you put the roof on, and you put the walls, everything comes in around that servant lead mindset and interwoven with our values, we sometimes need to pivot away from getting to our values where we're coming. We're coming into conflict with any of our values, for it's not aligned with who we are. We make our decisions on who we partner with in business vendors that we select, business relationships that we get into we evaluate them against our own values, we want to align ourselves with people who naturally embrace the beliefs that we have because it's going to be easier to get along with them, they're going to know where we're coming from, they're going to und how we prioritize, and on occasion, there is a difficult moment where we have to walk away from an opportunity from a sale, from a relationship. It was something that would have maybe served us financially, but it would have been a withdrawal from our values bank account, and that's where you determine what's really important to you. Are you willing to make those hard tradeoffs because if you're willing to sacrifice your values for profits, well they're not, it's not a value, it's just a matter of convenience for you, but when you're willing to give up something in order to maintain it, well, that's the definition of value it has so much value to me that I'm willing to give up something in order to maintain it? If their mindset is antithetical to that of a servant leader, then over time, they will just prove why they can't remain in the organization; it's just too great of a conflict. Value is really just a matter of convenience, but a value something that you're going to stick to and hold to regardless of the opportunity or the threat. It costs you

	<p>something by value something I already know; I'm going to have to walk away from some things because I'm going to hold on to this. It has to cost you something here and there in order to maintain it otherwise, if you can put the value down and pick up something else, well, you've just confirmed that the value is very low. It's a high premium we place on this thing, and we're not going to trade it out for something that's going to give us a short term win, and it's going to cost us a long term commitment to something we've said we're going to pour ourselves into because it's valuable to us. The practice of leadership is so difficult, there's the philosophical understanding of it, and then there's showing up every day and doing it on the job, and to be a really good leader is not easy. You've got to set yourself aside; you've got to be willing, you got to be willing to fall and to be hurt in order for others to recognize where their limits of their performance are in order for them to grow; it's very difficult but so worthwhile because the positive impact that you can have on another person, you can positively impact other people's lives in a way that you wouldn't expect to do when you show up to your job.</p>
E4	<p>We have something called boundary defenders, who we have folks who are in charge of kind of keeping their eye on how that boundary is tracking as well; that's one of them we don't have. We have more than one as kind of, the buck stops here on raising the red flag if we think something is, you know, at risk, I think it's wonderful that we've set it to the boundary and it's on the piece of paper that is our strategy.</p>
E5	<p>There's a lot of effort that goes into maintaining our boundaries, but we're saying do this first, make sure this is always a strong foundation on which we stand. Then the other side is our must-win battles which are more about where are we going to get the biggest level of impact and growth to reach some of our goals, but we can't do those breaking our boundaries. Boundaries come first because that's not the norm across the corporate culture is to stay within those boundaries that the boundaries end up being like a moving target, and the argument is that it's because times change, you've got, you've got all these external these macro factors that macroenvironmental factors that fit into whether it's political, social, whatever it is, so the boundaries always moving. I believe that that is one of those guiding lights to the insurance of the boundary to not keep us as a shifting thing but say we're legacy when building the team but just really ingraining that something did get us here and that is trust, and that's something that we're not going to sacrifice people more people are going to trust that consistency because if the thing moves with the wind then well, that we don't know if that's good if they're going to still have that mindset, but if they know that, that, that they're going to stay within these boundaries all the time, they're going to be more trustworthy. Yes, on values and that everything's going to stay stick to, so it's going to stick to those values. Yes, if values are really not held, regardless of what it is, are they really values.</p>

Table 30

Interviewee comments related to quality management initiatives in business strategy

Interviewee	Comments – Quality Management Initiatives in Business Strategy
A1	<p>It's part of like just the D&I across the board but strategy certainly the innovation and empowering others. So, if there's a way that you can improve something that we're doing or improve something out of the world because we have value to offer, then innovation can help with the big leaps and technological advances but can also be just tiny tweaks that just improve over time, and a year later you look back and wow, look how far we've come. Certain kinds of innovation and, like I said earlier, everything's beta, so we're always open to that, and would you say that personally; as a leader of this leadership qualities and you will have probably liked some of these like that; developing empower employees.</p>
A3	<p>I am certainly studying both of those (Lean/Six Sigma). We are not implementing those wholesale is those things, but we call it our initiative or innovation, so that's our third pillar</p>

	<p>of our business is innovation, and so the ask that we have of every employee is that they look at how they do their work, and how can they do that better every single day. And we have an innovation group, so I have two developers and two engineers, and their sole focus is to take ideas that come in from the rest of the business and figure out how do we implement, and they get prioritized, and sometimes that's writing new code to automate some of the things that our engineers do manually so that we let the computer do the thinking. It is about using new tools, so we're trying to go to a completely data-centric execution, which means you put all the data that needs to do the work into a repository, and that becomes the central repository that everybody utilizes, so it's much easier to control quality that way because it gets changed one place, and then all the things that are impacted automatically get driven from that. So, we've got a lot of work going on in that space of how do we do what we do better, and how do we add more value to our customers and it all lives in that innovation pillar; it takes all the principles of Six Sigma and Lean, and it just is our own interpretation of that appeal well, and then that would be about value to the customer that will, in essence, allow us to be able to gain a competitive advantage. One of those initiatives that was organically developed we invested in it we did the work to do it, and now we have an improved product to sell to all of our customers that solve problems on their side, got to kind of de-risk.</p>
B4	<p>Well, we're ISO certified company with the Quality Management System. This way, all day, every day, we work within the scope of an ISO QMS; it is corrective action. We have a continuous improvement form when somebody makes a mistake that's documented on what is what I call a CRP or continuous improvement form that's part of our quality management program. Talking about that, we live and breathe out every day, quality management, and we've been doing that for 15 years. Our ISO quality management system that gives us a framework on how to how to approach pretty much every part of our bus; we don't work together, don't have good leadership, you're not going to be able to execute strategy, and you're not going to be able to function and perform at a high level. The company was green before, green was cool, we've been green for a long time, and now ESG is on the forefront, so we're glad to see it because it fits.</p>
C9	<p>I think leading innovation leads to breakthroughs that challenge your current way of thinking, but it also is like, links to continuous improvement and Lean of doing things in a better way and I think more so now without industry you know we're all trying to do things in a better way, whether that's to reduce emissions, whether it's reducing harm to people as utilizing technology. The company is heavily focused on having groups of people who are just dedicated to innovation and technology, and I think it just links back to continuous improvement.</p>
C10	<p>Lean allows you to have some type of, like, have some structure with and with the intent of, of being able to understand what the positive results of that behavior is with absolutely positive results where can you improve. There were a lot of discussions early on with this Lean of either get on the bus, find your seat on the bus, or get off the bus. This is the kind of company we're going to have, we're either going to succeed, or we're going to fail. By doing this, you are welcome to come with us, we want you to be with us, but if you're not willing to work like this to live like this to operate like this, then it's probably best for you to find, to go somewhere else, and that was painful. Lean helps with some of that, and so it's just because at the end of the day, you're not going to be able to satisfy everybody, but you've got to be. You've got to set the values for the company and have that right culture, whatever culture you want to have, and that's management's prerogative to set that culture how they choose.</p>
E4	<p>We use a methodology called Lean innovation, and increasingly to help us to prototype and pilot, different forms of value creation in the marketplace or innovation team at least the one that I oversee is really primarily responsible for discovering and developing new value that we can create for end users specifically with a goal of, kind of monetizing that value, typically, at least so far it's been in the form of new product development in creation.</p>
E5	<p>So, quality management is actually in our boundaries is what we call it, so we have a couple of core areas of our strategy; it is our main intent. So, that's that bigger vision of what, what</p>

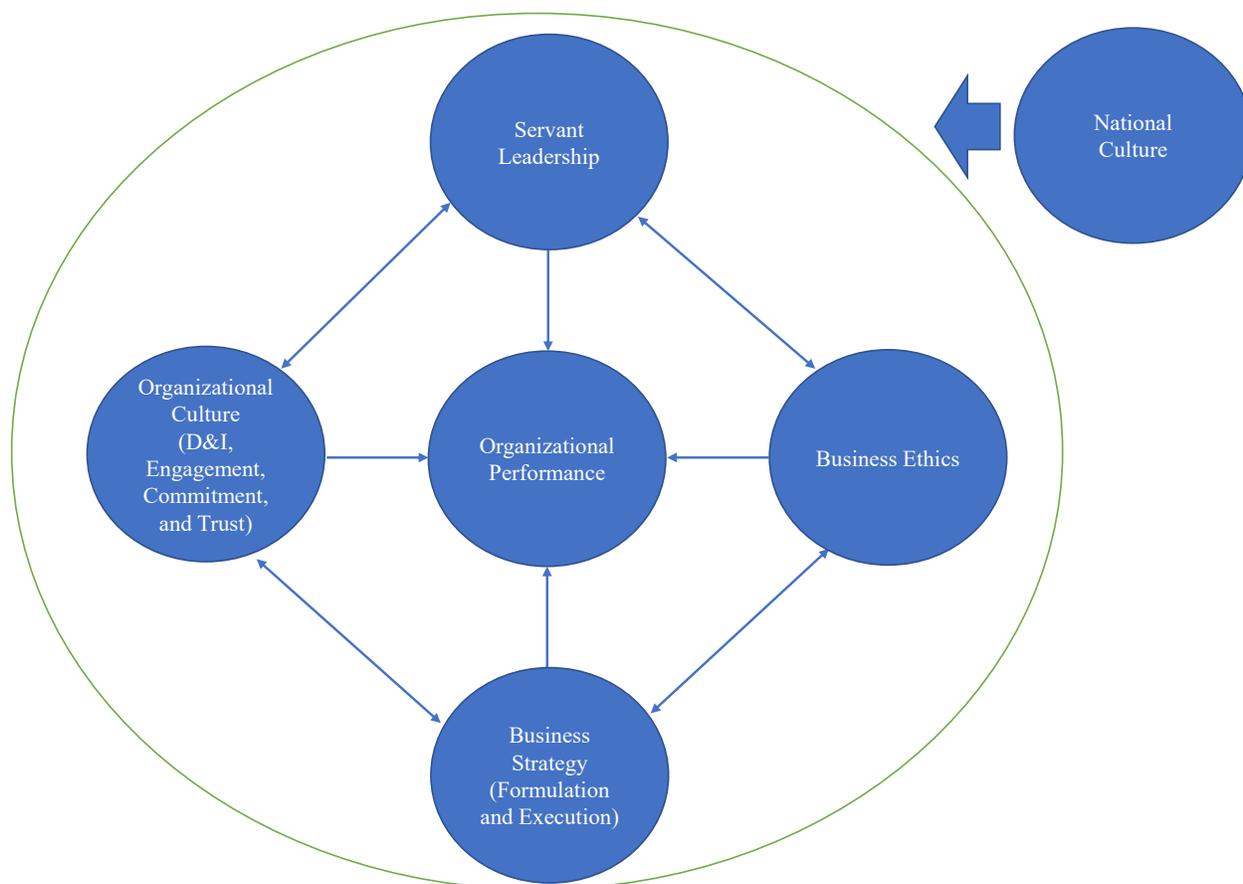
is it we always do it in three years, because we feel like five years just feels a little bit, making an impact in different end-user communities. So, that's the main intent, and then it has boundaries, and the boundaries are, we will look to succeed, but not outside of these of this fence, this electric fence, and within that electric fence is our quality and our R&D mandatories. Focus on continuous improvement.

Conceptual Framework

The elements of the conceptual framework and their interrelationships post-fieldwork remained the same as postulated pre-fieldwork. The following is the conceptual framework:

Figure 3

Qualitative Case Study Conceptual Framework



Research Concept 1 – National Culture. An interdependent relationship exists between national culture and leadership, and leadership behaviors vary across diverse cultures (Hofstede, 2001). The leaders concurred that this interdependent relationship exists between national culture and leadership. They emphasized the value of appreciating different national cultural conditions and being sensitive to the different social norms and customs across the various culture clusters. The leaders also acknowledged that national culture affects their leadership approaches, including how they exhibit servant leadership attributes toward influencing organizational performance.

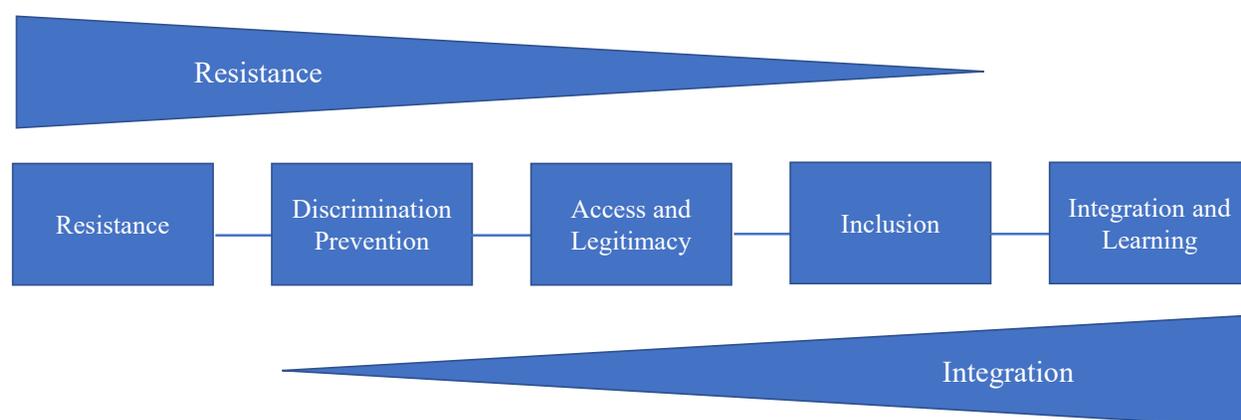
Research Concept 2 – Organizational Culture. Senior leaders exhibit values and actions that define organizational culture, which influences employee behaviors, work practices, and operating styles to achieve strategic initiatives (Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019; Snyder et al., 2018; Spector, 2013). The leaders agreed that executives define organizational culture through the values and actions they demonstrate. Several leaders emphasized the importance of having a corporate culture that maintains core values, respects workers, and allows employees to grow and succeed and have a sense of community. Participant E1 mentioned the value of leaders establishing an organizational culture in which the company creates a positive lasting memory, and that employees enjoy coming to work and how that can lead them to (a) excel in their work; (b) see a purpose for what they are doing; (c) contribute to something bigger than themselves; (d) learn and engage in new opportunities; (e) sense being part of a family that comes together; (f) feel respected, safe, and protected by a set of compelling values; and (g) go home happy.

