LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES AND BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT CAREER ADVANCEMENT FOR TELEWORKERS

by

Glory Sanders

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Abstract

Research in telework has primarily focused on the study of teleworkers or on the comparison between teleworkers and non-teleworkers. For this reason, leader behaviors in the telework context has been a relatively neglected area of study. This study emphasizes the lack of career advancement within the telework arena that has contributed to higher turnover intentions and a reluctance to participate in telework programs. This research specifically explores leader behaviors and strategies that support career advancement for teleworkers within Denver, Colorado. The findings indicate that leaders are more intentional about communication with teleworkers than with non-teleworkers. Physical distance creates many challenges in which effective and intentional communication are instrumental in overcoming. Additionally, the study findings showed that leaders employ a performance-based approach to monitoring and evaluating teleworkers and maintaining flexibility in one’s leadership style. These behaviors enhance leader-follower relationships within the telework environment. Leader behaviors, including intentional communication, performance-based monitoring and evaluation, flexibility, and relationship building, supported teleworkers in achieving career advancement.

Keywords: leadership behaviors, leadership strategies, career advancement, telework, communication, performance-based, flexibility, relationship building
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Approvals

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Dr. Rol Erickson, Dissertation Committee Member        Date

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Edward M. Moore, Ph.D., Director of Doctoral Programs   Date
Dedication

This body of work is dedicated to my husband Carlos and my children Kyasia, Carly, Nyah, and Cori whose love and support were instrumental in its successful completion. I am grateful for the sacrifices you have made in this joint endeavor.
Acknowledgments

Throughout this journey, I have been blessed with unimaginable guidance and support. First, I give all glory to God for his strength, wisdom, and every provision given to complete this work. He has blessed me with a supportive husband who dreamed with me and held my head up in the difficult moments. I offer my sincerest thanks to my husband Carlos for every sacrifice made along this journey. I also want to thank my daughters Kyasia, Carly, Nyah, and Cori for every encouraging word that motivated me and for the quiet nights I needed to focus. Further, I thank my parents and my siblings for instilling the values from which the foundation of my life was built. It is those values that ensured an honest and dedicated effort.

I am extremely grateful for Liberty University. I am blessed to have been able to learn and grow both academically and spiritually through this institution. I offer my greatest thanks to Dr. Mark Davis for guiding me through this rigorous endeavor. I am grateful for every prayer, word of encouragement, honest feedback, and every ounce of wisdom he shared with me. Truly, I would not have been successful without him. I also offer a huge thank you to Dr. Rol Erickson for his expertise and guidance throughout this process. I have learned a great deal from him and am blessed to have had him with me along the way. I greatly appreciate Dr. Edward Moore and the DBA program for providing this opportunity. Truly, I am humbled and blessed by everyone who put their hands to the plow and supported this body of work. I could not have accomplished this without them.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. ii

Approvals ................................................................................................................................................ iii

Dedication ................................................................................................................................................ iv

Acknowledgments ..................................................................................................................................... v

List of Figures .......................................................................................................................................... x

Section 1: Foundation of the Study ........................................................................................................ 1

  Background of the Problem ..................................................................................................................... 2

  Problem Statement ................................................................................................................................. 5

  Purpose Statement ................................................................................................................................. 6

  Nature of the Study ............................................................................................................................... 7

    Discussion of Method ......................................................................................................................... 7

    Discussion of Design .......................................................................................................................... 8

    Summary of the Nature of the Study ................................................................................................. 10

Research Questions ................................................................................................................................... 11

Conceptual Framework ........................................................................................................................... 11

  Path-Goal Theory ............................................................................................................................... 12

  Transactional Leadership ...................................................................................................................... 14

  Situational Leadership ......................................................................................................................... 18

  Summary of the Conceptual Framework ............................................................................................. 23

Definition of Terms .................................................................................................................................. 243

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations ................................................................................................. 244

Assumptions ............................................................................................................................................ 24
LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES AND BEHAVIORS

Limitations .............................................................................................................. 24
Delimitations .......................................................................................................... 25
Significance of the Study .......................................................................................... 25
Relationship to the Field of Study ........................................................................... 25
Reduction of Gaps ..................................................................................................... 26
Implications for Biblical Integration ......................................................................... 26
Summary of the Significance of the Study ................................................................. 28
A Review of Professional and Academic Literature .................................................. 28
Present State of Telework .......................................................................................... 32
History of Telework ................................................................................................... 34
Concepts .................................................................................................................... 36
Potential Themes and Perceptions ............................................................................ 58
The Application of Leadership Behaviors ................................................................. 67
Summary and Conclusion ......................................................................................... 70
Transition and Summary of Section 1 ......................................................................... 70
Section 2: The Project ............................................................................................... 72
Purpose Statement ..................................................................................................... 73
Role of the Researcher ............................................................................................... 73
Participants ................................................................................................................ 77
Discussion of Method ............................................................................................... 79
Discussion of Design ............................................................................................... 80
Population and Sampling ......................................................................................... 82
Discussion of Population ......................................................................................... 82
## LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES AND BEHAVIORS

Summary of Application to Professional Practice ........................................... 148
Recommendation for Further Study ................................................................. 149
Reflections ........................................................................................................ 150
Personal and Professional Growth ................................................................. 150
Biblical Perspective ......................................................................................... 151
Summary of Reflections .................................................................................. 152
Summary of Section 3 ..................................................................................... 153
Summary and Study Conclusions ................................................................. 154
References ....................................................................................................... 157
Appendices ...................................................................................................... 191
Appendix A: Informational Letter .................................................................. 192
Appendix B: Informed Consent ....................................................................... 193
Appendix C: Pre-Interview Screening Survey .................................................. 196
Appendix D: Interview Protocol ..................................................................... 197
Appendix E: Permission Request Form ............................................................ 200
Appendix F: Social Media Recruitment ........................................................... 201
Appendix G: Signed Permission Request Forms ............................................. 202
Appendix H: Signed Informed Consent Forms ................................................. 203
Appendix I: Interview Transcripts ................................................................. 204
List of Figures

Figure 1. Situational Leadership Model (Hersey et al., 2008, p. 142) .......................................................... 18

Figure 2. Path-Goal Theory ......................................................................................................................... 39
Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Telework is a broad term used to describe the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to conduct work away from the central office (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Telework practices incorporate multiple elements including various work locations, reliance upon communication technology, contractual relationships between the employee and the organization, and locational time allocation including the portion of the time work is conducted in an alternative work location (Peters et al., 2016).

Organizations often implement telework into the work structure to attract, motivate, and retain highly skilled employees (Morganson et al., 2010). Moreover, telework contributes many benefits to the organization and employee. Telecommuting is credited with increasing organizational performance, improving work-life balance, decreasing environmental costs, and providing flexible work arrangement for employees (Caillier, 2013; Coenen & Kok, 2014; Mahler, 2012).

Many teleworking benefits are discussed throughout literature, yet some organizations discontinued the program (Weinert et al., 2014), or are reluctant to adopt this technology-enabled work modality (Pyoria, 2011). According to Weinert et al. (2014), Yahoo, Best Buy, and Hewlett Packard determined that the negative implications of telework were significant and excluded it as a viable work option for employees. Among the many challenges of telework is the impact of professional isolation and career stagnation (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017). Golden et al. (2008) determined that professional isolation had a negative impact on work performance. Further, Maruyama and Tietze (2012) noted that telework reduced visibility and career development within the sales and marketing industries.
While extensive literature covering the drawbacks of telework from the organization and employee perspective exists, little research has been conducted concerning the impact of leadership strategies and behaviors on employee career advancement and voluntary turnover, thus presenting a business case for this study. This study focuses on the leadership strategies and behaviors that impact career advancement for teleworkers. Focusing on the leader’s experience with teleworkers, the goal is to add to the field of study by providing potential solutions that will improve opportunities, or recognition of existing opportunities, for career growth under the telework paradigm.

A qualitative multiple case study was developed emphasizing the constructs of path-goal theory, transactional leadership, and situational leadership. The researcher used this conceptual framework to develop research questions that would lead to a greater understanding of leader behaviors in the telework environment. The study was conducted in Denver, Colorado and data were collected through individual interviews. Twelve leaders across multiple industries responded to the study and provided valuable insight from firsthand experiences and perspectives. The data were manually and electronically analyzed to reveal relevant themes. Those themes included intentional communication, performance-based monitoring, flexible leadership, and relationship building. The researcher discussed the findings and compared each to the conceptual framework and research question to better understand leader strategies in relation to the problem.