Research Concept 3 – Diversity and Inclusion. Senior management can use diversity and inclusion initiatives to help make employees feel safe and connected (Mello, 2019). As mentioned, the literature is quiet regarding the leadership styles best suited to embrace diversity

and inclusion (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; C. Hughes, 2016; Sims, 2018). Diversity and inclusion programs can be an effective way for leaders to demonstrate investment in their employees (Gamble et al., 2019). The leaders had plenty to say regarding diversity and inclusion, and there were many viewpoints across the spectrum. However, there was consensus regarding the need for strategic human resources through (a) viewing all employees as human assets with value and worth; (b) creating a learning and inclusive environment; (c) hiring and developing the right people; (d) continuing to revisit diversity and inclusion initiatives within their companies; and (e) ensuring a psychologically safe environment in which all employees feel valued and respected, regardless of race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. The leaders all seemed to be on the integration side of the resistance–integration continuum as they emphasized inclusion and integration and learning, and none regarded diversity from the viewpoint of resistance and discrimination prevention.

Figure 4

Resistance–Integration Continuum (Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018)



Research Concept 4 – Employee Engagement, Commitment, and Trust. Senior leaders can try to engage employees and build commitment and trust, which improve task performance, job satisfaction, and office behavior, and foster collaboration (Kouzes & Posner,

2017; Y. Lee et al., 2017; Mello, 2019). The leaders believed in the value of engaging workers at all levels of the organization and raising the degrees of commitment and trust. The leaders had much to say regarding employee engagement, loyalty, and trust, and they generally believed the exhibition of servant leadership characteristics is paramount for increasing employee engagement and raising the levels of employee commitment and trust. The leaders mentioned the attributes of (a) empowering workers; (b) holding themselves and their subordinates accountable; (c) building a sense of community within their teams; (d) taking steps toward helping followers grow and succeed both personally and professionally; (e) listening; (f) demonstrating humility; (g) sharing their vision; and (h) exhibiting empathy and forgiveness. The leaders also referenced other actions that demonstrate a more caring type of leadership approach, such as (a) being approachable; (b) taking time to connect with their subordinates and make them feel appreciated and part of the team; (c) leading by example; (d) motivating and encouraging innovation; (e) communicating with openness and transparency; (f) recognizing workers in a public forum; (g) setting-up team-building events, including fun activities and volunteer opportunities outside of work; (h) creating a psychologically safe work environment; (i) implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives; (j) striving for open relationships between leaders and followers, in which followers sense leaders support them; (k) exhibiting a coaching mindset; (l) seeking feedback from employee surveys and taking appropriate actions depending upon results of these surveys; and (m) revamping their company's method regarding performance reviews.

Research Concept 5 – Business Strategy Formulation and Execution. Business strategy formulation entails selecting a strategic approach and establishing a competitive scope of operations (Gamble et al., 2019). Business strategy execution entails incorporating specific techniques, actions, and behaviors customized to the chosen strategic alternative and competitive

scope criteria that executives believe will give their company a competitive advantage and allow them to provide superior value to their customers (Gamble et al., 2019). The leaders discussed business strategy and decision-making at great lengths, as well as the steps they take to involve employees at various levels and degrees in the business strategy formulation and execution process. Several leaders mentioned how their desire to be servant leaders plays a role in engaging employees in decision-making, creating a positive organizational culture, and integrating CSR and sustainability initiatives as part of an overall strategy. They acknowledged that high-level corporate strategy was decided at the senior level but mentioned various approaches they take to involve employees in strategic decision-making and implementation.

One company discussed creating different workgroups and assigning champions to specific strategies that involve employees at various organization levels. This company also mentioned setting-up a strategic taskforce to brainstorm ideas. This taskforce included about 10% of the workforce, and then another 20% for working-related action items. They also addressed how they ensure communicating strategy to the entire organization and then involving them in executing the strategic decisions. Another company mentioned their Lean journey and how Lean plays a role in involving more employees in strategy development and implementation as part of continuous improvement and ensuring consideration of CSR and ESG. Another company described how they pull together 30 to 40 leaders from various functions to be involved in their long-term strategy, and that some of these leaders can include newer employees familiar with strategy and who are regarded as having the capability to help with strategy. This company emphasized that they seek strategy development and execution as a collaborative effort. They also mentioned engaging in structured listening by visiting various offices and meeting with employees to seek input about what is working and what is not.

Research Theory 1 – Servant Leadership. Servant leadership creates an environment of trustworthiness; respect for others; responsibility through accountability and excellence; fairness; transparency; open communication; and citizenship in complying with laws and regulations that can lead to greater job satisfaction; employee commitment and trust; and involvement in business strategy formulation and execution (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Y. Lee et al., 2017; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Snyder et al., 2018). Several of the leaders described themselves as servant leaders and believed servant leadership influences organizational performance through (a) positively impacting diversity and inclusion; (b) increasing employee engagement; (c) building employee commitment and trust; and (d) affecting business strategy formulation and execution. They mentioned how they try to (a) empower employees; (b) hold themselves and their workforce accountable; (c) take time to listen to their workers; (d) create a sense of community within their organization and refer to their teams as “family” or “tribe”; (f) share vision openly and transparently; (g) demonstrate humility; and (h) be good stewards of what and who they have been entrusted to lead.

Research Theory 2 – Importance of National Culture on Servant Leadership.

National culture can provide a deeper understanding of servant leadership and its connection to business ethics through how leaders (a) exhibit servant leadership characteristics, such as humility, service, and vision; (b) empower followers; (c) help employees grow and succeed; and (d) demonstrate ethical behavior and treat employees fairly (Bedi et al., 2016; Hale & Fields, 2007; Zhang et al., 2021). The leaders recognized the importance of national culture and the way it impacts how they demonstrate servant leadership attributes and how senior leaders run their companies, including some of the leaders interviewed. The leaders acknowledged that national culture affects servant leadership and its connection to business ethics. They mentioned the

importance of national culture on servant leadership; however, this impact is only slight because they emphasized (a) valuing and respecting all individuals on their teams; (b) creating a sense of community that spans the globe; and (c) maintaining the highest of integrity regardless of culture and where they conduct business.

Research Theory 3 – Servant Leadership Link to Organizational Culture. Servant leaders can make servant leadership criteria part of their company's values, norms, and beliefs. Servant leaders can demonstrate servant leadership criteria through establishing an organizational culture that supports diversity, inclusion, and employee engagement, and that creates an environment for increased employee commitment and trust, which can lead to improved organizational performance and competitive strategy (Eva et al., 2018). The leaders (a) acknowledged the need to make diversity and inclusion a more significant priority; (b) spent considerable time discussing servant leadership attributes and how they apply these characteristics to promote diversity and inclusion, enhance employee engagement, and build worker commitment and trust; and (c) mentioned specific servant leadership attributes. The leaders also discussed how they capture servant leadership-related terminology within their mission and vision statements and as part of their core values. For example, (a) one company selected has servant leadership as one of its four cornerstone principles; (b) all of them referred to the significant importance of their workforce, with an emphasis on strong relationships; (c) one company communicates a vision that centers on building a sense of community and creating a learning environment that leads to an engaged and committed workforce; and (d) some linked servant leadership attributes and organizational culture by discussing people's development, empowerment, accountability, and stewardship, in addition to diversity and inclusion, business ethics, CSR, and ESG.

Research Theory 4 – Servant Leadership Connection with Business Strategy.

Servant leadership mediates the hierarchical relationship between strategic initiatives and employee creativity, leading to effective business strategy execution. Servant leadership provides a link between strategy and creativity through guidance, sacrifice, and ethical values that lead to respect, loyalty, and commitment to execute strategic initiatives and goals (Do et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019). The leaders acknowledged the value of utilizing their employees at various levels and degrees in business strategy formulation, implementation, and decision-making. The leaders spent considerable time discussing how they apply a servant leadership mindset in the overall business strategy that considers creating a positive organizational culture and integrating CSR and sustainability initiatives.

Anticipated Themes

The researcher anticipated a few themes based on academia's view of servant leadership, national cultural importance to servant leadership, and servant leadership's link to organizational culture and business strategy, such as those outlined in the section on the four research theories in the conceptual framework. The anticipated themes were as follows:

- The leadership styles of the leaders within these companies align with servant leadership characteristics.
- Servant leaders help followers grow and succeed.
- There is a strong link between servant leadership and business ethics and CSR.
- National culture plays a role in how leaders lead their organizations, including servant leaders.

- Servant leadership can positively impact organizational culture as it pertains to diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, and employee commitment and trust.
- Servant leadership affects business strategy formulation and implementation from the perspective of greater employee involvement and social dimension of business consideration.

The Leadership Styles of the Leaders Within these Companies Align with Servant Leadership Characteristics. The primary reason for anticipating this first theme was that the companies selected were companies recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The interview data supported this anticipated theme, as several leaders mentioned the importance of leaders being servants. Some leaders even referred to themselves as servant leaders and referenced different servant leadership characteristics when describing their leadership style. These leaders talked extensively about the various servant leadership attributes and how they strive to exhibit them within their teams. The survey data supported the leaders demonstrating servant leadership characteristics as the mean score on the overall SLQ was 6.1 on a Likert seven-point scale. Furthermore, the publicly available information, such as that on the companies' websites, also supported the interview data.

Servant Leaders Help Followers Grow and Succeed. The second anticipated theme centered on how servant leaders emphasize helping followers grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, and “flipping the pyramid,” meaning leaders serve followers instead of the other way around. The primary reason for anticipating this second theme was because when the researcher first heard the term “servant leadership,” it was in the context of leaders being servants by (a) putting others first, (b) focusing on helping followers grow and succeed, and (c)

being humble and reasonable stewards. Another primary reason for anticipating this theme was because, according to Blanchard et al. (2016), Jesus demonstrated authentic servant leadership in the way He led His disciples, taught that service is a mandate for leadership, and lived a life of service (Blanchard et al., 2016).

All the leaders mentioned that helping subordinates grow and succeed was a significant priority, and they believed this was critical for improving individual and team performance. The leaders mentioned the efforts they make to (a) invest in employees by spending time with them and focusing on their goals and career aspirations; (b) coach subordinates; (c) create a learning environment; (d) empower employees and then hold them accountable; and (e) integrate quality management initiatives, such as Lean. The researcher anticipated the leaders would apply various servant leadership attributes to serve their subordinates, such as empowerment, humility, stewardship, accountability, and building a sense of community.

The leaders discussed employing these servant leadership characteristics, as expected. However, a few things stood out. First, they said leaders could not empower workers without at the same time holding them and themselves accountable. The leaders recognized the value of empowering subordinates to provide them with a sense of ownership and responsibility, but the leaders need to keep both leader and employee responsible, and there needs to be a clear set of expectations. The leaders acknowledged that empowerment hand-in-hand with accountability can be effective if leaders ensure employees can sense they are working in an encouraging and learning environment. The researcher was not aware of the connection between empowerment and accountability.

Second, several leaders highly stressed building a sense of community. Some of these leaders used terms such as “family” and “tribe” to describe their teams and emphasized the

importance of (a) spending quality time with their subordinates, including team-building activities; (b) making themselves available for their teams; (c) publicly recognizing staff for their accomplishments; and (d) encouraging employee participation in community service opportunities outside of work. These leaders believed building a sense of community is crucial to increasing employee engagement and raising employee commitment and trust. The researcher did not anticipate the significant emphasis on building community these leaders conveyed.

Third, several leaders emphasized the importance of a coaching mindset. Some leaders even used coaching analogies to describe how they lead their organizations through listening, encouraging, mentoring, empowering, and making themselves available for their teams. One company even mentioned they do not have managers and supervisors, but coaches. The researcher expected the leaders to indicate a coaching mindset, but not to the extent they did.

Fourth, several leaders addressed integrating quality management initiatives to help followers grow and succeed and exhibit some of the servant leadership attributes. Leaders from one company spent considerable time discussing Lean, its focus on continuous improvement, and mentioned the relationship between Lean and servant leadership.

There is a Strong Link Between Servant Leadership and Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility. The primary reason for anticipating this third theme was academia's view regarding the connection between servant leadership and business ethics and CSR, including (a) servant leadership provides an ethical and transparent working climate (Jaramillo et al., 2015); (b) servant leadership emphasizes behaving ethically, which entails doing the right thing the right way and always holding to solid ethical standards (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019); (c) servant leadership promotes morality-centered self-reflection (Hunter et al., 2013); (d) servant leadership points leaders to the primary

calling to assist and care for those around them (Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); (e) servant leadership highlights the importance of treating others the way they want to be treated (Marques, 2018; Molano, 2019); and (f) servant leadership encourages CSR and acting in a socially responsible manner (Kincaid, 2012; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Another primary reason for anticipating this theme was because the servant leadership attribute of stewardship involves having an attitude of being a caretaker focused on leaving a positive legacy (Sims, 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017).

The leaders were quick to emphasize the necessity of proper business ethics and acknowledged that one of their critical roles is to ensure an ethical work climate and demand integrity from themselves and their workforce. The leaders discussed the importance of exhibiting their commitment to proper business ethics by (a) leading by example; (b) holding to strong ethical standards; (c) sticking to core values; (d) setting boundaries for strategic decisions; (e) acting morally and humbly; and (f) treating others the way they want to be treated. The leaders were also quick to address the value of CSR and the need to make this a greater priority, and all five companies had taken steps in this direction regarding CSR or ESG.

National Culture Plays a Role in How Leaders Lead Their Organizations, Including Servant Leaders. The primary reason for anticipating this fourth theme was because, according to Perez (2017), leaders, including servant leaders, can use national cultural dimensions to match their values and behaviors effectively to the culture of the place where they engage in business activities. Another reason is that employees from diverse cultures can have different perceptions and levels of openness and receptiveness to how leaders, including servant leaders, lead them.