**Background of the Problem**

Telework continues to increase in popularity as information and communication technologies (ICTs) improve and employees seek more flexibility with work (Morganson et al., 2010). Research conducted by Global Workplace Analytics, revealed that regular home-based
work among the non-self-employed population increased 140 percent between 2005 and 2016 (Global Workplace Analytics, 2018). Approximately 25% of the United States workforce teleworks at some frequency; the Census Bureau does not provide granular data on the frequency of telework (Global Workplace Analytics, 2018). While flexible work options have become available in 40% more United States companies over the past 5 years, only seven percent made it available to most employees (Global Workplace Analytics, 2018). Despite the wide acceptance of telework, many companies have discontinued its use after implementation. Hewlett Packard, Yahoo, IBM, and Best Buy are among those companies that have rescinded their telework programs (Weinert et al., 2014; Wright, 2017). In fact, telework strategies have not grown as quickly as originally predicted by Jack Nilles, who coined the term “telecommuting” in 1972 (Linden & Oljemark, 2018).

Researchers argue that reduced visibility in teleworking environments leads to increased work hours and career advancement opportunities that are incommensurate with the level of effort necessary to demonstrate their devotion to work (Felstead et al., 2003; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012). Moreover, leaders in managerial roles are often unwilling to relinquish control and authority within the context of teleworking autonomy (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). Allen et al. (2015) explained that some leaders believe employees are less inclined to work diligently if they cannot be seen by supervisors and coworkers. Groen et al. (2018) used control theory to explain that the ability to monitor employee behavior is reduced with telework, and greater emphasis is placed on output controls as an alternative method of monitoring employees. On the same note, Golden and Eddleston (2019) asserted that the teleworker’s reduced presence creates difficulties in collaboration and coordination causing
leaders to infer a lack of concern for one’s job—a bias that may be weighed more heavily than production on the employee’s performance evaluation.

Teleworkers report negative feelings associated with the increased work effort related to the higher emphasis on output and incommensurate career advancement opportunities (Groen et al., 2018). Studies revealed that in several cases, teleworkers performed better than their work-office counterparts however they received less performance-based promotions and salary increases than their onsite coworkers (Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Marica, 2018; Weinert et al., 2014). Moreover, Weinert et al. (2014) reported that teleworkers, when compared to onsite employees, were more committed to the organization and were more satisfied with their supervisors but were less satisfied with promotions. Choi (2018) posited that the fear employees hold over stifled career progress alone deters employees from participating in telework programs.

Leadership scholars call for improvements and greater focus in career, task, and social support networks (Bartol & Zhang, 2007). This includes improvements in career advice, mentorship and sponsorship, career enhancing visibility, key developmental assignments, and advocacy for promotions (Bartol & Zhang, 2007). Many leadership development scholars suggested greater inclusion of social networks in leadership development practices across organizational levels (Chavez & Green, 2010; Cullen et al., 2012; Day et al., 2014; O’Connor & Quinn, 2004). Lautsch et al. (2009) highlighted a need for leaders to learn how to better support teleworking employees in an environment where they are frequently out of sight.

The recommended improvements were largely developed from studies concerning organizational and individual benefits and drawbacks of telework (Bartol & Zhang, 2007; Chavez & Green, 2010; Cullen et al., 2012; Day et al., 2014; O’Connor & Quinn, 2004), but
little research has been done to incorporate the leader’s behaviors and strategies concerning career advancement opportunities for teleworkers. Responding to these calls, this case study seeks to provide a greater understanding of the leadership behaviors and strategies that are effective in supporting the career advancement goals of teleworking employees.

**Problem Statement**

The general problem being addressed is the prominent concern that organizations are not providing adequate career advancement opportunities for employees working in a telecommuting environment resulting in low participation in cost-saving work arrangements and higher turnover intentions among teleworkers (Choi, 2018). Turnover costs are estimated at 150% of the employee’s annual salary (Choi, 2018). Researchers indicate that teleworking arrangements negatively impact career progression (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Van Steenbergen et al., 2017). Additionally, Choi (2018) noted that employees may decide against telework for fear of potentially adverse results on career progression. A common emotion reported among teleworkers is anxiety drawn from career advancement concerns (Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Taylor & Kavanaugh, 2005). Experts claim that much of the problem is related to the physical disconnect between teleworkers and leaders, reducing informal political networking (Hill et al., 2003), knowledge sharing (Golden et al., 2008), and leadership support (Dahlstrom, 2013) that is critical to career progression. ICTs provide an alternative mode of communication however it lacks critical communication elements such as closeness in physical proximity, nonverbal physical cues, frequent interaction, impromptu discussions, and informal feedback in passing (Gera, 2013). Lautsch et al. (2009) emphasized that the communication between leaders and teleworkers via ICT is more frequently used for monitoring and scheduling purposes versus
information sharing and development. Consequently, teleworkers are often sidelined during advancement opportunities (Hill et al., 2003).

In addition, research on non-standard work structures suggests that high-quality leader-follower relationships are a critical component of successful teleworking arrangements (Beham et al., 2015). Louie (2017) reported that leader-follower relationships are more difficult to maintain when at least one party is primarily teleworking; the approach in which leaders influence and inspire is altered. Research has been conducted to understand the nuances of telework; however, literature that explores how leaders address the specific challenge of career advancement in physically separated work environments has not received much attention (Groen et al., 2018). The specific business problem is that some leaders may lack effective leadership styles and behaviors to support career advancement for teleworkers within the Greater Denver Area, Colorado.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to add to the body of knowledge by expanding the understanding of effective leadership behaviors and strategies that support career advancement for teleworkers. The general problem is explored through an in-depth study of the leader’s approach to overcoming career development challenges and processes for teleworkers. Researchers have previously explored the adoption of telework; leadership emergence in teleworking environments due to psychological factors; management approach variations between onsite employees and teleworkers; and teleworker’s concerns over career advancement opportunities (Baruch & Nicholson, 1997; Brunelle, 2013; Charlier et al., 2016; MacDuffie, 2007); however, less attention is given to the behaviors and strategies leaders use to address career advancement challenges (Groen et al., 2018).
This multiple case study is intended to help reduce the gap between existing literature and current organizational practices by identifying successful career development strategies for current and future teleworking employees. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews to ascertain the individual experiences of leaders that have developed successful strategies to support career development for teleworkers. The author interviewed 12 leaders from three organizations who have developed solutions to the problem and explore what those solutions are. Participants were identified through face-to-face meetings, email inquiries, personal recommendations, and telephone conversations with organizational leaders.

**Nature of the Study**

Existing literature concerning the benefits and drawbacks of remote work indicate that career advancement is a major concern for teleworking employees (Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Marica, 2018; Weinert et al., 2014). While many leadership theories circulate, little research has been done to examine the leadership style and behaviors in relation to career development for teleworkers. This problem was investigated using a qualitative multiple case study.

**Discussion of Method**

The method selected for this study is a qualitative research method. The study was conducted to explore what leadership styles and behaviors are effective to promote career advancement with telework employees. With the qualitative method, the researcher can build a complex, holistic picture by analyzing words, pictures, reports, and detailed accounts of the participants in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, the qualitative research method is appropriate when evaluating individual experiences, individual and group behaviors, organizational operations, and interactions that influence relationships (Teherani et al., 2015). The researchers collected data through interviews to delve into the leader’s experiences through
discussions and stories related to specific events, feelings, motivations, concerns, and claims (Cypress, 2018). Based on this information and the non-numerical nature of the intended data, the author determined that a qualitative study is the best approach to support the research questions.

The quantitative method was considered based on the interest in leadership behaviors as it pertains to the stated problem however after further consideration, the researcher found that the quantitative approach would not fully support the purpose of this study. Quantitative research is conducted to evaluate hypotheses using numerical data and statistical analysis. It is undertaken with the assumption that measurements can be made from the collected data (Watson, 2015). The data is then analyzed to verify the measurements made and to identify trends and relationships (Watson, 2015). The data collected through this study will not be measured numerically for hypothesis testing therefore the quantitative method is not the best approach.

The mixed methods approach was also considered. Mixed methods research combines the data collection and analysis styles from both qualitative and quantitative research however the purpose of this approach extends beyond combining methods (Watkins & Gioia, 2015). It integrates assumptions about methodologies, research questions, and data to form interpretations by combining the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research (Watkins & Gioia, 2015). Due to the quantitative component, the mixed method research is not the best approach for this study.

**Discussion of Design**

Using the multiple case study design, researchers explored several data sources to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon including interviews, records, illustrations, and other historical data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Yin (2014) identified documents and interviews as sources
of data which will be utilized in this study for triangulation. According to Campbell (2015), a “case” refers to an individual, situation, organization, or phenomenon. Yin (2014) noted that case studies are abundant in data and useful for researching relevant issues within a real-life context.

Stake (2006) described a multiple case study as one that incorporates several single cases, all similar in nature, under one target case. The problem being investigated, and the information sources are represented by the selected case (Bhattacharya, 2017). Researchers can provide analytical insight on the similarity and differences between each case (Yin, 2014). For these reasons, the multiple case study was selected as the best design to satisfy the purpose of this inquiry.

The grounded theory approach focuses heavily on the development of new theories while the case study is intended to find patterns or irregularities in data that often form the basis for additional study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Researchers using this approach typically develop theories grounded in deep, structured, and systematic forms of data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher constantly compares information to reach a point of data saturation from which a theory can be discovered (Bhattacharya, 2017). This study is not meant to develop new theories therefore a grounded theory approach was not selected.

The phenomenological study is used to abstract the essence of an experience by exploring the meaning of a shared phenomenon (Bhattacharya, 2017). This approach necessitates participants to reflect on individual experiences in detail as a part of experiencing an event (Bhattacharya, 2017). The researcher uses this information to understand the structure of an experience. This type of study is generally used to explore and understand culture therefore it was ruled out as the best approach for this study.
Similarly, ethnography is the study of people within the context of their culture (Wolcott, 2008). For this type of study, the researcher is typically immersed in the culture context being studied for a prolonged period, often a year or more, to better understand the culture or people in their daily lives (Wolcott, 2008). This knowledge is derived from documenting events, interviews, and studying archived materials (Wolcott, 2008). This is outside the scope for this study, therefore, ethnography was not used.

Lastly, the narrative inquiry is used by researchers interested in understanding lived experiences through stories (Kim, 2015). The field text is essentially the stories, interviews, autobiographies, photos, journals, and other artifacts are the basic unit of analysis (Kim, 2015). This approach is employed when researchers desire to understand why individuals create meaning in their lives in the form of a narrative (Kim, 2015). Understanding the meaning behind individual stories does not fulfill the purpose of this study, and for that reason, the narrative approach was not selected.

**Summary of the Nature of the Study**

The qualitative method is considered the most appropriate for this research. This study focuses on understanding efficient leadership styles and behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. Using the qualitative method, the researcher can build a complex, holistic picture by analyzing words, pictures, reports, and detailed accounts of the participants in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, the qualitative research method is appropriate when evaluating personal experiences, individual and group behaviors, how organizations operate, and how interactions influence relationships (Teherani et al., 2015). The researcher utilized interviews to enter the participant’s world and perspective through discussions and stories related to specific events, feelings, motivations, concerns, claims, and so
on (Cypress, 2018). The design selected for this study was the multiple case study. The case study provided an opportunity to evaluate several data sources to gain a deeper understanding of the stated problem and viable solutions.

**Research Questions**

The relationship between the leader and the subordinate employee is an integral component of the study and provides the foundation for understanding the differences in career development strategies between teleworkers and non-teleworkers. The case was explored through discussions with leaders at various levels who have developed successful strategies to support career advancement for teleworkers. To fulfill the purpose of this study, the following research questions were answered:

RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors, if any, were used to successfully support career development among teleworkers?

RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting virtual career advancement versus that in a traditional environment?

RQ3. What challenges did leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

**Conceptual Framework**

This conceptual framework was provided to illustrate the complete picture of the ideas within this study. The present work integrates three leadership theories (path-goal theory, transactional leadership, and situational leadership) and associated behaviors related to the teleworker’s needs and goals. Path-goal theory highlights flexible leader behaviors consistent with follower motivation. Transactional leaders focus on leadership behaviors while excluding individual differences and leadership traits (McCleskey, 2014). Lastly, situational leadership
connects leadership styles with the follower’s readiness level. That said, path-goal theory, transactional leadership, and situational leadership are explained further within this conceptual framework.

**Path-Goal Theory**

The path-goal theory is a situational theory of leadership that draws from both expectancy theory and contingency theory (Dyer & Wallace, 2017). Expectancy theory can be summarized as one’s decisions to act in a manner that is dependent on the intrinsic benefits of the results. Contingency theory contends that leaders, individuals, and organizations can optimize decision making after considering how the external and internal situations may benefit from the action. In this connection, path-goal theory holds that the leader’s major function is to enhance subordinate employees’ instrumentalities and expectancies (Dyer & Wallace, 2017). This includes the perceived degree of relationship between the behavior and the relationship, and perceived relationship between effort and behavior. Moreover, Jeanes (2019) noted that path-goal theory maintains that that leader effectiveness and behaviors are contingent upon employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Therefore, although path-goal theory is a leadership theory, it relies a great deal on work motivation literature.

Robert House developed path-goal theory is 1971 as a dyadic theory of leadership—a theory concerning the relationship between the appointed supervisor and the employee—that has been expanded to include unit relationship and group leadership at the first level in recent years (Dyer & Wallace, 2017). It is generally interested in how formally appointed supervisors influence the employee’s motivation and attitude. The focus of path-goal theory is not with organizational leadership, emergent leadership, or leadership during periods of organizational change; rather, it is concerned with job task leadership (Dyer & Wallace, 2017).
Leadership Behaviors. According to Jeanes (2019), experts argue that there is a “best suited” leadership style that is based on the individual’s motivation. Four leadership behaviors are outlined under the path-goal theory: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented. Directive leader behavior refers to a situation in which the leader explains what is expected of the employee and how to perform a given task (House & Mitchell, 1974). The directive leader behavior is similar to the “telling” leadership style in situational leadership (Northouse, 2016). Supportive behavior is directed toward satisfying the needs of the employee and resembles the consideration behavior construct of the Ohio State studies (Northouse, 2016). Northouse (2016) added that supportive leaders are characterized by friendliness, approachability, and mutual respect. In addition, Bickle (2017) noted that nurturance and support is provided as required to bolster the employee’s motivation.

Northouse (2016) described participative leader behavior as one in which leaders create an environment that invites subordinates to participate in decision making and when the decisions impact the employee directly. Leaders will likely use participative leader behaviors when employees are autonomously motivated, and tasks are ambiguous (Bickle, 2017). Achievement oriented leader behaviors are effective for employees who set high expectations for themselves and desire continuous growth (Bickle, 2017). Moreover, Northouse (2016), leaders using achievement-oriented behaviors display a high degree of confidence that subordinates are capable of setting and accomplishing challenging goals.

Situational Moderators. Dyer and Wallace (2017) posited that two general boundary conditions influence the leadership effects on employees: employee characteristics and environmental characteristics. Employee characteristics involve goal orientation, cognitive ability, stress, authoritarianism, and locus of control. These characteristics influence the
employee’s perception of the leader’s behavior as a source of satisfaction (Northouse, 2016). The effectiveness of the applied leader behavior relies heavily of the employee’s characteristics.

Environmental characteristics are those outside of the follower’s control including task structure and authority systems. This includes role ambiguity, work autonomy, task structure and interdependence, task demands, and scope. Given these environmental characteristics, the path-goal theory focuses on guiding employees on paths that are unobstructed by barriers generated from employee and environmental characteristics (Northouse, 2016). Moreover, the function of the leader is to provide linkages between effort and goal attainment when a clear causal linkage is not provided by the environment (House, 1996). Researchers characterize teleworkers as highly skilled, have a higher degree of education (Groen et al., 2018), and autonomously motivated (Weinert et al., 2015). According to Weinert et al. (2015), telework is afforded to employees who are reliable and trusted by leaders as a result of previous performance. The atypical characteristics of the telework environment lends itself to flexible leader behaviors as described in the path-goal theory.

**Transactional Leadership**

Bass described transactional leadership as an exchange relationship between the leader and follower in which the leader sets expectations according to previously defined requirements (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Pieterse et al., 2010). Burns (1978) described transactional leadership as a distinct leadership style positing that the exchange of work and reward between the leader and employee maximizes gains for both the organization and the individual. Leaders offer contingent rewards such as monetary bonuses and promotions, and sanctions including negative feedback and corrective coaching for successful, or unsuccessful, achievement of set expectations (Hartley et al., 2019; McCleskey, 2014). Transactional leaders can measure success
against the organization’s existing reward-penalty system (Berkovich & Eyal, 2019). The rationale for employing a contingent reward system is to devise an incentive mechanism through which employees expect their efforts to bolster performance and to be rewarded in turn (Hartley et al., 2019). With that expectation, employees can minimize workplace anxiety, fulfill their own interests, and focus on clear organizational objectives (Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012). A major benefit of transaction leadership is that it helps organizations become more efficient and is effective in refining existing processes (Bass, 1991). The downfall is that with the focus on rules and systems, it may stifle innovation (Bass, 1991).