The leaders acknowledged they consider national cultural dimensions, especially as several had worked and led organizations in various locations worldwide or had employees from

different culture clusters. Several leaders defined themselves as servant leaders and mentioned national cultural conditions only slightly affecting their leadership style. These leaders explained it was vital for them to be (a) respectful of different social norms and customs; (b) cognizant of the different national cultural dimensions; (c) steadfast in holding to company values and maintaining proper business ethics and integrity; (d) flexible in the way they empowered, developed, and engaged employees and held them accountable.

None of the leaders elaborated on the specific national cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity, and long-term–short-term orientation. However, they seemed familiar with these terms and believed these needed to be considered regarding how they led their teams. The leaders placed greater emphasis on ensuring they are (a) valuing their workforce and treating them with respect; (b) sticking to company values, including ethics and integrity, and not damaging their company’s reputation; (c) utilizing “local content” within foreign offices as much as possible; and (d) promoting diversity and creating an inclusive environment. The researcher expected some leaders to expound on these national cultural dimensions, but this did not occur because they kept returning to the importance of valuing and respecting employees regardless of culture, holding to company values, and considering diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Servant Leadership Can Positively Impact Organizational Culture as Regarding Diversity and Inclusion, Employee Engagement, and Employee Commitment and Trust.

The primary reason for anticipating this fifth theme was because there is plenty of evidence that supports the practical application of servant leadership in the Christian and nonprofit sectors (McNeff & Irving, 2017). Furthermore, researchers in recent years have increasingly studied whether servant leadership can have the same effect in the private sector (de Waal & Sivro,

2012; Harwiki, 2016). Another primary reason for this theme was based on the premise that servant leadership is all about (a) serving followers and looking for ways to helping them grow and succeed (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Hunter et al., 2013; Liu, 2019; Van Dierendonck, 2011); (b) creating a climate of growth in which workers can develop and improve their potential (Neubert et al., 2016); and (c) focusing on providing learning, encouragement, and affirmation to followers (Parris & Peachey, 2013), it would seem that servant leadership can play a positive role in promoting diversity and inclusion, engaging employees, and building employee commitment and trust.

Given all the recent attention on diversity and inclusion, the leaders had quite a lot to say about diversity and inclusion, including how they and their companies were implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives and taking a more strategic human resource approach regarding adapting to a more diverse workforce and ensuring a more inclusive environment. There was consensus among the leaders that they needed to seek ways to increase employee engagement and build greater employee commitment and trust to improve individual and team performance and gain a competitive advantage. The leaders mentioned how they are seeing greater worker engagement, loyalty, and trust, and they attributed this primarily to creating a sense of community within their organizations. The leaders also attributed these increases to the efforts they are making toward (a) empowering employees; (b) creating a learning environment; (c) communicating early and often and being open and transparent; (d) maintaining proper business ethics and integrity; (e) integrating quality management initiatives, such as Lean; (f) revamping the way they handle performance reviews; and (g) measuring the progress and level of contribution to the organization.

Servant Leadership Affects Business Strategy Formulation and Implementation from the Perspective of Greater Employee Involvement and the Social Dimension of Business Consideration.

The primary reason for anticipating this sixth theme was because servant leadership emphasizes empowerment, stewardship, and putting employees and other stakeholders first (Heyler & Martin, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Researchers have recognized contemporary leadership styles, such as servant leadership, as affecting the process of business strategy formulation and implementation (Do et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019). Another primary reason for this theme was that servant leadership can lead to improved citizenship behaviors within the organization, which can build social capital (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018), especially as companies such as those selected are addressing growing social and environmental challenges (Do et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Kincaid, 2012).

The leaders mentioned some ways they involve employees in business strategy and decision-making through empowerment and collaboration. The leaders spent considerable time discussing the need to consider CSR and now ESG as part of the overall strategy and the need to create an organizational culture focused on the interests of the workforce. Leaders from each company stressed the importance of social responsibility and their commitment to impact positively the communities in which they conduct business and society-at-large.

The Literature

Servant leadership has attracted growing research interest in organizational studies because its premise of putting the needs of others first can foster positive organizational outcomes (Liu, 2019; Saleem et al., 2020). Servant leaders prioritize helping their followers

grow, contribute, and feel valued (Northouse, 2019). The literature review included information from academia on the effect of servant leadership on organizational performance.

Five major themes were identified during the literature review. First, a growing number of scholars are involved in both qualitative and quantitative research on servant leadership's impact on organizational performance, as more companies are adopting a more caring leadership style, seeking a leadership approach that engages employees, desiring to encourage collaboration and creativity, and promoting service to all stakeholders (Neubert et al., 2016). Second, more research is needed to understand better the cultural context of servant leadership and its impact on organizational performance. Third, the research supports national culture affecting servant leadership and its connection to business ethics. Fourth, the research also supports servant leadership positively impacting corporate culture. Finally, studies point to mostly positive viewpoints regarding servant leadership's influences on business strategy formulation and execution.

The researcher focused on gathering data on servant leadership in an attempt to (a) gain an in-depth understanding of servant leadership and its attributes within companies recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership; (b) gain an in-depth understanding of how national culture impacts servant leadership and its connection to business ethics; (c) see whether a positive relationship exists between servant leadership and an organizational culture conducive to diversity and inclusion initiatives and employee engagement opportunities; and (d) see whether there is a link between servant leadership and business strategy.

The researcher collected information from semi-structured interviews with leaders at various levels. The leaders provided much information related to each of the above three areas. The researcher also relied on survey data and a review of publicly available data for triangulation

purposes to support the interview information. There were three critical takeaways from the data collected from the interviews, surveys, and the review of publicly available information, as it relates to the literature with a focus on both similarities and differences : (a) servant leadership can positively impact organizational performance and culture; (b) national culture plays an essential role regarding servant leadership and its connection to business ethics; and (c) servant leadership affects business strategy development and execution.

Servant Leadership Can Positively Impact Organizational Performance and Culture. The first critical takeaway is that companies and leaders that promote servant leadership believe it is an approach that can positively impact organizational performance and culture from the perspective of diversity and inclusion and employee engagement, commitment, and trust.

All the leaders interviewed mentioned the importance of exhibiting servant leadership attributes in how they lead their organizations, and some even referred to themselves as servant leaders. Some of the critical servant leadership attributes the leaders mentioned were (a) empowering employees; (b) stressing accountability; (c) demonstrating humility; (d) practicing stewardship; (e) building a sense of community; (f) focusing on the growth and success of followers; (g) creating an environment of trust; and (h) communicating a vision with transparency. These leaders emphasized how they strive to (a) lead by example; (b) not micromanage; (c) approach decisions in a collaborative manner; (d) stick to core values; and (e) create a sense of community within their organizations.

Several of these leaders discussed how they see their roles more from a coaching mindset that focuses on (a) developing careers, (b) engaging employees, (c) gaining trust from the workforce, and (d) driving individual and team performance. Several leaders highlighted the

significance of business ethics and CSR. These leaders stressed the necessity to (a) demonstrate servant leadership attributes, (b) lead by example, (c) seek collaboration, (d) coach, and (e) emphasize business ethics and CSR. All these factors help to implement diversity and inclusion initiatives effectively, increase employee engagement, and raise the level of employee commitment and trust that will lead to improved individual and team performance within their organizations and gain or sustain a competitive advantage. The following paragraphs discuss specific servant leadership attributes and then address improved organizational performance from the perspective of diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, and employee commitment and trust.

Empowering Employees. The leaders recognized the importance of empowerment because it (a) enables them to provide autonomy to followers to complete tasks, foster talents, engage in independent problem-solving, participate in effective self-leadership, and have the freedom to handle stressful situations (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Northouse, 2019; Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); (b) provides employees with a sense of ownership and responsibility and gives them the ability to practice power (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Sims, 2018; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); and (c) creates a sense of community within the organizations in which workers can grow and flourish (McNeff & Irving, 2017; A. Wong et al., 2018).

Stressing Accountability. The leaders acknowledged the value of accountability because it (a) provides the opportunity for transparency with clearer setting and monitoring of performance (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011); (b) builds strong relationships between leaders and employees through increased trust, responsibility, and identification with the organization (Mulinge, 2018); and (c) helps to create an effective learning

environment (Ragnarsson et al., 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). One point of interest regarding empowerment and accountability is that the leaders noted empowerment must be accompanied by accountability for both to work within their organizations to (a) increase productivity; (b) improve the decision-making process; (c) enhance morale; (d) reduce turnover; (e) build stronger relationships; (f) heighten trust levels; and (g) encourage stewardship (Mulinge, 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017).

Demonstrating Humility. The leaders recognized the importance of humility because it (a) helps leaders have a realistic view of self and retain the proper perspective regarding their interest, talents, and achievements (Heyler & Martin, 2018; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); (b) creates the environment for leaders to focus on others and admit the task is more significant than themselves (Mulinge, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); and (c) enables leaders to prioritize employees and provide them with the necessary support and recognition (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Sims, 2018; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015).

Practicing Stewardship. The leaders acknowledged the importance of stewardship because it involves leaders taking responsibility for their organization, committing to service, and making decisions in the best interests of everyone within their organization and society-in-general instead of for their self-interest (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Heyler & Martin, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Regarding stewardship, the leaders emphasized the importance of CSR and ESG within their organizations.

Building a Sense of Community. The leaders recognized the importance of a sense of community because it involves leaders trying to build positive relationships and create an environment of encouragement, collaboration, support, and teamwork (Coetzer et al., 2017;

Jaramillo et al., 2015; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). The leaders believed creating this environment of encouragement, collaboration, support, and teamwork is crucial for increasing employee engagement, commitment, and trust. Some of the leaders used terms such as “family” and “tribe” to describe their teams, and they emphasized the importance of (a) spending quality time with their subordinates, including team-building activities; (b) making themselves available for their teams; (c) publicly recognizing staff for their accomplishments; and (d) encouraging employee participation in community service opportunities outside of work.

Focusing on Growth and Success of Followers. The leaders acknowledged the importance of employee growth and success because it (a) involves leaders demonstrating a genuine interest in their workers’ career progression, goals, and ambitions; (b) provides followers with various opportunities to enhance their skills, develop new talents, and receive the necessary support and mentoring; and (c) enables a climate of growth for team members (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Hunter et al., 2013; Liu, 2019; Van Dierendonck, 2011). The leaders regarded helping subordinates grow and succeed as a significant priority to drive improved individual and team performance. The leaders mentioned various efforts they make to focus on workforce growth and success, including (a) investing in employees by spending time with them and focusing on their goals and career aspirations; (b) coaching subordinates; (c) creating a learning environment; (d) empowering employees and then holding them accountable; and (e) integrating quality management initiatives, such as Lean.

Creating an Environment of Trust. The leaders recognized the importance of an environment of trust because it (a) demonstrates the priority to maintain proper business ethics and integrity; (b) establishes credibility and builds rapport and long-term meaningful dyadic

relationships between leaders and subordinates; (c) enables open communication; and (d) fosters a psychologically safe and fair organizational culture (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Sims, 2018; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). The leaders stressed the significance they and their companies place on business ethics and integrity and even mentioned zero tolerance for ethics violations. The leaders emphasized the efforts they make to create an environment of trust, including (a) leading by example in consistently striving to do the right thing in the right way, do what they say they are going to do, and exhibiting a credible character ; (b) holding to strong ethical standards and expecting themselves and their staff to operate ethically among themselves and with all stakeholders; (c) sticking to their values and setting boundaries for strategic decisions (i.e., not making strategic decisions that go against their core values); (d) striving to lead and act morally and humbly; (e) focusing on helping followers grow and succeed, as mentioned in the previous paragraph; (f) striving to treat others the way they want to be treated; and (g) encouraging CSR (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Conrad, 2018; Daft, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Kincaid, 2012; Marques, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Van Dierendonck, 2011). The senior leaders referred to their companies' codes of conduct and ethics training they provide employees.

The leaders conveyed a message that indicated a connection between servant leadership and business ethics. Several leaders referred to themselves as servant leaders and claimed that a critical part of their role as leaders is to (a) provide an ethical and transparent working climate (Jaramillo et al., 2015); (b) emphasize behaving ethically, which entails doing the right thing the right way and always holding to strong ethical standards for themselves and their employees (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019); (c) treat others the way they want to be treated (Marques, 2018; Molano, 2019); and (d) encourage prosocial and OCBs, CSR, and

acting in a socially responsible manner (Haldorai et al., 2020; Kincaid, 2012; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Communicating Vision with Transparency. The leaders acknowledged the importance of vision because it allows leaders to share their hopes, dreams, and aspirations for their organization to inspire the workforce to act and accomplish and focus on continuous improvement (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Qiu & Dooley, 2019; Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017). The senior leaders interviewed emphasized that this sharing of vision should be done frequently and in an open and transparent manner, so the workforce can embrace the vision, feel empowered, and join efforts to accomplish it (Heyler & Martin, 2018).

Leadership can drive the level and success of individual and team performance, as leadership encompasses influence over others to accomplish a specific or common goal (Northouse, 2019). Research has reinforced the importance of leadership support and how commitment to employee development can raise the level of individual and team performance (Boone & Makhani, 2012; Brouns et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Eva et al., 2018; Franco & Antunes, 2020; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Tortorella & Fogliatto, 2017; A. Wong et al., 2018). Regarding leadership support and employee development commitment, the leaders mentioned several of the servant leadership attributes discussed in the preceding paragraphs, with some of these being paramount and nonnegotiable for their teams, such as (a) empowering workers while at the same time holding them accountable; (b) building a sense of community; (c) focusing efforts to help workers grow and develop through creating a learning environment, providing training and development opportunities, and enabling a psychologically safe work environment; and (d) implementing quality management initiatives, such as Lean. The leaders also mentioned

specific actions they take regarding diversity and inclusion and employee engagement, commitment, and trust.

Diversity and Inclusion. Diversity and inclusion continue to receive more attention within corporations as they (a) deal with an increasingly diverse workforce; (b) seek to be more socially responsible in their operations and employment practices; (c) recognize the value of diversity and inclusion from an HRD perspective (Mello, 2019; Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018). There is plenty of research on diversity and inclusion from an HRD perspective, but not as much from a leadership perspective. Researchers have acknowledged that servant leadership, along with transformational leadership, LMX, and authentic leadership, is more conducive to promoting diversity, and that the ethical roots, motivational qualities, and service mentality of servant leadership can lead to an organizational culture in which diversity thrives (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; C. Hughes, 2016; Sims, 2018).