With teleworking arrangements drastically reducing the ability to monitor the employee’s daily activities, leaders place a greater emphasis on work products or outcomes (Felstead et al., 2003; Sewell & Taskin, 2015). Establishing measurements for performance can offset leadership concerns and trust regarding the lack of visibility associated with telework (Allen et al., 2015). With transactional leadership there is an emphasis on managing performance; this approach works best with employees that know their jobs well and are motivated by the reward-penalty system (McCleskey, 2014). Similarly, telework programs works best when employees are well versed in their profession (Guthrie, 1997; Sparrow, 2000). Sparrow (2000) defined telework as a privileged work arrangement afforded to employees who exemplify high standards of performance. According to Berkovich and Eyal (2019), transactional leadership has two major behavioral constructs: a) setting goals and providing rewards (contingent reward) and b) monitoring performance and applying corrective action when required (management by exception-active and passive). The following paragraphs will delve deeper into each construct of transactional leadership.
Contingent Reward. Bass (1978) posited that transactional leadership behaviors are related to various work outcomes that are conducive to organizational effectiveness including areas of identification and commitment to the organization. The transactional contingent reward system operates on a contract-based level by defining clear task requirements and role specifications for employees with prescribed performance criteria and rewards for goal achievement and effort (Xenikou, 2017). Field experts assert that employees are motivated by rewards and other positive outcomes to put greater effort towards performing their jobs well (Bass et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2011). Unlike annual performance evaluations, the contingent reward system offers more frequent reviews of the employee’s performance with suitable rewards when qualified (Kark et al., 2017).

Contingent reward leaders focus on reinforcing positive employee behaviors and strengthening performance management (Kark et al., 2017). These leaders empower qualified employees to take more control over their work tasks and expect employees to satisfy quality metrics while upholding organizational policies (Xenikou, 2017). Rewards that are valued by employees are offered for exemplary performance while a lack of compliance to policies, performance, and professionalism will omit the employee from the reward (Kark et al., 2017).

While telework was originally considered as a method of reducing real-estate costs (Kurland & Bailey, 1999), it is currently envisioned as a flexible method of organizing work and ergonomics (Berkley et al., 2017). In lieu of financial rewards, organizations may offer telecommuting as a non-monetary incentive to retain talent and to develop intrinsic motivation among employees (Mayo et al., 2008). Moreover, increased flexibility is an important non-monetary reward that is inexpensive and relatively easy to implement and is therefore often favored by organizations (Mayo et al., 2008). The notion of telework as a reward drives concerns
among employees who desire to receive rewards and recognition beyond flexible work arrangements, including involvement in decision-making activities and allocation of meaningful work that promotes career advancement (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). In this respect the concern is that “out of sight” truly is “out of mind,” meaning that employees who are rarely seen within the traditional office are forgotten or otherwise not considered for opportunities that may promote career advancement (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). Marica (2018) argued that the lack of direct contact with leaders and top decision makers complicates the performance assessment process, particularly when considering promotion for the respective employee. As a part of the present work, leadership behaviors that are conducive to career advancement among teleworkers within the scope of the transactional contingent reward system will be addressed.

**Management by Exception.** Transactional leaders work to ensure that conditions are optimal for successful task performance by monitoring work and implementing corrective action when necessary (Bass, 1991). In management by exception (MBE) the leader takes corrective action to prevent mistakes using either an active or passive approach (Bass, 1991). Bass et al. (2003) described the use of contingent sanctions, or active MBE, as an active search for deviations from performance standards and rules followed by necessary corrective actions. Conversely, leadership only intervenes when performance objectives have not been met or after problems have become serious in passive MBE (Bass et al., 2003).

Using the MBE approach, leaders can empower employees to take responsibility for their work (Moore & Newsome, 2019). Employees are motivated by a desire to avoid sanctions for failing to meet standards, or to avoid corrective action as an indication of a mistake in one’s work (Kark et al., 2017). The benefit is that leaders have more time and energy to focus on prominent issues; allowing employees to make decisions and increasing responsibility over their
work increases their motivation and saves time for the leader (Moore & Newsome, 2019). Moreover, Moore and Newsome described one disadvantage is the increased likelihood of mistakes that could potentially become expensive and time consuming to identify and correct. Within the telework environment, employees are given more responsibility over their work thus making MBE a likely leadership approach in this arena (Kark et al., 2017).

**Situational Leadership**

Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard introduced the situational leadership theory, formerly called the life-cycle theory of leadership, in the *Training and Development Journal* in 1969 (Graeff, 1997; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1977). Since its inception, situational leadership (SL) has undergone many revisions to improve the model (Blanchard et al., 1992; Graeff, 1997). The central idea is that there is no single best way to influence people (Hersey et al., 2008). The leadership style that should be used depends on the performance readiness level of the individual being influenced (Hersey et al., 2008). In other words, maximum leader effectiveness is achieved by matching the appropriate leadership style with the given level of follower readiness (Papworth et al., 2009).
Using the SL model, leaders have an avenue to practice different variations of leadership styles (Hersey et al., 2008). This model is based on a reciprocal relationship between (a) the amount of direction and guidance (task behavior) provided by the leader, (b) the amount of socioemotional support (relationship behavior) provided by the leader, and (c) the level of performance readiness exhibited by the follower in performing a specific task (Hersey et al., 2008). Experts describe task behaviors as the extent in which leaders engage in defining follower roles, providing instructions, establishing formal lines of communication, and creating organizational patterns (Bass, 2008; Daft, 2014; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981). This includes telling employees what to do, how to do it, when it should be done, and by whom (Hersey et al., 2008). Conversely, relationship behaviors include creating harmonious relationships, engaging in two-way or multiway communication, integrating employees into the process of developing action plans, and reducing emotional conflict (Bass, 2008; Daft, 2014; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981; Hersey et al., 2008). A balance between task and relationship behaviors is then applied according to the employee’s level of performance readiness (Hersey et al., 2008). The leadership styles continuum (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Hersey, 1985; Hersey et al., 2008) includes:

- **Style 1 (S1).** The *telling* leadership style, also referred to as crisis leadership, is characterized by a higher-than-average amount of task behaviors and a lower-than-average amount of relationship behavior.

- **Style 2 (S2).** The *selling* leadership style is characterized by higher-than-average amounts of both task and relationship behaviors.
• Style 3 (S3). This *participating* leadership style is characterized by a lower-than-average amount of task behaviors and a higher-than-average amount of relationship behaviors.

• Style 4 (S4). The *delegating* leadership style is characterized by lower-than-average amounts of both task and relationship behaviors.

The crucial variable in the leadership situation is the relationship between the leader and the follower, and in order to maximize this relationship the leader should determine the task-specific outcomes required of the follower (Hersey et al., 2008). This allows the leader to determine the follower’s level of performance readiness, or the extent in which the follower demonstrates an ability and willingness to accomplish the task (Hersey et al., 2008). That said, performance readiness is dichotomized into two components—*ability* and *willingness* (Hersey et al., 2008). Ability is defined as the demonstrated knowledge (task understanding), skill (proficiency), and experience (ability gained through prior performance of the task) an individual brings to the given activity (Thompson & Vecchio, 2009). Likewise, willingness is defined as the level of confidence (self-assurance), commitment (dedication), and motivation (desire) to perform the task (Thompson & Vecchio, 2009). The continuum of performance readiness (Hersey et al., 2008) includes:

• Readiness level 1 (R1). The follower is unable to perform the task and lacks confidence, or unable to perform the task and lacks commitment.

• Readiness level 2 (R2). The follower is unable to perform the task but confident, or unable to perform the task but motivated to try.

• Readiness level 3 (R3). The follower is able perform the task but apprehensive about doing it alone, or the follower is able but unwilling to apply it to the task.
• Readiness level 4 (R4). The follower is able and confident about performing, or able and committed to accomplishing the task.

The appropriate leadership style for a follower in R1 for a specific task is the *telling* (S1) approach. Followers in the R1 group are unable and insecure, or unable and unwilling (Hersey et al., 2008). Using S1, leaders can provide task information in inconsiderable amounts, reduce the fear of mistakes, focus on instructions, and provide step-by-step guidance for followers who are unable and insecure (Hersey et al., 2008). Further, leaders can attend to followers who are unable and unwilling by stating facts directly, reinforcing small improvements, reinforcing consequences for nonperformance, and managing emotional levels (Hersey et al., 2008).

Next in the range of performance readiness is R2. In this group, followers are unable but confident or willing to try (Hersey et al., 2008). For maximum effectiveness, leaders should apply S2, the *selling* style, at this level of readiness (Hersey et al., 2008). Leaders can use persuasion to obtain “buy-in,” check for task understanding, explain the “why” and emphasize the “how” aspects, and explore related skills using the *selling* approach (Hersey et al., 2008). This differs from telling in that the leader is providing an opportunity for dialogue and clarification for the purpose of obtaining buy-in from the follower (Hersey et al., 2008).

The third readiness level is R3 in which the follower has developed the ability to perform the task but lacks confidence or willingness (Hersey et al., 2008). The best leadership approach for this situation is S3, *participating* (Hersey et al., 2008). The leader using the S3 for able but insecure followers can be effective by establishing above-average amounts of supportive and facilitative behaviors. This includes utilizing two-way or multiway communication, inviting input from the follower, allowing follower-made decisions, and offering praise and confidence building conversation (Hersey et al., 2008). Alternatively, leaders can share decision-making
responsibilities with followers, offer “need to know” information, focus on results, and involve followers in the consequences of nonperformance to increase commitment for able but unwilling followers (Hersey et al., 2008).

Lastly, R4 followers are those that are both able and confident or willing (Hersey et al., 2008). The appropriate leadership style match is S4, or delegating (Hersey et al., 2008). This leadership style includes observing and monitoring as opposed to providing specific task instructions (Hersey et al., 2008). Using the S4 style, leaders should resist overloading followers with tasks and responsibilities, receive updates, encourage autonomy and freedom for risk taking, and delegate activities (Hersey et al., 2008).

Although there are leadership style and performance readiness level matches, there are no fixed rules within the SL model (Thompson & Vecchio, 2009). The SL model is intended to improve the odds of developing effective and successful leaders (Hersey et al., 2008). Vecchio (1987) noted that the degrees of task behaviors and relationship behaviors are examined together within the extent of follower readiness to rationalize leader effectiveness. In other words, the leader’s ability to effectively influence others relies on their ability to adapt leadership behaviors to the given situation (Hersey et al., 2008).

The telework environment creates a unique situation in which leaders must adapt their behaviors. Given the unique nature of telework, the relationship between the leader and employee may differ in some ways from that of in-office personnel, including behaviors that support career advancement (Mackenzie, 2010; Walker, 2010). Employing the same leadership style for both collocated and off-site employees is disadvantageous and can lead to employee disengagement, conflict, and the redefining of people as a mere source of production (Morris, 2008; Zaccaro & Bader, 2003). The concept of SL is that there is no single best approach to
leading, rather any leadership style can be more, or less, effective depending on the situation (Hersey et al., 2008). That said, telework is often offered as a reward or form of career advancement for high performing employees (Church, 2015). This suggests that there is an increased level of performance readiness among teleworkers therefore it may prove beneficial to investigate the leader’s effectiveness among teleworkers through the lens of SL. The link between SL and leadership in telework is the leader’s ability to adapt their leadership styles and behaviors to match the telework situation in such a way that sustains or improves the leader’s effectiveness.

**Summary of the Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework includes three elements that align with leadership behaviors and implementing change to support career advancement for teleworkers: path-goal theory, transactional leadership theory, and situational leadership theory. Within the realm of telework, employees are afforded more responsibility to control their own work (Pollack & Pollack, 2015). Path-goal theory is centered on flexible leader behaviors based on the employee’s motivation (Dyer & Wallace, 2017). The objective for leaders under this theory is to create a clear path for employees to achieve set goals. The focus of transactional leadership is on the exchange between the leader and the employee for meeting targets (contingent reward) and methods of monitoring and correcting errors in production (MBE active and passive; Bass, 1985). Additionally, situational leadership is described to support the study by explaining possible leadership responses to varying levels of employee readiness and maturity. This focuses on the level of employee commitment and competence and the most appropriate leadership response (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).
Definition of Terms

Career advancement: Career advancement defines the upward progression of one’s career by promotion to a higher title within the same field or from one occupation to another (McKay, 2018).

Flexible work arrangement: Flexible work arrangements incorporate various types of flexible work programs including telework, virtual work, part-time work, and flexi-time work arrangements (Allen et al., 2015).

Greater Denver Area: The Greater Denver Area encompasses all major cities surrounding Denver, Colorado between Colorado Springs and Boulder (Crunchbase Staff, 2019).

Telework: Telework is the performance of tasks that are normally conducted within the office in a remote off-site location using information and communication technology (ICT), for at least a portion of the work schedule (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Assumptions

The following assumptions are accepted as plausible or true. This research study was developed with the expectation that data concerning the topic of effective leadership styles and behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers would be obtained through leaders who have successfully developed strategies to support career growth among teleworking employees. The first assumption is that participants will provide truthful and knowledgeable responses to the interview questions. Finally, the sampling of teleworkers in the Denver area are representative of teleworkers in other regions.
Limitations

The data collected from the participants of this study are limited to leaders who have direct experience with career advancement among teleworkers. The results drawn from the collected data are limited to the study sample only. Furthermore, research with participants is limited to Denver, Colorado. The sample size provides limitations as the results cannot be generalized for all leaders who work directly with teleworkers. Additionally, the use of a qualitative study introduces limitations related to ambiguities within the human language. With the qualitative study the participants have more control over the content of the data being collected therefore the results cannot be verified objectively against the scenarios provided by the respondents. Likewise, qualitative data is not evaluated to determine whether it is statistically significant or the result of chance, therefore, the findings cannot be extended to wider populations with a high degree of certainty. Lastly, time presents further limitations to this study as an unlimited amount of time would allow for more in-depth research and data collection.

Delimitations

This study draws from the perspectives and experiences of leaders who have first-hand knowledge of leading teleworkers through career advancement. It does not include the perspective of leaders who have not supervised teleworkers or the experiences of teleworking employees. Finally, the study population incorporates only leaders within Colorado’s Greater Denver Area.

Significance of the Study

Relationship to the Field of Study

This study is focused on the leadership styles, behaviors, and strategies used to support career advancement among teleworkers and is therefore relevant to the field of business
leadership. The current challenges of career advancement undertaken by teleworkers are addressed within this study. Understanding the nuances of telework parallels the expansion of information technology in level of importance as physical work locations gradually decrease (Nakrošienė et al., 2019). This indicates that the utilization of telework is rapidly increasing (Nakrošienė et al., 2019). Exploring leadership behaviors and strategies that support career advancement among teleworkers is significant to the field because the findings may potentially provide valuable information that can aid organizational leaders in improving growth opportunities for teleworkers. Likewise, the findings of this study may lead to improvements in leadership behaviors that may potentially increase the organizational benefits of current telework programs.

Reduction of Gaps

Exploring successful leadership behaviors and strategies that support career advancement among teleworkers may reduce gaps between existing literature and current organizational practices. Specifically, identifying effective leadership styles and behaviors that support career advancement in a virtual environment may create an opportunity to discuss relevant solutions for teleworkers going forward. This information could potentially be utilized to develop new policies for career development within the virtual environment. Moreover, understanding the differences in leadership behaviors between career development in a virtual environment versus that of a traditional setting could increase the leader’s awareness and ability to develop telecommuting employees for career growth. Finally, current research outlines significant changes within the leader-subordinate employee relationship as a result of virtual work arrangements (Smith et al., 2018); contributions to this research could be made by identifying
changes in strategies and behaviors that bolster career development strategies in a virtual environment.

**Implications for Biblical Integration**

In the Old Testament of the Bible, God’s leadership is visible through His interactions with people including Adam and Abraham. God’s leadership approach can be portrayed as transactional in the sense that He provides clear instructions and intervenes only when necessary. This occurs when God’s people fail to obey His instructions, fail to meet objectives, or break a covenant made with God. The leadership style in which leaders intervene only when necessary to correct or prevent a problem is MBE (Burns, 1978). Further, God demonstrated transactional leadership by providing a reward/penalty system for those whom He instructed to fulfill His plan.

In the book of Genesis, God created Adam and placed him to work in the Garden of Eden. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (Genesis, 2:15, ESV). God provided Adam with clear instructions for the work that should be done and the boundaries in which he should conduct himself. God said, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17). Likewise, Adam was well informed of the consequences of disobedience. Adam disobeyed God’s commands and was therefore admonished according to the reward/penalty system that God established. God said to Adam, “Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life” (Genesis 3:17). In this example, it is seen that God intervenes with harsh punishment when His commands are disobeyed.
As God greatly punishes the disobedient, he also rewards the faithful. God made a covenant with Abraham because of his faithfulness and confirmed it later with Isaac. God instructed Abram to leave his home and his family and go to a land shown to him. The transaction between God and Abram was that if Abram did as God commanded, God would bless him and all the families of the earth. The reward for Abram’s obedience is described in Genesis 12:2, “I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, calling him, “the father of a multitude of nations” (Genesis 17: 5). In addition, God said to Abraham, “You shall be fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you” (Genesis 17: 6). Likewise, God promised Abraham that he would have a child with his wife despite their old age. God confirmed the covenant with Isaac saying, “I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge” (Genesis 24: 4-5).

**Summary of the Significance of the Study**

This study is focused on leadership behaviors and strategies that promote career advancement for teleworkers. Understanding current leadership behaviors in this area could potentially contribute to improvements in current telework programs. Nakrošienė et al. (2019) suggested that the use of telework within organizations is rapidly increasing. That said, exploring leadership behaviors as it pertains to career advancement for teleworkers could potentially provide valuable information that may lead to discussions for relevant solutions within current telework programs. Moreover, understanding the differences in leadership behaviors between career development in a virtual environment versus that of a traditional setting could increase the
leader’s awareness and ability to develop teleworking employees for career growth. Lastly, this study may contribute to current research by identifying changes in strategies and behaviors that improve career development strategies in a virtual environment.