The leaders were across the spectrum regarding diversity but acknowledged the need to (a) empower employees to help them realize their true potential; (b) demonstrate humility; (c) exhibit authenticity to reveal their true intentions and commitments, including open, transparent, and frequent communications with staff and the steps to build high-quality leader–follower relationships; and (d) emphasize stewardship by stimulating workers to act and behave for the common good, including encouraging CSR and ESG. The leaders' positions on empowerment, humility, authenticity, and stewardship align with the integrated framework developed by Gotsis and Grimani (2016), which ranks diversity considerations along a continuum of selected leadership styles, including servant leadership. The leaders also discussed the need to incorporate strategic human resources by (a) viewing all employees as human assets with value and worth; (b) creating a learning and inclusive environment and encouraging continuous learning and

development opportunities; (c) hiring and developing the right people; (d) continuing to revisit diversity and inclusion initiatives within their companies; and (e) ensuring a psychologically safe environment in which all employees feel valued and respected, regardless of race, gender, religion, or sexual preference and have a sense of belonging and uniqueness.

The leaders discussed at great length the importance of creating an inclusive environment that seeks equality of treatment and opportunities, a climate of value and respect, and capitalization of thinking of diverse groups. Several leaders appeared to be inclusive leaders, as described in a study sponsored by Deloitte (Bourke & Dillon, 2016). These leaders described how they are (a) committing to diversity and inclusion and recognizing that more needs to be done in the diversity and inclusion area; (b) seeking to understand diverse viewpoints and involving employees in decision-making; (c) acknowledging personal and organizational biases; (d) admitting the need to understand different cultures better and recognizing the value of having diverse work teams; and (e) empowering employees.

Employee Engagement. Employee engagement is one way organizations continuously seek ways to attain a sustainable competitive advantage and enhance organizational performance (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Hooi, 2021). Leadership affects the level of work engagement to achieve better individual and organizational outcomes (Esen et al., 2020). In recent years, there has been a growing interest in academia to focus on more encouraging leadership styles, including transformational, authentic, ethical, and servant leadership, to improve employee engagement (Aboramadan et al., 2020). Servant leadership can enhance employee engagement through its (a) emphasis on motivational and aspirational aspects; (b) recognition of followers' need for psychological support and satisfaction ; (c) desire to provide a sense of belonging among followers and more interaction and adaption opportunities for them; and (d) orientation

toward humility, empowerment, accountability, and stewardship that shifts the focus from the leader to the follower (Aboramadan et al., 2020; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Eva et al., 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017).

The leaders expressed that one of their key roles is creating a caring, supporting, encouraging, and collaborative environment. They acknowledged this aspect was necessary for greater employee engagement and to drive individual and team performance. The leaders also mentioned the need to (a) demonstrate humility, (b) empower employees and hold them accountable, and (c) practice stewardship, especially as more individuals are concerned about social responsibility and environmental sustainability.

Employee Commitment and Trust. Leaders recognize that trust is an essential antecedent because credibility matters. Trust fosters collaboration and increases the likelihood employees are engaged, attached, and committed to the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Firms are realizing they need to take a strategic perspective on human resources by establishing learning organizations, reward and incentive systems that align with strategy, and diversity and inclusion programs to gain employee commitment and build follower trust that allows them to leverage their most valuable asset (Gamble et al., 2019; Mello, 2019). Servant leadership can raise the level of employee commitment and trust in a few ways. First, servant leadership's alignment with an ethical work climate: servant leaders strive to establish credibility, engage in morally right actions, and accentuate personal integrity and trustworthiness (Jaramillo et al., 2015; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Second, servant leadership's emphasis on building rapport and long-term relationships: servant leaders try to create a positive work climate; raise employee self-esteem through empowerment, listening, and building community; focus on valuing and developing followers; and implement diversity and inclusion initiatives (Chiniara & Bentein,

2016; Liu, 2019; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Sims, 2018). Third, servant leadership's orientation toward fostering a psychologically safe and fair organizational environment: servant leaders form a trusting relationship through interpersonal acceptance, empathy, and forgiveness; provide a climate in which employees can make mistakes and still be accepted; and strive to do what is in the best interests of others within their organization (Burton et al., 2017; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; A. Lee et al., 2020).

The leaders emphasized the importance of creating an ethical work climate, demanding integrity from everyone within their organizations, leading by example, and holding to strong ethical standards. They highlighted the efforts they make to create a sense of community within their teams, to empower and develop employees, and to do more in the diversity and inclusion area. The leaders mentioned (a) creating a learning environment in which workers can learn from their mistakes; (b) maintaining an open-door policy, so subordinates feel safe raising issues and concerns; and (c) striving to exhibit empathy and forgiveness, so followers sense acceptance and feel emotionally connected to others.

National Culture is Essential to Servant Leadership and its Connection to Business Ethics. The second critical takeaway is that national culture impacts servant leadership and its connection to business ethics, albeit slightly. The leaders acknowledged that national cultural dimensions are essential, especially as several had worked and led organizations in various locations worldwide or had employees from different culture clusters. Several leaders defined themselves as servant leaders and mentioned national cultural conditions affected their leadership style somewhat.

The leaders explained it was vital for them to be (a) respectful of different social norms and customs; (b) cognizant of the different national cultural dimensions; (c) steadfast in holding

to company values and maintaining proper business ethics and integrity; (d) flexible in the way they empower, develop, and engage employees and hold them accountable. None of the leaders elaborated on the specific national cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity, and long-term–short-term orientation. However, they seemed familiar with these terms and believed these needed to be considered for how they led their teams. The leaders placed greater emphasis on ensuring they (a) value their workforce and treat them with respect; (b) stick to company values, including ethics and integrity, and not damage their company’s reputation; (c) utilize “local content” within foreign offices as much as possible; and (d) promote diversity and create an inclusive environment.

The researcher expected at least some of the leaders to expound on these national cultural dimensions, but this did not occur because they kept returning to the importance of valuing and respecting employees regardless of culture, holding to company values, and considering diversity and inclusion initiatives, especially as several leaders described themselves as servant leaders. However, the leaders mentioned specific actions that align more with low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, high individualism (other than building a sense of community, which relates to collectivism), high femininity, and high long-term orientation.

Servant leadership aligns more with the behavioral norms of low power distance and low uncertainty because these cultures allow servant leaders to (a) place value on social equality among leaders and followers; (b) demonstrate humility; (c) encourage employee participation and interaction; (d) empower subordinates; (e) accept and expect accountability; and (f) legitimize uncertainty (Bissessar, 2018; Hale & Fields, 2007; A. Lee et al., 2020; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). These cultural conditions of low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance indicate why these leaders stressed the importance of (a) promoting diversity and

creating an inclusive environment; (b) empowering their workforce; (c) creating a sense of community; (d) ensuring greater collaboration and open and transparent two-way communication; and (e) integrating quality management initiatives, such as Lean. Despite various positions on diversity, there was consensus among the leaders regarding the need for more to be done within their organizations in the diversity and inclusion area and the need to take more steps toward ensuring an inclusive environment.

Servant leadership aligns more with the behavioral norms of high individualistic cultures because these cultures are more open to servant leaders (a) being follower-centric and self-sacrificing; (b) equipping their workforce; (b) encouraging employees to demonstrate initiative; (c) empowering workers; and (d) providing subordinates more opportunities for personal growth and development (Hale & Fields, 2007; A. Lee et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). These cultural conditions regarding high individualism indicate why the leaders emphasized the importance of (a) empowering workers to act independently and engaging them in decision-making; (b) creating a learning environment; and (c) taking a more strategic human resource approach by considering all diversity elements within their organization, creating a more fluid and adaptive culture for an increasingly diverse workforce, and integrating diversity programs within overall company strategy and objectives. However, according to A. Lee et al. (2020), servant leadership has some relevance for collectivist cultures because of the servant leadership attribute of building a sense of community. The leaders also mentioned the significant emphasis they place on creating this sense of community within their organizations because they believed this is crucial for increasing employee engagement, commitment, and trust. They mentioned they strive to accomplish this sense of community through various modes of team-building, including

participation in community service opportunities outside of work and public recognition of employees for their accomplishments.

Servant leadership aligns more with the behavioral norms of high femininity cultures because these cultures are more open to servant leaders (a) taking the time to listen to employee concerns and care for their wellbeing; (b) building stronger leader–follower relationships; and (c) creating a sense of community (Jabarkhail, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). These cultural conditions regarding high femininity indicate why the leaders emphasized the importance of (a) maintaining an open-door policy that includes listening to the concerns of their employees; (b) demonstrating empathy and providing respect and dignity to all employees regardless of level in the organization and cultural background; and (c) building a sense of community. According to Northouse (2019), masculinity–femininity can affect how much gender equality exists within organizations and whether leaders embrace a work–life balance. The consensus of the leaders was that they recognized the need for gender equality at various leadership levels within their organizations; however, they also wanted to ensure they have the right people in the correct positions. There was little discussion about work–life balance per se; however, the leaders discussed the importance of caring for their employees, and they mentioned the efforts they have made to allow flexibility for workers with home–work schedules during and post-COVID-19 pandemic.

Servant leadership aligns more with the behavioral norms of high long-term orientation because these cultures are more open to servant leaders (a) practicing stewardship, (b) sharing vision, and (c) investing in the future, including in employee development (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). These cultural conditions regarding high long-term orientation indicate why the leaders emphasized the importance of (a) being good stewards of what they have been

entrusted as leaders; (b) communicating their vision openly and transparently; (c) creating a learning environment and providing training and development opportunities for their staff; and (d) making CSR and ESG a more significant priority within their organizations. Regarding CSR and ESG, the leaders emphasized the need for increased attention because their companies' desire to contribute to the welfare, interests, and quality of life within their local communities from both a social responsibility standpoint and an environmental sustainability perspective.

According to Mittal and Dorfman (2012), moral integrity is considered an essential attribute of servant leadership across all cultural clusters. Business ethics and integrity in a cross-cultural setting involve (a) companies demonstrating consistency between words and actions; (b) firms making commitments to acceptable moral values and principles across the business community; (c) organizations honoring these commitments; and (d) enterprises ensuring alignment between ethical principles and their actions and business dealings, which can positively impact consumer behavior and improve customer relationship commitment (Li et al., 2018). The leaders interviewed stressed the importance of maintaining proper business ethics and integrity in dealings across the globe and mentioned (a) doing the right thing the right way consistently, regardless of the cultural environment; (b) treating all people the way they want to be treated; (c) communicating expectations for their workforce to follow their company's code of conduct; (d) providing ethics training; and (e) maintaining an ethics hotline.

Servant Leadership Affects Business Strategy Development and Execution. The third critical takeaway is that servant leadership affects business strategy formulation and implementation regarding how companies involve employees in the business strategy process and consider the social dimension of business. Leadership plays a critical role in business strategy formulation and implementation. The central task that senior leaders perform involves

business strategy development and execution (Rumelt, 2011), which entails some critical strategic-focused activities that are people- and social related. First, leadership needs to build its organization with the right people, resources, capabilities, and organizational structure. Second, leaders need to implement strategic human resources or HRD practices, including (a) engaging their followers by involving them in the strategy implementation process and embracing diversity and inclusion; (b) building core capabilities and competencies by creating a learning environment; and (c) hiring and developing the right people. Third, management needs to remain steadfast in being customer focused. Fourth, senior executives need to consider business integrity when making strategy decisions, which entails (a) operating ethically (ethics); (b) contributing to the betterment of society (CSR); and (c) being a good steward of the environment (sustainability; Gamble et al., 2019; Li et al., 2018).

The senior leaders interviewed acknowledged that a critical part of their role is to build their organization with the right people, resources, capabilities, and organizational structure. The leaders emphasized they wanted people who would align with the company culture and values. They recognized the value of implementing strategic human resources or HRD practices that focus on (a) creating a learning environment, (b) hiring and developing the right people, and (c) progressing in the diversity and inclusion area. The leaders highlighted the significance of doing everything they can to treat customers and stakeholders in the best manner possible. They emphasized business integrity when making strategy decisions by making such decisions within the boundaries of their core values and considering CSR and environmental sustainability.

Researchers have recognized that several contemporary leadership styles, including servant leadership, impact the process of business strategy development and execution (Do et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019). Servant leadership stresses the importance of leaders

serving their followers by (a) helping them with their personal growth and development; (b) empowering them to be involved in making decisions; (c) building a community in which they feel safe and connected to others within the organization; (d) demonstrating stewardship through providing direction, implementing CSR and sustainability programs, and holding them accountable for activities they can control, which can lead to the achievement of strategic goals (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Northouse, 2019). Uzonwanne (2015) concludes that participatory leadership significantly impacts the decision-making process due to facilitating the involvement of employees in making decisions.

Servant leadership affects business strategy development and execution in several ways. First, servant leadership encompasses practices that establish a higher purpose vision and strategy with the intent of (a) creating value for society as a whole instead of only for shareholders; (b) satisfying customers and other stakeholders; (c) creating a continuous learning environment; and (d) considering the triple bottom line of economic, social, and ecological implications (Coetzer et al., 2017; Peterlin et al., 2015). The leaders talked extensively about setting a strategy that considers the social dimension of business and creates value for all stakeholders, including employees, customers, shareholders, people in the local communities they operate in and society-at-large. The leaders emphasized these factors were important from a CSR and environmental sustainability perspective.

Second, servant leadership enhances social capital by putting employees' and other stakeholders' needs first in the following three dimensions: structural (links among team members), relational (quality of interactions among team members), and cognitive (extent of a shared understanding of goals and visions of an organization), which positively affects business strategy development and execution (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; Panaccio et al., 2015). The

leaders mentioned employees being their greatest asset, as well as the importance of involving them in the strategy and decision-making process. The leaders also stressed that strategy needs to incorporate CSR and ESG.