A Review of Professional and Academic Literature

The subject of leadership in telework has received great attention in literature, most notably in areas of leadership style and its influence on performance and job satisfaction (Belias & Kouzelios, 2014; Dahlstrom, 2013; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Torten et al., 2016). Belias and Kouzelios (2014) described job satisfaction as the difference between employee expectations and reality concerning job outcomes. Moreover, experts in job satisfaction and turnover research (Belias & Kouzelios, 2014; Guan et al., 2017; Torten et al., 2016; Tschopp et al., 2014) agreed that an individual’s attitude and expectations for career advancement greatly influences job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Within literature, researchers argue that increasing shifts toward telework leads to deficient career advancement opportunities that are incommensurate with the effort required to prove one’s devotion to work (Felstead et al., 2003; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012). This study is set to explore the leadership behaviors and styles that impact career advancement and its subsequent effect on turnover intentions. Apropos of leadership in the telework environment, Dahlstrom (2013) found that the study of leader behaviors is more important that the study of leader traits; therefore, the focal point of this study is the impact of leader behaviors on developmental opportunities and consideration for career advancement.

As a general framework, this literature review includes an analysis of seminal work and current literature using a compilation of data retrieved from academic and scholarly sources. The electronic database search strategy for this review includes the use of Google Scholar and the
Jerry Falwell Library provided by Liberty University. These engines were accessed to search for peer-reviewed journal articles involving concepts related to telework career advancement opportunities and leadership behaviors within a variety of industries. The search was extended to sources related to the implications of telework on job satisfaction. The following search terms were used: career advancement, implications of telework on career advancement, leadership behavior, and job satisfaction. For the purpose of this study, the time range was limited to studies published within five years of writing this literature review (specifically, articles published during or after 2015). Exceptions were made for frequently cited works published before the allotted timeframe.

The literature review begins with the current state and history of telework and progresses through the conceptual framework supported by path-goal theory, transactional leadership, situational leadership, and associated leader behaviors related to the teleworker’s needs and goals. Using the tenants of path-goal theory, the researcher examines the literature on leadership behaviors and how the follower’s motivational needs and environmental contexts influence the effectiveness of the applied leadership style. According to Dyer and Wallace (2017), path-goal leadership holds that the leader’s primary function is to bolster positive outcomes and rewards by establishing an unobstructed path to goal achievement (i.e., clarifying objectives, eliminating obstacles, and improving job satisfaction). They further noted that the leader’s effectiveness depends on various situational factors and employee characteristics. Withing this study, path goal theory will be discussed in terms of four leader behaviors (directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented) and the situational moderators (employee characteristics, environmental characteristics) that influence the leader’s effectiveness under an applied approach.
The reward feature of path-goal theory is also present in transactional leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass et al., 2003; Burns, 1978; Gordon, 2017; Zareen et al., 2015). Within transactional leadership, contingent rewards are afforded to employees who satisfy performance goals (Sosik & Jung, 2018). Similar to path-goal leadership, leaders using contingent reward behaviors define a clear path for followers to accomplish set goals (House, 1971; Northouse, 2016; Sosik & Jung, 2018). In addition, Hussain et al. (2017) posited that transactional leadership behaviors set the foundation for specifying expectations, negotiating contracts, clarify responsibility, and providing rewards and recognition for expected performance between leader and follower. This style of leadership satisfies the subordinate’s needs through recognition or exchange behaviors after fulfilling the agreed upon objectives and goals as established by the leader (Hussain et al., 2017). To further understand the impact of leadership behaviors in terms of performance-reward exchange, literature on the contingent rewards and management by exception are explored as constructs of transactional leadership.

In another way, path-goal leadership resonates with situational leadership. The most apparent connection between the two is the expectation for leaders to adapt their behaviors to meet the follower’s needs in varying situations (Blanchard, 1985; Carroll, 2017; Dyer & Wallace, 2017; Hersey et al., 2001; House, 1971; Northouse, 2016). The main premise in situational leadership is that no single best leadership style exists and that common approaches must be modified to match the characteristics of the follower (Carter et al., 2015; Ghasabeh et al., 2015). Literature on how situational leadership styles (e.g., telling, selling, participating, and delegating) in relation to the follower’s readiness level influence the perception of career advancement among teleworkers is examined in this review.
To better understand the impact of leader behaviors on career advancement in the telework environment, the major impediments to career advancement must be considered. This study will explore three major barriers to career advancement in telework: isolation, role ambiguity, and work intensification. Marineau (2017) asserted that high performers are sometimes passed over for promotion when operating outside of the primary office. Experts (Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Nakrošienė et al., 2019; Vega et al., 2015) revealed that telework has the propensity to diminish career growth opportunities as a result of isolation and role ambiguity. Moreover, Sewell and Taskin (2015) highlighted that isolation from telework often leads to overcompensation to create a virtual presence that prevents exclusion from decision-making activities. The relationship between work intensification and commitment has been investigated in the telework arena finding that telework may have positive implications on organizational commitment, but it comes at the cost of increased work extensivity and intensity (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Moreover, Birdie and Jain (2015) asserted that physical distance and infrequent communication between the leaders and teleworker leads to role ambiguity which negatively impacts career advancement.

Present State of Telework

According to Matos and Galinsky (2015), telework research is a collection of nonexperimental studies conducted on people in their existing jobs, most of which is absent standardized control groups for testing various ideas. The authors further stated that compiling and analyzing data from multiple studies is the only way to truly evaluate telework outcomes with different variables and examine the limitations of one’s assumptions. Furthermore, the undertakings by practitioners to build upon present literature created a way for researchers to examine the effects of shifts in how, when, and where telework occurs (Allen et al., 2015; Bloom
et al., 2013; Boell et al., 2016; Chithambo, 2011; Matos & Galinsky, 2015). Matos and Galinsky (2015) emphasized that telework research provides a balanced view to counter the proponents who espouse telework as a universal remedy to various issues such as traffic congestions, gender equality in work, and work-family balance, and the pessimists who maintain that it automatically impedes collaboration and innovation.

Trends in telework show that it continues to receive national attention (Allen et al., 2015; Bloom et al., 2013; Gallardo & Whitacre, 2018; Kane & Tomer, 2015; Strauss, 2016). Bloom et al. (2013) posited that significantly more employees are working from home-based offices aiding in individual, organizational, and environmental improvements. A recent data analysis of the 100 largest U.S. metropolitan areas by Brookings Institution discovered that commuting patterns are changing (Kane & Tomer, 2015). In addition, Chithambo (2011) noted that the number of teleworkers in the United States increased from four million in 1995 to 23.6 million in the year 2000. According to Strauss (2016), the number of U.S. employees that telework at least part of the time, apart from those that are self-employed, increased by over 100% within the past 20 years. Moreover, Brumm (2016) reported that 40% of the U.S. workforce fulfills at least a portion of their work duties remotely. With that, industries including finance, information technology, and transportation have experienced a substantial growth in teleworking opportunities in recent years (Mann & Adkins, 2017). Mayo et al. (2016) posited that leaders and employees that are predominantly “white collared” in nature more commonly use telework. This includes knowledge-based workers and those with higher degrees of education (Mayo et al., 2016).

Although it appears that telework adoption is steadily increasing, research remains divergent within extant literature and public statistics (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016).
Although the bulk of reviewed literature showed an uptrend in telework utilization, the Bureau of Labor Statistics American Time Use Survey (ATUS) reported a two percent decrease in the number of U.S. teleworkers. Similarly, Matos and Galinsky (2015) reported that telework usage decreased from 31\% to 23\% between the years 2005 and 2008. Moreover, Boell et al. (2016) asserted that the absorption of telework has been slower than predicted. Experts presumed that leading technology companies such as Hewlett Packard and Yahoo! would spearhead the telework initiative however both companies either restricted employee participation or abolished the program entirely (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016). According to Boell et al. (2016), variations in the definition of telework or work itself caused inconsistencies in statistical data. Researchers highlighted that the emergence of new telework definitions from innovative technologies and new types of telework complicate the ability to conduct comparable studies (Boell et al., 2016; Thulin et al., 2019). According to Spector (2017), ATUS and similar polling agencies do not accurately capture the condition of telework because they often include self-employed and ad-hoc telework which encompasses those who take work home to complete outside of normal duty hours.

**History of Telework**

The background and legislative framework for establishing telework began nearly three decades ago in response to transportation concerns and broadened into an influential recruitment and retention tool (Allen et al., 2015; Chiru, 2017; Waters, 2015). The term *telecommuting* initially appeared in Jack Nilles’s (1975) article addressing developments that impact traditional urban structures. Nilles also proposed telecommuting as an alternative to transportation and scarce nonrenewable resources (Nilles et al., 1976). This original work occurred before the advent of the Internet and defined telework as a “network” with telecommunications and
computational elements which provided opportunities for employees to work in offices closer to home (Gallardo & Whitacre, 2018). Information technology was not sophisticated enough to place an emphasis on home-based offices therefore much of the early concepts relied on the use of satellite offices (Gallardo & Whitacre, 2018).

According to Chiru (2017), the United States is among the most advanced countries for telework adoption having a legislative basis for providing and regulating such programs. Congressional interest in proliferating telework among executive organizations began with Public Law 106-346, Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2001, which required agencies to institute policies under which eligible employees could participate in telework programs to the maximum extent practicable without diminishing performance (Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2000). What is more, years of legislative activity culminated in 2010 when President Barak Obama signed the Telework Enactment Act into law (Chiru, 2017). This act and its provisions outlined the requirements for telework including specified roles in managing programs, training standards, expectations for policy guidance and reporting, and provided a framework for leveraging technology to maximize utilization.

That said, researchers give credit to technological advancements for the growth of telework among the U.S. workforce (Chithambo, 2011; Karis et al., 2016; Messenger & Gschwind, 2016; Picu & Dinu, 2016; Waters, 2015). Karis et al. (2016) noted that technology improves the organization’s ability to engage the best talent by allowing employers to recruit highly skilled candidates without regard to their location. This allows organizational leaders to concentrate efforts on critical skills and best practices within the workforce unhindered by geographical boundaries (Picu & Dinu, 2016). According to Allen et al. (2015), affordable
technology that facilitates mobile connections is pivotal in increasing the availability of telework for employees worldwide. Messenger and Gschwind (2016) supported this notion through their own study that investigates the effects of ICTs on telework. They found that technological advancements fostered the evolution of telework in three separate stages (home office, mobile office, and virtual office) in what they called “the three generations of telework” (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016, p. 196). Through this technology, users could quickly access and store data over the Internet; share capabilities and resources; and check emails, messages, stock trades, and so on simultaneously from smaller handheld devices (Ghilic-Micu & Stoica, 2016).

**Concepts**

The conceptual framework in this study explains the natural progression of the phenomenon and how the research problem will be explored. It is connected to the concepts, theories, and empirical research used to promote the knowledge espoused within this study. Moreover, it provides an integrated method of viewing the problem and presents a visual display of how the ideas within this study relate to one another.

This study integrates three leadership theories (path-goal leadership, transactional leadership, and situational leadership) and their relationship to career advancement within the telework environment. Path-goal theory focuses on leadership behaviors that influence motivation, satisfaction, and performance to accomplish set goals (Bickle, 2017; Dyer & Wallace, 2017; Jeanes, 2019; Northouse, 2016). In such, leaders consider follower and environmental characteristics to determine the most appropriate leader behavior (Jeanes, 2019). Path-goal theory closely resonates with many other theories of leadership including transactional leadership and situational leadership. For example, both path-goal theory and transactional leadership focus on achieving established objectives (Bass et al., 2003; Northouse, 2016). Under
both models, leaders create comprehensible goals for the follower in which rewards are resultantly offered (Bass et al., 2003; Northouse, 2016).

The similarities between path-goal theory and situational leadership include the belief that a single leadership style will rarely work in all situations (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al., 2008, 2013; House, 1996; Jeanes, 2019). Situational leadership experts (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al., 2008, 2013) noted that there is no single best way to influence individuals or groups to accomplish goals; therefore, the leader must adapt their behaviors to meet the follower’s needs in varying situations. Similarly, scholars of path-goal theory (Bickle, 2017; Dyer & Wallace, 2017; Jeanes, 2019; Northouse, 2016) explained that a “best suited” leadership style exists but is contingent upon and specific to the follower’s motivation and is influenced by follower and environmental characteristics. The following sections will delve into path-goal theory, transactional leadership, and situational leadership.

**Path-Goal Theory.** Building on Victor Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory of motivation, the path-goal theory holds that leader effectiveness and behaviors are contingent upon employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance (Bickle, 2017; Dyer & Wallace, 2017; Jeanes, 2019; Northouse, 2016). The path-goal theory was developed by Robert House (1971) who sought to identify the leadership style best suited to enhance employee motivation and performance by determining the employee’s characteristics (i.e., experience, task-related abilities, and locus of control) and the environmental contexts that moderate the leader behavior-outcome relationship (Jeanes, 2019). According to Dyer and Wallace (2017), effective leaders simplify work processes by complementing environmental and employee characteristics. Moreover, path-goal theory was
developed as a model to encourage employees to accomplish designated goals (Northouse, 2016) and emphasizes the relationship between the leader, follower, and task (Bickle, 2017).

Leadership training programs, improving one’s path-goal leadership for example, have not been developed from the path-goal theory (Northouse, 2016). Rather, path-goal theory offers comprehensive knowledge that can be applied to improve leadership in ongoing settings. It provides a general set of recommendations based on employee and task characteristics for how leaders should act in various situations (Northouse, 2016). Specifically, it informs leaders when to be directive, supportive, participative, or achievement oriented. Path-goal theory assumes that leaders are flexible and able to adjust according to situational demands (Northouse, 2016). Moreover, changes in leadership style are predicated by employee and task characteristics. According to Carroll (2017), employee satisfaction is contingent upon the leader’s performance as a facilitator and the extent to which rewards are offered for effective performance. Within the telework environment and specifically concerning employee career advancement as a component of job satisfaction, path-goal theory may be effectively used.

Using path-goal theory, experts argue that there is a “best suited” leadership style based on the employee’s motivation (Jeanes, 2019). In the seminal paper (House, 1971), leader behavior was dichotomized into two general classes: path-goal clarifying behaviors and behaviors aimed at satisfying the subordinate employee’s needs. According to House (1996), these behaviors were only generally defined, not operationally as a component of the theory; therefore, testing these components through preexisting Ohio State measures of leader “initiating structure” and “consideration” only provided approximations as a result. Subsequently, House and Mitchell (1974) defined four leader behaviors as directive, supportive, participative, and
achievement oriented in more specific terms. Figure 2 delineates the basic design of path-goal theory.

**Figure 2** Path-Goal Theory. Reprinted from *Path Goal Employer Services*, 2019, https://pathgoal.com/path-goal-theory. Copyright 2019 by PathGoal Employer Services.

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In this review, path-goal theory is discussed by in terms of leader behaviors and situational moderators which include environmental and employee characteristics. Leadership behavior is subdivided into four main constructs: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented (House & Mitchell, 1974). Directive leader behaviors refers to a situation in which the leader explains how to accomplish given tasks (House & Mitchell, 1974). House and Mitchell described supportive leader behaviors as behaviors that satisfy the human needs and well-being of the follower. Northouse (2013) noted that participative leaders invite consult subordinates to obtain their opinion and ideas, thus allowing them to participate in decision-making activities. Finally, achievement-oriented behaviors are best suited for employees that have elevated expectations for themselves and desire to be challenged (Bickle, 2017). These constructs remain relevant to this study by exploring the various leadership styles and the differences that successfully support career advancement among teleworkers. Situational moderators are discussed to understand the influence that employee and environmental characteristics have on the leader’s effectiveness under any given leadership approach. Situational moderators are discussed in terms of employee characteristics and environmental, or task, characteristics.

**Directive Path-Goal Clarifying Leader Behavior.** According to House and Mitchell (1974), directive leader behavior refers to a situation in which the leader explains what is
expected of the employee and how to perform a given task. Bickle (2017) reported that the
directive style is most effective in situations in which tasks are complex, ambiguous, and have
unclear boundaries. The directive leader behavior is similar to the “telling” leadership style in
situation leadership (Northouse, 2016). Nonauthoritarian and nonpunitive directive behavior
was emphasized in the seminal path-goal theory to reduce role ambiguity, clarify employee
perceptions concerning the extent to which their effort would result in goal attainment, and the
degree to which their efforts will be extrinsically rewarded through recognition by leaders,
monetary increases, advancement, and the like (House, 1996).

According to path-goal theory, leaders are most effective when their approach
complement the characteristics of the employee and the environment (Bickle, 2017; Dyer &
Wallace, 2017; House, 1996; Northouse, 2016). Researchers characterize teleworkers as highly
skilled, have a higher degree of education (Enslin & Schulz, 2015; Groen et al., 2018; Sewell &
Taskin, 2015), and autonomously motivated (Sewell & Taskin, 2015; Weinert et al., 2015).
Moreover, telework is afforded to employees who are reliable and trusted by leaders as a result
of previous performance (Weinert et al., 2015). Given the typical characteristics of the
teleworker, path-goal theory suggest that directive leader behaviors are counterintuitive to job
satisfaction. This is relevant to this study as the purpose is to identify leadership behaviors that
promote the career advancement needs of teleworkers. This study is set to explore how directive
leadership behaviors influence career advancement, or the perception of career advancement
opportunities in the telework environment.