Third, servant leadership promotes quality management initiatives, such as Lean, that can improve performance and gain or sustain a competitive advantage (Blocher et al., 2019; Nogueira et al., 2018; Plenert, 2012). Lean aligns with an organizational culture that embraces inclusion and empowerment, implements engaged performance teams, aims for perfection, and strives for continuous improvement (Gaiardelli et al., 2019; Plenert, 2012; Starbird & Cavanagh, 2011). Servant leadership has been found to impact Lean implementation positively because servant leadership involves empowering followers, which enables them the opportunity to grow and develop and provides them with the autonomy to complete tasks, foster talents, and collaborate with others (Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). Leaders from one company elaborated on their Lean implementation and mentioned how it empowers and engages employees and enhances collaboration.

Fourth, servant leadership mediates the hierarchical relationship between strategic initiatives, employee creativity, and innovative capacity, which can lead to effective business strategy execution. Servant leadership provides this link between strategy, creativity, and innovation through guidance, sacrifice, and ethical values that lead to respect, loyalty, and commitment to execute strategic initiatives and goals (Do et al., 2018; Hernández-Perlines & Araya-Castillo, 2020; Northouse, 2019). The senior leaders indicated this link was possible to achieve by (a) involving employees in strategy and decision-making; (b) implementing quality management programs; and (c) sticking to core values and not allowing strategic decisions to be accepted that are outside of the boundaries of these core values.

The Problem

Recent studies have found a positive correlation between servant leadership and organizational performance (Eva et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). However, researchers have acknowledged the need for more studies to (a) explore the core mechanisms of servant leadership and its effect on organizational performance; (b) understand its impact on organizational performance over an extended period; and (c) investigate its effects on organizational performance across diverse cultures and human relationships (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Saleem et al., 2020) within the corporate environment, specifically the oil and gas sector.

The researcher examined the problem of the failure of organizations to adequately consider the cultural context of servant leadership style, resulting in limited understanding and inaccurate estimates of its influence on organizational performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Eva et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Saleem et al., 2020) within the corporate environment, specifically the oil and gas sector. The researcher interviewed leaders at various levels within their organizations, obtained survey data, and reviewed publicly available documents for triangulation purposes. The leaders provided a wealth of information related to gaining an understanding of the (a) cultural context of servant leadership (Saleem et al., 2020); (b) impact of culture on servant leadership (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012); and (c) influence of servant leadership on organizational performance from the perspectives of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy (Do et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019).

Regarding the cultural context of servant leadership, the leaders mentioned (a) servant leadership characteristics and how they can work within organizations; (b) setting the right tone at the top to drive a servant-related mindset and attitude throughout organizations; and (c) the relationship between servant leadership and business ethics.

Regarding how culture impacts servant leadership, the leaders highlighted that national cultural dimensions somewhat affected how they lead because they need to be sensitive to the different norms and customs across the various culture clusters. However, the leaders placed greater emphasis on sticking to their companies' values and maintaining proper business ethics and integrity. The leaders did not elaborate on the specific national cultural conditions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity, and long-term–short-term orientation. However, they indicated servant leadership attributes that are more conducive for (a) low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance cultures that are more likely to embrace humility, empowerment, and accountability (Bissessar, 2018; Hale & Fields, 2007; A. Lee et al., 2020; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017); (b) high individualistic cultures that allow the equipping, encouraging, and empowering of followers (Hale & Fields, 2007; A. Lee et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021); (c) high femininity cultures that build stronger leader–follower relationships and create a sense of community (Zhang et al., 2021); (d) long-term orientation cultures that endorse stewardship and vision (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017); and (e) moral integrity regardless of culture cluster (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012).

Regarding the influence of servant leadership on organizational performance from the perspectives of corporate culture and business strategy, the leaders highlighted several key points. First, they emphasized that exhibiting specific attributes, including those related to servant leadership, is necessary to drive individual and team performance, increase employee engagement, and raise the levels of employee commitment and trust, including (a) empowering employees, along with holding them accountable; (b) creating a sense of belonging; (c) focusing on the personal and professional growth of their workforce; (d) acting in the best interests of others and their groups; (e) sharing a compelling vision; (f) providing a psychologically safe

environment; (g) establishing a learning environment that includes training and development opportunities; (h) leading by example; (i) practicing integrity; and (j) emphasizing service (Abbas et al., 2020; Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Bao et al., 2018; Boone & Makhani, 2012; Brouns et al., 2020; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Eva et al., 2018; Hunter et al., 2013; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017; Jaramillo et al., 2015; Qiu & Dooley, 2019; Sims, 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Second, the leaders highlighted that servant leadership plays a role in leaders wanting to involve employees in business strategy development and execution and to implement quality management initiatives, leading to improved organizational performance (Do et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). They acknowledged that engaging employees at various levels and degrees in the business strategy process and integrating quality management programs, such as Lean, are value-added to overall strategic initiatives. Third, the leaders identified that servant leadership influences leaders to focus more on CSR and environmental sustainability (Kincaid, 2012). Several leaders discussed the actions they and their companies as a whole are taking toward CSR and environmental sustainability and how they are considering the social dimension of business within their strategy that includes CSR and ESG.

Summary of the Findings

The findings address the problem being studied, the purpose of the research, and the research questions for a few reasons. First, the results provide an understanding of the cultural context of servant leadership. Second, the findings offer data related to the impact of national culture on servant leadership and its connection to business ethics. Third, the results provide insight into whether servant leadership can positively change organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion and positively change corporate culture to one that improves

employee engagement and increases employee commitment and trust. Fourth, the findings offer a sense of whether servant leadership actions or behaviors contribute to business strategy formulation and execution that helps organizations gain or sustain a competitive advantage.

Several critical conclusions were drawn from the findings. Regarding the first research question, the cultural context of servant leadership style could positively influence organizational performance. The leaders mentioned how servant leadership could (a) raise the level of individual and team engagement, loyalty, trust; (b) lead companies to see improved organizational and financial performance; and (c) gain or sustain a competitive advantage. The leaders stressed the value of exhibiting servant leadership attributes, such as empowerment, accountability, humility, stewardship, sense of community, growth and success of follower focus, trust and respect, and vision with transparency to help improve organizational performance. The leaders also described how they achieve this servant leadership-style influence on company performance by (a) applying a coaching mindset; (b) sticking to fundamental values; (c) making a concerted effort to engage employees and gain their loyalty and trust; (d) stirring employee creativity by involving them in quality management initiatives, such as Lean; and (e) emphasizing business ethics and CSR.

Regarding the second research question, national culture can impact servant leadership and its linkage to business ethics. The leaders acknowledged that national culture can be a factor in servant leadership's effectiveness and its association with business ethics through how servant leadership is portrayed and received within their teams across the globe. The leaders only slightly acknowledged this effect, however, because they stressed greater importance on (a) communicating and sticking to company core values regardless of the cultural environment; (b) demanding business ethics, integrity, and CSR worldwide; and (c) treating and respecting

employees of all cultures and backgrounds. The leaders did not discuss at great length the five national cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity, and long-term–short-term orientation, but they recognized the significance of considering these when leading their diverse teams.

Regarding the third research question, servant leadership can positively change organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion, improves employee engagement, and increases employee commitment and trust. The leaders were across the spectrum regarding diversity and inclusion; however, they all supported the need for their organizations to incorporate strategic human resources by (a) viewing all employees as human assets with value and worth; (b) creating a more fluid and adaptive culture for an increasingly diverse workforce; (c) providing a learning and inclusive environment; (d) hiring and developing the right people; and (e) establishing a psychologically safe work environment in which employees feel valued and respected, can share new ideas, and are empowered to grow and develop. The leaders mentioned servant leadership attributes as paramount for increasing employee engagement and gaining more employee commitment and trust, leading to improved individual and team performance, OCB, and social interaction. The leaders discussed the significance of (a) building a sense of community within their teams; (b) prioritizing helping subordinates grow and succeed; (c) empowering employees while at the same time holding them accountable; (d) maintaining integrity; (e) seeking continuous improvement via innovation and implementing quality management initiatives; and (f) emphasizing OCB as critical for greater employee engagement, loyalty, and trust.

Regarding the fourth research question, servant leadership can positively impact business strategy development and implementation. The leaders mentioned how they (a) engage

employees through participation, empowerment, and collaboration; (b) consider the social dimension of business, including what steps they can take to add value to society-in-general through CSR and sustainability efforts and creating a positive organizational culture; and (c) incorporate quality management initiatives that can lead to continuous improvement. The leaders explained that servant leadership styles help them achieve greater employee involvement, better CSR or ESG focus, positive corporate culture, and continuous improvement. Two servant leadership attributes that stood out were empowerment with accountability and building a sense of community. The leaders also stressed the importance of sticking to their core values and only making strategic decisions that stay within the boundaries of those values.

Finally, senior leaders' exhibition of servant leadership characteristics can work in the private sector based on data collected from 26 leaders from five companies within the oil and gas sector. The literature indicated the practical application of servant leadership in the Christian and nonprofit sectors (McNeff & Irving, 2017). This study explored whether servant leadership can have the same effect within the private sector, especially as more companies adopt a more caring leadership style (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Saleem et al., 2020; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). Several of the leaders interviewed referred to themselves as servant leaders and mentioned the importance of demonstrating servant leadership attributes to help (a) improve individual and team performance; (b) create a positive organizational culture; (c) raise the levels of employee engagement, loyalty, and trust; (d) ensure proper business ethics and consideration of CSR and sustainability initiatives as part of an overall strategy.

The following tables highlight the findings and themes for each research question:

Table 31*Summary of Research Questions and Findings*

RQ #	Research Question	Summary of Findings
1	How does cultural context mediate any servant leadership influence on organizational performance?	The cultural context of servant leadership style could positively influence organizational performance and allow organizations to see (a) greater individual and team engagement, loyalty, and trust; (b) improved financial performance; and (c) competitive advantage. The leaders mentioned the value in exhibiting servant leadership attributes to help improve organizational performance.
2	How does culture provide a richer understanding of servant leadership and any link to business ethics?	National culture can impact servant leadership and its linkage to business ethics. National culture can be a factor in servant leadership's effectiveness and its association with business ethics through how it is portrayed and received within teams across the globe. The leaders saw this effect slightly because they stressed greater importance on (a) sticking to core values; (b) demanding business ethics, integrity, and CSR; and (c) treating and respecting employees of all cultures and backgrounds.
3	To what extent, if any, does servant leadership positively change organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion, improves employee engagement, and increases employee commitment and trust?	Servant leadership can positively change organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion, improves employee engagement, and increases employee commitment and trust. The leaders were across the spectrum on diversity and inclusion, however supported the need for their organizations to incorporate strategic human resources through (a) viewing employees as human assets with value and worth; (b) creating a more fluid and adaptive culture for a growing diverse workforce; (c) providing a learning and inclusive environment; (d) hiring and developing the right people; and (e) establishing a psychologically safe work environment. The leaders pointed to the importance of demonstrating servant leadership attributes to raise employee engagement, commitment, and trust, including (a) building a sense of community within their teams; (b) making it a priority to help subordinates grow and succeed; (c) empowering employees while at the same time holding them accountable; (d) maintaining integrity; (e) seeking continuous improvement through pushing toward innovation and implementing quality management initiatives; and (f) placing emphasis on OCB.
4	How does servant leadership impact business strategy formulation and execution?	Servant leadership can impact business strategy development and implementation. The leaders stressed the importance of (a) engaging employees through participation, empowerment, and collaboration; (b) considering the social dimension of business that entails CSR and sustainability efforts, and creating a positive organizational culture; and (c) incorporating quality management initiatives that can lead to continuous improvement.

Table 32*Summary of Research Questions and Themes*

RQ #	Research Question	Theme #	Themes
1	How does cultural context mediate any servant leadership influence on organizational performance?	1	Leadership styles correlated with servant leadership
		2	Empowerment and accountability go hand-in-hand
		3	Building a sense of community leads to greater employee engagement, commitment, and trust
		4	Priority to helping the workforce grow and succeed with the intent to improve organizational performance
2	How does culture provide a richer understanding of servant leadership and any link to business ethics?	5	Business ethics is a must and links to servant leadership
		6	National culture dimensions slightly affect servant leadership
3	To what extent, if any, does servant leadership positively change organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion, improves employee engagement, and increases employee commitment and trust?	1	Leadership styles correlated with servant leadership
		2	Empowerment and accountability go hand-in-hand
		3	Building a sense of community leads to greater employee engagement, commitment, and trust
		4	Priority to helping the workforce grow and succeed with the intent to improve organizational performance
		7	Significant emphasis on diversity and inclusion and CSR
4	How does servant leadership impact business strategy formulation and execution?	8	Business strategy and decision-making involves employees and considers the social dimension of business

Application to Professional Practice

This purpose of this qualitative case study was to address gaps in the literature and add to the existing literature regarding the failure of organizations to adequately consider the cultural context of the servant leadership style. These gaps result in limited understanding and inaccurate estimates of servant leadership's influence on organizational performance. As mentioned in the purpose statement above, there is evidence that supports the practical application of servant leadership in the Christian and nonprofit sectors (McNeff & Irving, 2017). However, scholars have recognized more research is needed in some areas related to servant leadership. First, more research is required to understand the potential influence of national culture on servant leadership and its connection to business ethics (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Saleem et al., 2020;

Zhang et al., 2021). Second, more research is needed to understand servant leadership within the corporate environment across multiple industries and its effect on organizational performance over an extended period and throughout different cultures and human relationships (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2018; Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Saleem et al., 2020; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; A. Wong et al., 2018). Finally, scholars have conducted studies on the effect of HRD on diversity and inclusion, but there are relatively few studies on the effect of servant leadership on diversity and inclusion (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2015; Mello, 2019; Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018).

This qualitative case study was designed to corroborate existing research and contribute to investigating the real-world engagement of servant leadership within the private sector, as some studies have found a positive relationship between servant leadership and organizational behavior (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; A. Wong et al., 2018). The value of this qualitative case study centers on how leaders can incorporate servant leadership characteristics into the way they manage their organizations to (a) drive individual and team performance; (b) positively impact corporate culture to one that embraces diversity and inclusion, improves employee engagement and social exchange between leaders and followers, and increases workforce commitment and trust; and (c) consider more staff involvement, CSR, sustainability initiatives, and innovation as part of overall business strategy.

Improving General Business Practice

Leadership continues to receive attention as a discipline because (a) more individuals desire to improve their personal, social, and professional lives; (b) more corporations seek individuals with specific leadership qualities; and (c) more universities offer programs in

leadership studies. In recent years, academia has focused on various contemporary leadership styles, including transformational leadership, authentic leadership, situational leadership, interpersonal leadership, and servant leadership (Northouse, 2019). Some reasons for this increased focus on contemporary leadership styles are due to an increasing number of firms (a) adopting a more caring and collaborative type of leadership approach to create teamwork, community, and personal growth; (b) striving to increase the motivation, encouragement, and engagement of employees toward a commitment to company objectives, goals, and values; (c) considering the impact of national culture as they expand into global markets, given an interdependent relationship exists between national culture and leadership; and (d) reevaluating their organizational culture to achieve strategic initiatives that include HRD and CSR (Braun & Nieberle, 2017; Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019; Hoch et al., 2018; Hofstede, 2001; Mello, 2019; Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Northouse, 2019; Perez, 2017; Snyder et al., 2018; Spector, 2013; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015).

The results from this qualitative case study could help improve general business practice. The study revealed the positive effect of servant leadership on individual and team performance, employee engagement, and workforce loyalty and trust. Companies are always seeking ways to improve organizational and financial performance, enhance employee engagement, commitment, and trust, and gain a competitive advantage. The firms in this study were no different and had the same focus. The leaders interviewed stressed the value of exhibiting numerous specific characteristics, including those related to servant leadership to achieve more excellent individual, team, and financial performance, increased employee engagement, loyalty, and trust, and improved competitive advantage. The mentioned characteristics are as follows: first, empowering employees and stressing accountability, which can be accomplished by (a) having a

coaching mindset; (b) providing encouragement and mentoring; (c) setting clear expectations; (d) holding themselves accountable as well; and (e) allowing employees to be a part of business strategy development and execution. Second, creating a sense of belonging, which can be accomplished by (a) spending quality time with their followers; (b) seeking ways for people to have fun at work; (c) providing team-building activities; (d) publicly recognizing staff for their accomplishments; and (e) viewing their organization as a “family” or “tribe.” Third, focusing on the personal and professional growth of their workforce, which can be accomplished by (a) demonstrating a genuine interest in their workers’ career progression, goals, and ambitions; (b) establishing a learning environment that includes training and development opportunities; (c) providing a climate in which employees can make mistakes; (d) coaching and mentoring; (e) empowering workers; (f) having an open-door policy; (g) revamping performance reviews that focus on learning from experiences instead of results at any costs; and (h) integrating quality management initiatives, such as Lean. Fourth, acting in the best interest of all stakeholders (e.g., employees, customers, shareholders, supply chain partners, and society-in-general), which could be accomplished by (a) practicing stewardship; (b) contributing to the welfare, interest, and quality of life within their local communities from both a social responsibility standpoint and an environmental sustainability perspective; (c) emphasizing service; (d) maintaining proper business ethics and integrity; (e) considering CSR and environmental sustainability as part of overall strategy; and (f) encouraging workforce participation in community service opportunities outside of work. Fifth, sharing a compelling vision that provides a sense of direction and clarification of values can be accomplished by being open, transparent, and inspiring. Sixth, providing a psychologically safe environment can be achieved by taking the necessary steps to ensure employees feel valued and respected, share new ideas, and are empowered to grow,

develop, and make decisions. Seventh, emphasizing proper business ethics and CSR, which can be accomplished by (a) treating people the way they want to be treated; (b) leading by example in a way that employees want to emulate; (c) practicing integrity in all business dealings and interactions with customers, partners, governments, and those within the local communities in which their firms operate (Abbas et al., 2020; Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Bao et al., 2018; Boone & Makhani, 2012; Brouns et al., 2020; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2018; Hunter et al., 2013; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017; Jaramillo et al., 2015; Kincaid, 2012; Northouse, 2019; Qiu & Dooley, 2019; Sims, 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015).

Potential Application Strategies

The results from this qualitative case study provide ways leaders could apply servant leadership attributes to drive individual and team performance over an extended period and across different cultures and human relationships. These ways include (a) empowering employees; (b) stressing accountability for themselves and their subordinates; (c) demonstrating humility; (d) practicing stewardship; (e) building a sense of community; (f) adopting a coaching mindset that emphasizes the growth and success of followers; (g) maintaining integrity through leading by example and sticking to core values; and (h) communicating a vision with transparency. The findings conveyed some reasons for servant leadership positively impacting organizational performance. First, leaders could see increased productivity, improved decision-making, enhanced morale, reduced turnover, stronger relationships, heightened trust levels, and more stewardship when employees are empowered and at the same time are held accountable. Servant leaders understand the importance of empowerment and accountability because these factors provide a sense of ownership and responsibility among employees (Mulinge, 2018; Sousa

& Van Dierendonck, 2017; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Second, leaders could gain greater engagement, loyalty, and trust from their workforce by building a sense of community within their teams. Servant leaders understand the significance of creating a sense of community, which allows employees to feel they are in a work environment that is caring, supportive, encouraging, and collaborative (Coetzer et al., 2017; A. Wong et al., 2018). Third, leaders could improve individual and team performance by prioritizing helping workers grow and succeed personally and professionally by (a) spending ample time on their career progression, goals, and ambitions; (b) creating learning environments; (c) providing adequate training and development opportunities; (d) exhibiting a coaching mindset; (e) maintaining an open-door policy; (f) publicly recognizing them; (g) promoting from within; (h) incorporating quality management initiatives, such as Lean; (i) including them in business strategy and decision-making; and (j) revamping the performance review process, such as more frequent check-ins, 360 feedback, and a focus on learning experiences instead of only results. Servant leaders understand the value of helping followers grow and succeed by creating a climate of growth in which workers can develop and improve their potential and leaders can provide learning, encouragement, and affirmation (Neubert et al., 2016; Parris & Peachey, 2013).

The results from this qualitative case study also indicate how leaders can take specific steps to ensure proper consideration of national cultural conditions or differences as their organizations expand into diverse and global markets. First, leaders could continuously be sensitive to the different social norms and customs across the various culture clusters and ensure employees traveling and working abroad are adequately trained to understand such national cultural dimensions. Servant leaders understand the importance of being sensitive to different social norms and customs. This sensitivity is exhibited by (a) valuing and respecting individuals

of diverse cultures and backgrounds; (b) encouraging ongoing learning and development opportunities; (c) providing culture-related training for those traveling and working abroad; (d) remaining steadfast in holding to company values and maintaining proper business ethics and integrity while being flexible regarding how they empower, develop, and engage employees and hold them accountable; and (e) utilizing “local content” within foreign offices as much as possible (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Northouse, 2019; Perez, 2017).

Second, leaders can be ever mindful of the distinct cultures across the globe while ensuring they stick to their company’s fundamental values and maintaining proper business ethics and integrity. Servant leaders solidly connect to business ethics through how they (a) focus on subordinates’ interests; (b) demonstrate ethical behavior by continuously acting and interacting in a transparent, fair, and honest manner with all stakeholders (e.g., customers, suppliers, shareholders, government officials, and society-in-general); (c) preserve integrity by doing what they say they are going to do, exhibiting a right and credible character, and regularly employing ethically justifiable means; (d) treat workers fairly regardless of cultural background and beliefs; (e) help employees across diverse backgrounds to grow and succeed; (f) not compromise their values when making strategic decisions; (g) preserve a set of core values that determine the culture and behavior of the organization; and (h) encourage CSR (Bedi et al., 2016; Boone & Makhani, 2012; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Collins & Porras, 1997; Conrad, 2018; Daft, 2016; Do et al., 2018; Hale & Fields, 2007; Kincaid, 2012; Marques, 2018; Northouse, 2019; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Zhang et al., 2021). Third, leaders could create an inclusive environment across all their locations worldwide while considering national cultural conditions or differences. Servant leaders understand the importance of creating an inclusive environment as they strive to (a) integrate diverse employees in organizational processes; (b)

establish a psychologically safe climate; (c) demonstrate humility by acknowledging workers' beliefs, skills, and experiences; and (d) consider employee empowerment, accountability, development, engagement, commitment, and trust in their leadership approach (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; A. Lee et al., 2020; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012; Northouse, 2019; Perez, 2017; Zhang et al., 2021).

The results from this qualitative case study also indicate how leaders can appreciate human resources from an investment perspective (similar to how they consider physical and capital assets) by embracing diversity and inclusion, creating a learning environment, and hiring and developing the right people. Diversity and inclusion continue to receive increased attention within the corporate environment (Mello, 2019; Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens; 2018). The findings from this study align with this enhanced focus on diversity and inclusion, greater emphasis on creating a learning environment, and increased significance of hiring and developing the right people (Mello, 2019). Regarding embracing diversity and inclusion, leaders can (a) foster an organizational culture in which all employees feel valued, respected, appreciated, and encouraged; (b) create a fluid and adaptive culture that considers an increasingly diverse workforce; (c) integrate diversity programs within their overall company strategy and objectives; (d) incorporate diversity and inclusion initiatives as part of overall ESG; (e) provide diversity training; (f) establish a senior-level diversity and inclusion council comprising individuals from diverse backgrounds; (g) assess perceptions of diversity through surveys and focus groups and take appropriate action based on the results; (h) launch mentoring programs for underrepresented groups; (i) equip supervisors and managers with the right tools to be effective in their roles in creating an inclusive environment; (j) design systems and structures to leverage the potential of a diverse workforce; and (k) encourage collaboration, creativity, and

innovation (Catalyst, 2020; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; C. Hughes, 2016; Mello, 2019; Russell, 2018). Regarding creating a learning environment, leaders can (a) provide ongoing training and development opportunities to enable their team members to build core capabilities and competencies; (b) empower their workforce and hold them accountable; (c) adopt a coaching mindset; and (d) view mistakes as learning moments (Bourke & Dillon, 2016; Braun & Nieberle, 2017; Gamble et al., 2019; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Ragnarsson et al., 2018; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). Regarding hiring and developing the right people, leaders can ensure this aspect includes those who work well in a team environment (Mello, 2019; Starbird & Cavanagh, 2011). Servant leaders understand the importance of taking a strategic approach to human resources. Such leaders strive to provide a workplace in which employees (a) feel valued, respected, appreciated, and encouraged; (b) grow and succeed, such as through training and development opportunities; (c) sense being part of a community within their organizations; (d) are fully engaged; and (e) trust their superiors (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Hooi, 2021; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Muller et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019; Russell, 2018; A. Wong et al., 2018).

The results from this qualitative case study also indicate how leaders can assess ways to integrate CSR and ESG as part of their overall strategic initiatives. The concepts of CSR and ESG continue to gain attention as stakeholders demand more from companies in the social responsibility, environmental sustainability, and corporate governance space (Daft, 2016; Gamble et al., 2019; Kincaid, 2012; Mello, 2019; Spector, 2013). Given this increased focus by stakeholders, leaders could (a) view their roles as stewards of what they have been entrusted; (b) find ways to incorporate programs that contribute to the welfare, interest, and quality of life within their local communities as part of their overall business strategy; (c) consider the triple bottom line of the economic, social, and ecological implications of their strategic decisions; (d)

commit to principles that hit the mark when it comes to CSR, such as business ethics, philanthropy and community investment, environmental management, sustainability, human rights, worker rights, and corporate governance; and (e) publish an ESG report available to all stakeholders and the general public (Coetzer et al., 2017; Kincaid, 2012; Peterlin et al., 2015). The two largest of the five companies whose leaders were interviewed have begun publishing ESG reports that are publicly available. Servant leaders understand the importance of considering both internal and external stakeholders in strategic decisions that involve the social dimension of business through (a) foresight, which includes the ability to foresee future implications based on past and current trends and to embrace a longer-term strategic view; (b) stewardship, which involves the capacity to act as stewards of what has been entrusted to them and to influence followers to do the same; (c) healing, which entails the capability and desire to focus on positively impacting others; (d) growth in others, which includes the recognition that all individuals have intrinsic value and a commitment to the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of those within their scope of influence; and (e) building community, which involves an emphasis on making connections within the marketplace through listening, service, cooperation, and a focus on others (Kincaid, 2012; Peterlin et al., 2015).

Summary of Application to Professional Practice

Researchers have acknowledged more studies are needed to understand the influence of servant leadership on organizational performance across multiple sectors within the corporate environment over an extended period and throughout different cultures and human relationships. This qualitative study aimed to further research servant leadership's impact on organizational performance based on data gathered from five companies recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The results from this qualitative study corroborate existing

research, as the leaders interviewed mentioned (a) servant leadership attributes playing a critical role in driving individual and team performance and employee engagement, commitment, and trust; (b) employees wanting to be empowered, have a sense of belonging, and be given the opportunity to grow and succeed; (c) leaders respecting different social norms and customs and being flexible in the way they manage workers across various culture clusters while ensuring proper business ethics and integrity; (d) companies recognizing the importance of taking a strategic approach to human resources that considers creating an inclusive environment, promoting diversity and inclusion, providing a learning environment, and hiring and developing the right people; (e) corporations focusing more attention on CSR and ESG and integrating these as part of their overall business strategy; and (f) firms incorporating quality management initiatives, such as Lean, and seeking ways to involve employees in business strategy development and execution.

Recommendations for Further Study

This qualitative case study was conducted across five companies within the oil and gas sector that are recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. As mentioned above, the results from this study corroborate existing research on the practical application of servant leadership within organizations. However, there are a few suggested recommendations for further research. First, since researchers have acknowledged more studies on servant leadership are needed over an extended period within the corporate setting, additional studies across different private sectors should be considered, which would add to the body of knowledge on servant leadership's impact on organizational performance. As part of these studies, researchers could include quantitative analysis that delves further into financial performance, market share, and employee retention and turnover. Furthermore, as part of these studies,

researchers could conduct in-depth interviews with direct reports to better understand diversity and inclusion and employee engagement, commitment, and trust from the perspectives of the individual contributors and compare and contrast these with leaders at various levels within an organization. Second, given the increased attention on CSR and ESG, further research should be considered on servant leadership vs. other contemporary leadership styles regarding integrating CSR, environmental sustainability, and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and ecological implications as part of overall business strategy across multiple industrial sectors and culture clusters. Third, since more firms are adopting a strategic approach to human resources, studies should be considered to evaluate whether servant leadership is more conducive than other contemporary leadership styles regarding HRD from the viewpoint of (a) creating an inclusive and learning environment in which diversity and inclusion are promoted and employees are provided with the opportunity to learn from their mistakes; (b) emphasizing broader training and the development of personnel; and (c) changing from the traditional annual performance review process.

Reflections

The researcher found conducting this qualitative study on servant leadership's impact on organizational performance enriching and, by far, the most challenging endeavor undertaken. The researcher learned an incredible amount during the research process, from formulating a problem and purpose statement to developing a conceptual framework and conducting a detailed literature review, from creating a data-gathering methodology to conducting 26 in-depth interviews, from analyzing and coding the interview data to administering an academically recognized survey instrument, and from reviewing publicly available information to presenting the findings. The researcher thoroughly enjoyed conducting the in-depth interviews and found

each participant engaging and open regarding (a) sharing their knowledge on leadership; (b) describing the attributes of servant leadership, such as empowerment, accountability, sense of community, growth and success of followers, humility, and stewardship; (c) expounding on how they seek to impact positively organizational culture from the perspectives of diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, commitment, and trust, and business strategy; and (d) stressing the importance of business ethics and CSR. The researcher appreciated the incredible insight from the dissertation chair and committee and administrative review, who provided much-needed guidance for completing this study.

Personal and Professional Growth

The researcher has been blessed to have had many personal and professional growth opportunities over the years as a CPA and finance manager who has worked and led groups in multiple locations across the globe. The researcher has been fortunate to have worked in 22 countries on five continents and encountered many excellent people from several cultural clusters. The researcher believes this exposure was invaluable for this study as it provided an appreciation and enthusiasm for (a) observing various leadership styles; (b) valuing and respecting all individuals regardless of national cultural dimensions and cultural clusters; (c) creating a positive organizational culture that strives to promote diversity and inclusion, engage employees, raise the level of loyalty and trust among workers, and help followers grow and succeed; (d) maintaining business ethics and exhibiting CSR regardless of culture; and (e) seeking continuous improvement opportunities. The researcher grew personally and professionally from this qualitative research study in several ways. First, the researcher became thoroughly convinced that Maxwell (2007) was right in that “everything rises and falls on leadership” (p. 225). This qualitative study outlined how leaders can (a) determine the success of

their organization; (b) establish an engaging and inclusive work environment; (c) ensure integrity and proper business ethics; (d) emphasize CSR; and (e) seek to be good stewards and positively impact both internal and external stakeholders. Second, the researcher's admiration grew regarding the value of a more caring leadership style, such as servant leadership, and how this can drive organizational performance, improve financial performance, and gain a competitive advantage. This qualitative study explained how leaders can apply specific servant leadership attributes to demonstrate how they value, appreciate, and engage their workers. Some of the most notable servant leadership characteristics were empowering employees, stressing accountability, building a sense of community, creating an environment of trust, humility, stewardship, and helping others grow and succeed personally and professionally. Third, the researcher gained a greater appreciation of the need for a positive organizational culture in which employees feel a sense of belonging and believe that what they are doing is for a greater purpose, as well as how leaders can drive this sense. This qualitative study mentioned ways leaders can prioritize this culture by (a) creating a more fluid and adaptive culture for an increasingly diverse workforce; (b) spending quality time with their workers; (b) providing more training and development opportunities; (c) viewing mistakes as learning moments; (d) establishing a psychologically safe work environment in which employees feel valued and respected, can share new ideas, and are empowered to grow and develop; (e) maintaining integrity and proper business ethics; and (f) emphasizing OCB and CSR. Fourth, the researcher was grateful that companies emphasize topics that continue to receive more attention, such as diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, quality management initiatives, and CSR or ESG. This qualitative study discussed ways leaders are reassessing how they manage their organizations, so they can have teams that (a) embrace diversity and inclusion; (b) make employees more engaged; (c) integrate continuous

improvement through Lean or Six Sigma; and (d) consider the social dimension of business, including CSR and environmental sustainability. Fifth, the researcher developed a strong desire to share the value of a more caring type of leadership approach that (a) emphasizes service; (b) focuses on others; and (c) stresses the importance of treating people the way they want to be treated, which has the potential to drive individual and team performance, increase employee loyalty and trust, and gain a competitive advantage. Finally, this qualitative study outlined how leaders exhibit characteristics that display their commitment to service, others, and the Golden Rule to improve organizational performance and positively impact business strategy development and execution.

Biblical Perspective

The themes identified during this qualitative study have implications from a Christian worldview perspective. First, leadership styles aligned with servant leadership follow the most excellent leadership model, Jesus (Blanchard et al., 2016). The findings from this study suggest how leaders can emulate some of the attributes exhibited by Jesus, such as (a) investing in followers, as Jesus did with His 12 disciples, who became the first-generation leaders of the Christian church, which continues to this day (Blanchard et al., 2016); (b) engaging in a life of service, which was evident throughout His entire ministry and exemplified when He washed the feet of His disciples (R. Warren, 2002); (c) demonstrating humility – Jesus focused on others and accepted an accurate picture of Himself and His calling (Collins, 2001; Wilkes, 1998); (d) practicing stewardship in the way Jesus focused on equipping others for service (Duby; 2009; R. Warren, 2002; Wilkes, 1998); (e) exhibiting compassionate and unconditional love in the same manner Jesus did to all He came in contact with (Blanchard et al., 2016; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015); (f) empowering team members, as Jesus did when He sent the disciples to carry

out His mission (Wilkes, 1998); and (g) sharing a compelling vision, as Jesus conveyed to His disciples for them to carry out their mission and purpose in life and work (Blanchard et al., 2016).

Second, scripture points to both empowerment and accountability. Matthew concludes his gospel with the recording of the Great Commission, which is when Jesus empowers His followers to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:18–20 NIV). Matthew also records Jesus teaching that individuals are responsible and will be held accountable for their words and actions (Matthew 12:36). Nehemiah empowered his followers by allowing them to work in family units and be responsible for their respective sections of the wall around the city of Jerusalem (Thomas et al., 2015). The findings from this study reveal how leaders can link empowerment and accountability to (a) lead, live, and work as a team at a higher level; (b) make clearer choices and decisions; and (c) encourage team members toward love and good works (Gosnell, 2019; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:24).

Third, building community leads to greater employee engagement, commitment, and trust, which aligns with a Christian worldview. According to R. Warren (2002), individuals were “created for community, fashioned for fellowship, and formed for a family, and none of us can fulfill God’s purposes by ourselves” (p. 132). R. Warren (2002) focuses on the importance of the community of believers in a local church; however, there are implications for a company that has leaders who strive to build a sense of community within their organizations. The findings from this study indicate how leaders can take steps to create a caring, supporting, encouraging, and collaborating environment in which employees are engaged in their work, loyal to their firm, and trust their leaders. One company interviewed during this study spent considerable time

discussing how they view their organization as a “family” or “tribe” because they want to (a) develop skills and talents that can benefit the organization in a similar way to a church family, which can help develop spiritual muscle to further the Kingdom ; (b) provide opportunities for employees to share in a purpose greater than themselves in a similar way to a church family can share in Christ’s mission in the world; and (c) offer workers a sense of belonging in a similar way to a church family can experience true fellowship and mutuality (Coetzer et al., 2017; R. Warren, 2002; A. Wong et al., 2018). Nehemiah realized that to start the reconstruction efforts of the wall around Jerusalem, he needed to create a sense of community among the people of Jerusalem and help them do what was necessary to bring safety and security to the city (Thomas et al., 2015). Paul addresses the importance of creating a sense of community in his letter to the Romans: “In Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Romans 12:5, NIV).

Fourth, making it a priority to help the workforce grow and succeed to improve organizational performance is rooted in the biblical concept of focusing on others. Numerous verses in the scriptures indicate how helping others has positive benefits for both the giver and the receiver: (a) “Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4, KJV); (b) “And do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Hebrews 13:16, NIV); (c) “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9, NIV); (d) “A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes will be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:25, NIV); and (e) “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35b, NIV). The findings from this study reveal how leaders can reap benefits from an individual and team performance perspective by focusing on helping the individuals on their teams to grow and succeed personally and

professionally through (a) coaching and mentoring; (b) empowering; (c) providing training and development opportunities; (d) creating a learning environment; and (d) including them in business strategy and continuous improvement initiatives.

Fifth, scripture supports the idea that business ethics is a must when leading and conducting business, and there is a link to servant leadership, which the following verses exemplify: (a) “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much” (Luke 16:10, NIV); (b) “The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity” (Proverbs 11:3, NIV); and (c) “May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, LORD, is in you” (Psalms 25:21, NIV). According to Maxwell (2003), business ethics and ethical decision-making are based on the Golden Rule that Jesus defines in Matthew 7:12: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (NIV). The Golden Rule (a) entails treating people the way they want to be treated; (b) allows for a win-win opportunity; (c) serves as a compass when direction is needed; and (d) enables individuals to be valued, appreciated, trusted, respected, and understood (Maxwell, 2003). The findings from this study indicate how leaders can maintain integrity and proper business ethics and be servant leaders through living by the Golden Rule, with a credible character, core ethical values and standards, and a focus on service and others.

Sixth, the Golden Rule also applies to the theme of national cultural dimensions impacting servant leadership. The Golden Rule provides a common ground that can be accepted across various culture clusters and religions (Maxwell, 2003). This applicability of the Golden Rule takes on greater significance as companies expand into global markets and take a more strategic approach to human resources. The findings from this study indicate how leaders can

consider the Golden Rule when they lead their organizations and serve their internal and external stakeholders through (a) appreciating and respecting different social norms and customs; (b) providing employee development, empowerment, and accountability opportunities; and (c) creating a psychologically safe environment.

Seventh, greater attention to diversity and inclusion and CSR, involvement of employees in business strategy and decision-making, and consideration of the social dimension of business have positive implications from a biblical worldview perspective, one tenet of which is human dignity. The concepts of embracing diversity and inclusion and incorporating CSR as part of the overall strategy suggest a greater emphasis on human dignity and increased value on all stakeholders. God calls His people to be (a) humble and attentive to others; (b) good stewards of what He has entrusted them with; and (c) focused on others (R. Warren, 2002; Wilkes, 1998). Companies that promote diversity and inclusion, create a learning and inclusive environment, and make it a priority to engage in CSR and environmental sustainability efforts emphasize humility, stewardship, and a focus on others. The findings from this study reveal how leaders can use their position of influence and decision-making authority to implement diversity and inclusion programs and consider the social dimension of business within their firm's overall strategic initiatives.

R. Warren (2002), in his famous book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, makes some bold statements regarding service, including (a) “[people] were put on this earth make a contribution and to serve God”; (b) “service is the pathway to real significance and service is not optional”; and (c) “real servants make themselves available to serve, pay attention to needs, and do the best with what they have” (pp. 225, 232–233, and 255–256). Servant leadership flips the organization pyramid upside down and is all about serving and contributing to followers' lives. The findings

from this study indicate how leaders can be servant-type leaders and positively impact lives, including those within their organizations. Jesus was explicit about this role when he said, “Your attitude must be like my own, for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life” (Matthew 20:28, LB). When people recognize the purpose and value of work involves serving and helping others, they have more reason to use their talents, ambitions, and energy and be more successful (Keller, 2012). Paul expounds on the purpose and value of work in his letter to the Colossians: “whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Colossians 3:23, NIV). Servant leadership conceptually aligns with a biblical worldview because of its emphasis on service and stewardship, focus on others, and being modeled after the life of Jesus (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003).

Summary of Reflections

Despite the difficulty of conducting this research and writing this dissertation, the researcher thoroughly enjoyed the learning experience of the dissertation process. The researcher spent considerable time bathing this dissertation endeavor in prayer and is forever indebted to the doctoral dissertation chair and committee and administrative review, the professors in the DBA program at Liberty University, and the interviewees who provided incredible insight into the topic of servant leadership and its impact on organizational performance. Thanks to this dissertation, the researcher gained a greater appreciation for (a) individuals who engage in research with the intent to provide insight into bettering society; (b) organizational leaders with a servant-type mindset that focuses on empowerment, humility, stewardship, betterment of followers, business ethics, and CSR; and (c) companies recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership because they believe it is the right way to run their organizations. One verse stands out for the researcher regarding the biblical perspective of servant leadership

and its impact on organizational performance: “It is God Himself who has made us what we are and given us new lives from Christ Jesus, and long ages ago He planned that we should spend these lives in helping others” (Ephesians 2:10, LB).

Summary of Section 3

This qualitative case study explored the cultural context of servant leadership attributes to understand whether these actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspectives of corporate culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. Section 3 included an overview of this qualitative study, which relied on multiple data sources. The qualitative research was based primarily on data gathered from 26 semi-structured interviews with leaders from five companies within the oil and gas sector recognized for servant leadership or promoting servant leadership. The qualitative study was also based on survey data from 51 participants and a review of publicly available documents used for triangulation purposes.

Section 3 also presented the findings that address the problem being studied, the purpose of the research, and the research questions. The results (a) provide an understanding of the cultural context of servant leadership; (b) offer data related to the impact of national culture on servant leadership and its connection to business ethics; (c) provide insight into whether servant leadership can positively change organizational culture to one that supports diversity and inclusion and positively change corporate culture to one that improves employee engagement and increases employee commitment and trust; and (d) offer a sense of whether servant leadership actions or behaviors contribute to business strategy formulation and execution to help organizations gain or sustain a competitive advantage. The findings corroborate existing research regarding the practical application of servant leadership within organizations.

Section 3 concluded with supporting material. First, this section outlined applications for professional practice based on the results of this qualitative study, including suggestions on how to improve general practice and potential application strategies. Second, this section provided recommendations for further research. Third, this section contained reflections on the research experience and the implications of this study from a biblical worldview.

Summary and Study Conclusions

Servant leadership continues to gain popularity as an effective leadership style and is one of several contemporary leadership styles that has received much attention in recent years. Plenty of evidence supports the practical application of servant leadership in the Christian and nonprofit sectors (McNeff & Irving, 2017). However, servant leadership remains under-researched regarding its influence on organizational performance within the corporate environment. Academia has acknowledged the need to conduct more research to understand the cultural aspects of servant leadership, how culture impacts servant leadership, and how servant leadership contributes to sustainable organizational performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Muller et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). Therefore, this research study aimed to add to the existing body of knowledge regarding understanding servant leadership's influence on organizational performance. This qualitative study explored the cultural context of servant leadership attributes to understand whether these actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspectives of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy because researchers have highlighted the need to study further whether servant leadership can have the same effect within the private sector.

This research study presented a problem statement and research questions regarding the failure of organizations to adequately consider the cultural context of servant leadership and its potential impact on organizational performance. This research study encompassed a review of the professional and academic literature on (a) servant leadership characteristics; (b) national cultural conditions impacting servant leadership; and (c) servant leadership's link to organizational performance from the perspectives of organizational culture and business strategy. This study employed a research methodology based on a flexible design and a case study method

with the incorporation of triangulation. A data collection and organization plan with measures to ensure reliability and validity was also developed. This plan focused on investigating the cultural context of servant leadership attributes to understand whether these actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspectives of corporate culture, employee engagement, and business strategy. This study presented findings primarily based on interview data from 26 individuals across five companies within the oil and gas sector, as well as survey data from 51 participants and a review of publicly available documents. This study offered suggestions for improving general practice, potential application strategies, recommendations for further research, reflections on the research experience, and biblical perspective implications.

Furthermore, this study provided several key conclusions and themes. First, servant leadership is a viable leadership style, especially as more companies seek to (a) adopt a more caring leadership style; (b) improve individual and team performance; (c) drive a positive organizational culture; (d) ensure proper business ethics and integrity; (e) promote diversity and inclusion initiatives; (f) increase employee engagement; (g) raise worker commitment and trust; (h) involve staff in business strategy and decision-making process; (i) implement quality management initiatives, such as Lean; and (j) consider the social dimension of business, including CSR and ESG efforts. Several of the leaders interviewed emphasized the importance of leaders. Second, empowerment and accountability go hand-in-hand. Empowerment and accountability were two of the servant leadership attributes the leaders spent considerable time addressing. The leaders noted that one must come with the other for them to work effectively within their teams. Third, building a sense of community leads to greater employee engagement, loyalty, and trust. The leaders also spent ample time discussing the value of creating a sense of

community within their organizations to build a more caring, supporting, encouraging, and collaborative environment. Fourth, there was a priority to helping the workforce grow and succeed with the intent to improve organizational performance. All the leaders stressed this priority as crucial for improving individual and team performance, mentioning the value of (a) empowering and holding employees accountable; (b) creating a learning environment; (c) providing more training and development opportunities; (d) maintaining an open-door policy; (e) publicly recognizing workers; and (f) implementing quality management initiatives. Fifth, business ethics is a must and is connected to servant leadership. All the leaders recognized that ensuring an ethical work climate with full integrity is a crucial role of theirs. The leaders tied business ethics to servant leadership through (a) treating all internal and external stakeholders the way they want to be treated; (b) sticking to their values and setting boundaries for strategic decisions; and (c) focusing on helping followers grow and succeed. Sixth, national cultural dimensions slightly affect servant leadership. Sixth, national cultural dimensions slightly affect servant leadership. The leaders recognized the importance of being (a) sensitive to the different norms and customs across the globe, especially as more companies expand into global markets; (b) mindful of the different national cultural dimensions while sticking to their company values and maintaining proper business ethics and integrity; and (c) aware that different national cultural dimensions can impact how they lead their organizations. The leaders placed greater importance on sticking to core values, maintaining proper business ethics, and valuing all individuals with respect and dignity than focusing on different national cultural dimensions. Seventh, the leaders placed significant emphasis on diversity and inclusion and CSR. The leaders spent considerable time addressing how their organizations are (a) incorporating diversity and inclusion initiatives; (b) taking a more strategic human resource approach; and (c) paying more

attention to CSR and sustainability efforts regarding formulating and executing strategy, conducting business, treating stakeholders, contributing to the welfare, interest, and quality of life in the communities they do business, and impacting the environment. Eighth, business strategy and decision-making involve employees and consider the social dimension of business. The leaders mentioned efforts to engage more individuals at various levels in business strategy development and execution and the decision-making process. The leaders believed servant leadership is the driver for this process. Servant leadership can also help establish a positive corporate culture incorporating CSR and sustainability efforts as part of an overall strategy. Ninth, each of these eight themes fits the Christian worldview because (a) leadership styles aligned with servant leadership follow the most excellent leadership model – Jesus (Blanchard et al., 2016); (b) scripture points to various servant leadership attributes, such as empowerment, accountability, creating a sense of community, and helping followers to grow and succeed (Matthew 28: 28-20, Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:5; Philippians 2:4); (c) scripture supports the idea that business ethics is a must when leading and conducting business, and there is a link to servant leadership (Luke 16:10; Proverbs 11:3; Psalms 25:21; Matthew 7:12); (d) the Golden Rule applies to the theme of national cultural dimensions impacting servant leadership because the Golden Rule offers common ground that can be accepted across various culture clusters and religions (Maxwell, 2003); and (e) greater attention is paid to diversity and inclusion and CSR, involving employees in business strategy and decision-making, and considering the social dimensions of business to focus on human dignity, which is one of the key tenets of the biblical worldview. Finally, leaders who exhibit servant leadership characteristics have the potential to improve individual and team performance, raise employee engagement, and increase employee loyalty and trust because such leaders help followers recognize the purpose and value of their

work and use their talents, ambitions, and energy to be more successful (Keller, 2012). Kouzes and Posner (2017) state that exemplary leaders engage in five key practices. Such leaders (a) model the way; (b) inspire a shared vision; (c) challenge the process; (d) enable others to act; and (e) encourage the heart. The major takeaway from this research study is that exemplary leaders succeed at these five key practices by exhibiting servant leadership characteristics, which can lead to improved organizational performance.

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Appendix A Interview Guide

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Date and Time of Interview: _____

Location and Mode of Interview: _____

Body Language Observations: _____

- Seek permission to record the interview – May you give consent to be audio-recorded during this interview? Emphasize ethical considerations and confidentiality of information.
- Make introductions – May you introduce yourself and tell me briefly what you do within your organization? Show genuine appreciation for them agreeing to have this discussion.
- Review the purpose of the interview – To explore the cultural context of servant leadership attributes and understand whether these actions and behaviors contribute to improved organizational performance from the perspective of organizational culture, employee engagement, and business strategy.
- Handling the interview – (a) focus on the topic at hand; (b) maintain a warm, respectful and non-judgmental manner toward the participants; (c) ensure the questions are asked in a balanced, unbiased, non-leading, non-threatening, sensitive, clear, and consistent manner; (d) have this interview guide, notebook, and recording equipment ready to go before the interview; (e) anticipate and be prepared to answer any questions the respondents may have; (f) adopt an active listening position and avoid interrupting

interviewee; (g) honor any promises made to the participants; (h) keep in mind ethical considerations during the interviews related to privacy, sensitive topics, and confidentiality of the information; and (i) take copious notes.

- Asking questions related to the first two research questions (high-level questions that will be expanded based on responses).
- How do you define servant leadership?
- Why do you think your company is recognized for servant leadership?
- How important is an exhibition of servant leadership attributes within your organization (go through them and split into groups to not overwhelm them too many different attributes – humility, stewardship, empowerment, accountability, building community within your organization, creating an environment of trust, conceptualizing, and helping followers grow and succeed)?
- May you provide an example of how you and the company exhibit these attributes (seek different examples in groups of attributes)?
- How important are business ethics and CSR within your organization?
- May you provide an example related to business ethics and CSR?
- How does your organization consider national cultural dimensions within the countries and locations you operate (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and long-term short-term orientation)?
- How do these national cultural dimensions figure into the way you lead your organization?
- Do various servant leadership attributes (as previously discussed) figure into your organization's consideration of national cultural dimensions? If so, how?

- How do these national cultural dimensions figure into business ethics and CSR within your organization?
- Asking questions related to the third research question (high-level questions that will be expanded based on responses).
- In what ways do you influence individual and team performance?
- How does your company encourage OCB (voluntary actions performed by employees that benefit others in the organization and overall company)?
- How do you demonstrate a focus on the personal growth of your subordinates?
- How would you say the social exchange is between you and your staff, and why?
- What is your company's position on diversity and inclusion (D&I)?
- How does your company promote D&I (i.e., what D&I initiatives exist within your company)?
- What do you do to support D&I and make employees feel valued and respected?
- How do you create an environment of fairness and respect and ensure equality of treatment and opportunities?
- What actions do you take to improve employee engagement within your organization (motivate them, make them feel appreciated for their work, and encourage innovation)?
- What actions do you take to increase employee commitment and trust (build a climate of trust, create a psychologically safe work environment, exhibit empathy and forgiveness)?
- Do your leadership actions related to these topics that we discussed (influencing individual and team performance, encouraging OCB, focusing on the personal growth of employees, promoting D&I, improving employee engagement, and building employee commitment and trust) relate to servant leadership attributes?

- Ask questions related to the fourth research question (high-level questions that will be expanded based on responses).
- In what ways do you facilitate the involvement of employees in making decisions and being a part of business strategy development and execution?
- In what ways does your company consider the social dimension of business (adding value for society as a whole instead of only for shareholders and creating a positive organizational culture that affects business strategy)?
- How does your company promote quality management initiatives (Lean, Six Sigma, etc.) to achieve outstanding performance, gain a competitive advantage, and enhance financial performance?
- Do you think servant leadership actions and behaviors contribute to business strategy formulation and execution to gain or sustain a competitive advantage (moral visioning, developing and empowering employees, increasing employee creativity and innovative capacity, accepting accountability for strategic decisions, and improving citizenship behaviors and CSR)? If so, how and what are some examples? If not, why not?
- Which of these do you engage in as a leader?
- Provide the participants an opportunity to make any final statements and ask them to add things they think have not been considered during the discussion.
- Thank them for participating and ask them if it will be okay to reach out to them for member checking and follow-up questions.

Appendix B

Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ)

Servant Leadership Measures (SL-28)

Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Zhao, H., & Henderson, D. (2008). Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19(2), 161–177. [original scale development research]

Section A. In the following set of questions, think of _____, your immediate supervisor or manager (or team leader); that is, the person to whom you report directly and who rates your performance. If the person listed above is not your immediate supervisor, please notify a member of our research team.

Please select your response from Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 7 presented below and enter the corresponding number in the space to the left of each question.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- ___ 1. My manager can tell if something work-related is going wrong.
- ___ 2. My manager gives me the responsibility to make important decisions about my job.
- ___ 3. My manager makes my career development a priority.
- ___ 4. My manager seems to care more about my success than his/her own.
- ___ 5. My manager holds high ethical standards.
- ___ 6. I would seek help from my manager if I had a personal problem.
- ___ 7. My manager emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community.
- ___ 8. My manager is able to effectively think through complex problems.
- ___ 9. My manager encourages me to handle important work decisions on my own.
- ___ 10. My manager is interested in making sure that I achieve my career goals.
- ___ 11. My manager puts my best interests ahead of his/her own.
- ___ 12. My manager is always honest.
- ___ 13. My manager cares about my personal well-being.

- ___ 14. My manager is always interested in helping people in our community.
- ___ 15. My manager has a thorough understanding of our organization and its goals.
- ___ 16. My manager gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way that I feel is best.
- ___ 17. My manager provides me with work experiences that enable me to develop new skills.
- ___ 18. My manager sacrifices his/her own interests to meet my needs.
- ___ 19. My manager would **not** compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success.
- ___ 20. My manager takes time to talk to me on a personal level.
- ___ 21. My manager is involved in community activities.
- ___ 22. My manager can solve work problems with new or creative ideas.
- ___ 23. When I have to make an important decision at work, I do **not** have to consult my manager first.
- ___ 24. My manager wants to know about my career goals.
- ___ 25. My manager does whatever she/he can to make my job easier.
- ___ 26. My manager values honesty more than profits.
- ___ 27. My manager can recognize when I'm disappointed without asking me.
- ___ 28. I am encouraged by my manager to volunteer in the community.

Item Key (SL-28)

Item #s	Reference/comments
1, 8, 15, 22	Servant Leadership: Conceptual skills
2, 9, 16, 23	Servant Leadership: Empowering: our items
3, 10, 17, 24	Servant Leadership: Helping subordinates grow and. Item #3 is adapted from Ehrhart, PPsych, Spring, 2004
4, 11, 18, 25	Servant Leadership Putting subordinates first. Items #11 and #18 adopted from Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006 G&OM.
5, 12, 19, 26	Servant Leadership: Ethical Behavior. Item #5 is adapted from Ehrhart, PPsych, Spring, 2004.
6, 13, 20, 27	Servant Leadership: Emotional healing
7, 14, 21, 28	Servant Leadership: Creating value for the community. Item #7 is adapted from Ehrhart, PPsych, Spring, 2004

Appendix C

Permission to Use SLQ

Re: Request to Use Your Servant Leadership Questionnaire for a Dissertation

Robert Liden <bobliden@uic.edu>

Sat 3/13/2021 9:14 PM

To: Johnny Wesevich <johnnybapak@hotmail.com>

2 attachments (736 KB)

Xu, Zhong, & Liden 2020 Inspiration for Servant Leaders Ch2 servant leadership academic review.pdf; servant leadership scale.docx;

Dear Johnny,

You may use our scale and it is attached along with a recent article.

Best of luck with your research,

Bob Liden

On Sat, Mar 13, 2021 at 4:53 PM Johnny Wesevich <johnnybapak@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dr. Liden,

May I use your Servant Leadership Questionnaire as part of my doctoral dissertation? I am currently a DBA student at Liberty University and doing a doctoral dissertation on servant leadership's impact on organizational performance with a focus in the oil and gas sector. The plan is to conduct in-depth interviews, as well as collect survey data and review publicly available documents. The intent is to not use your questionnaire for public or commercial purposes but only within the confines of this dissertation.

Thank you in advance.

John Wesevich, MBA, CPA, CIA, CMA

Doctoral Student at Liberty University

johnnybapak@hotmail.com

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