Supportive Leader Behavior. Supportive behavior is directed toward satisfying the needs
of the employee (Bickle, 2017; Dyer & Wallace, 2017; Malik, 2013; Northouse, 2016; Rana et
al., 2019). According to Malik (2013), supportive leaders respond to the human needs and well-
being of the subordinate employee by showing concern. Northouse (2016) added that supportive leaders are characterized by friendliness, approachability, and mutual respect. In addition, Bickle (2017) noted that nurturance and support is provided as required to bolster the employee’s motivation. This researcher found that supportive leadership is effective when employees are unsatisfied, and tasks are mundane, unchallenging, and repetitive. Similarly, Dyer and Wallace (2017) asserted that supportive leader behaviors are best suited for situations in which work is stressful, dull, or hazardous. According to path-goal theory, a subordinate with a strong need for affiliation would prefer supportive leader behaviors as concern and friendliness serve as a source of satisfaction. Moreover, Rana et al. (2019) posited that supportive leadership is appropriate when employees maintain an internal locus of control with prominent levels of confidence in their performance capabilities.

Similarly, Bae et al. (2019) found that supportive leadership behaviors reduce nonparticipation in telework programs. In the telework environment, employees tend to take control over how tasks are performed (Beauregard et al., 2018; Costa et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2016; Vega et al., 2015). Rana et al. (2019) found that supportive leadership styles complement employees who tend to desire control over task performance and reject autocratic authority. Rana et al. noted that supportive leadership, when applied appropriately, results in greater job satisfaction.

In addition, Lapierre et al. (2015) posited that the possibility gaining support from leaders decreases in the telework environment. Weinert et al. (2015) found that telework characteristics influence telework-enabled stressors that increases work-exhaustion and turnover intentions. According to path-goal theory, supportive leader behaviors help employees accomplish goals in stressful environments (Dyer & Wallace, 2017). Given the characteristics of the telework
environment it can be suggested that the lack of supportive leadership behaviors contributes to the teleworkers concerns. Like directive leadership, supportive leadership relates to this study is that it is a leadership behavior that has the propensity to impact career advancement among teleworkers as it influences job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

**Participative Leader Behavior.** Participative leaders create an environment that invites subordinate employees to be active in decision-making and task planning (Bickle, 2017; Dyer & Wallace, 2017; Northouse, 2016; Rana et al., 2019). Likewise, leadership experts and participative leaders welcome ideas and opinions from subordinates and integrate their suggestions into organizational decisions (Dyer & Wallace, 2017; Northouse, 2013; Rana et al., 2019; Yukl, 2015). Bickle (2017) asserted that employees are generally self-sufficient and desire control and clarity when completing tasks. Because subordinate employees are often autonomously motivated, participative leader behaviors are effective when tasks are ambiguous and unstructured (Bickle, 2017). Likewise, participative leadership behaviors are considered the most effective when employees are autonomously motivated (Bickle, 2017).

Teleworkers have reported experiencing low job satisfaction and increased stress due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, miscommunication, and role ambiguity (Beauregard et al., 2019; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Nakrošienė et al., 2019; Sewell & Taskin, 2015; Vega et al., 2015). Dissatisfaction among teleworkers leads to increased turnover intentions (Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Torten et al., 2016). Researchers suggest that participative leaders promote joint decision-making (Dyer & Wallace, 2017; Northouse, 2013; Rana et al., 2019). Given the typical characteristics of teleworking employees, participative leader behaviors will likely increase motivation, commitment, job satisfaction and the effectiveness of teleworking employees (Rana et al., 2019). This study is aimed at understanding the influence of various
leadership behaviors that support career advancement among telework, thus, participative leader behaviors will be incorporated.

**Achievement-Oriented Behavior.** The achievement-oriented leader behavior applies when employees have elevated expectations for themselves and desire to be challenged (Bickle, 2017). In the same way, leaders apply achievement-oriented behaviors when they have elevated expectations for the subordinate employee and set challenging goals (Malik, 2013). In return, the employee generally expects recognition for the accomplished work (Carroll, 2017). According to Northouse (2016), leaders using achievement-oriented behaviors display a high degree of confidence that subordinates are capable of setting and accomplishing challenging goals; thus, elevated standards of excellence are set for subordinates to continuously improve.

According to Sewell and Taskin (2015), teleworkers often overcompensating to create a virtual presence in the workplace to prevent exclusion from decision-making activities and stretch assignments. This suggests that teleworkers are inclined to be challenged and to participate in decision-making activities that impact the employee’s career. Given these characteristics, achievement-oriented behaviors maximize the leader’s effectiveness. Like participative leaders, achievement-oriented may have a positive impact on career advancement among teleworkers therefore it is relevant to this study.

**Situational Moderators.** Within the path-goal theory, two general boundary conditions influence leadership effects on employees: employee characteristics and environmental (task) characteristics (Dyer & Wallace, 2017). The employee characteristics involve goal orientation, cognitive ability, stress, authoritarianism, and locus of control. The environmental characteristics include role ambiguity, work autonomy, task structure and interdependence, task demands, and scope. Leaders influence employee perceptions and drive them toward goal accomplishment by
clarifying roles, expectations and standards while applying one of the four leadership styles discussed above and considering various situational factors (Dyer & Wallace, 2017).

**Employee Characteristics.** Researchers have concentrated on employee needs for affiliation, locus of control, preferences in structure, and self-perceived task ability and found that these employee characteristics, among others, determine how leader behaviors are interpreted in a particular work setting (Northouse, 2016). Moreover, Northouse (2016) added that these characteristics influence the employee’s perception of the leader’s behavior as a source of satisfaction. According to path-goal theory, a subordinate with a strong need for affiliation would prefer supportive leader behaviors as concern and friendliness serve as a source of satisfaction. Path-goal theory suggests directive leadership for employees who are dogmatic, authoritarian, and are working in uncertain situations. Directive leadership provides the psychological structure and task clarity needed in this situation (Northouse, 2016).

The employee’s need for control can be dichotomized in two groups: internal and external locus of control. According to Northouse (2016), employees with an internal locus of control believe that they control life events while those who maintain an external locus of control believe that fate or other outside forces decide life events. Those who maintain an internal locus of control feel more satisfied with participative leadership as it allows the employee to be in charge of their work. Conversely, directive leader behaviors are more suitable for employees with an external locus of control because the environment is uncertain (Dyer & Wallace, 2017).

Northouse (2016) identified a final area in which leaders affect motivation as the employee’s perceptions of their task-related abilities. He adds that increases in self-perceived ability and confidence decrease the need for directive leadership. Moreover, directive leadership
becomes redundant and overly controlling for employee’s who feel competent to complete the task independently (Northouse, 2016).

**Environmental Characteristics.** Environmental characteristics are those outside of the follower’s control including task structure and authority systems. Environmental factors should be considered to maximize employee outcomes (Dyer & Wallace, 2017). Northouse (2016) asserted that situations in which clearly structured tasks and established authority systems are present, employees will recognize paths to the desired goal and will not need clarification or coaching from leaders. Moreover, he noted that excessive coaching and direction from leaders may be perceived as unnecessary and unempathetic in this situation. Conversely, tasks that are unclear and ambiguous require leadership behaviors that provide structure (Northouse, 2016).

A unique focus of path-goal theory is guiding employees on paths that are unobstructed by barriers (Northouse, 2016). Such barriers increase frustration and cause threats for the employee (Northouse, 2016). Moreover, the function of the leader is to provide linkages between effort and goal attainment when a clear causal linkage is not provided by the environment (House, 1996). Further, it is the leader’s function to clarify perceptions regarding the existence of such linkages in the event that it is not recognized by the employee (House, 1996).

**Reformulation.** Experts in path-goal theory posited that the increased usage of teams within organizations caused researchers to modify the way they think about organizational behaviors and related research (Dyer & Wallace, 2017; House, 1996; Jeanes, 2019; Northouse, 2013). In 1996, House reformulated his path-goal theory, however the original premises remained the same. In the revised version, House defined five axioms believed to be true:
1. Leader behavior is acceptable and satisfying to subordinate employees only to the extent that the employee perceives such behavior as essential for achieving present work-related goals or instrument to future goal attainment.

2. Leader behaviors will enhance the subordinate employee’s goal acquisition only to the extent that such behaviors improve the subordinate’s motivation; enhances the subordinate’s task ability; provides guidance and removes obstacles; and provides adequate resources necessary for effective performance.

3. Leader behaviors will improve the subordinate employee’s motivation to the extent that such behaviors connect goal attainment to the employee’s needs, provides resources and makes the task intrinsically satisfying, ensures rewards are contingent upon goal attainment, and provides support for the employees intrinsic and extrinsic psychological needs.

4. Leader behaviors will improve the subordinate employee’s task ability to the extent that leaders engage in developing the employee and modeling behaviors relevant to the task.

5. Leader behaviors will enhance the organization’s performance to the extent that such behaviors provide adequate resources; promotes collaborative relationships between work unit members; supports positive relationships between organizational units and the larger organization and enhances the perceived legitimacy of the organizational unit by other organizational members (House, 1996).

**Summary of Path-Goal Theory.** Path-goal theory is theoretically complex and pragmatic (Northouse, 2016). In a practical sense, it is fairly straightforward. The primary philosophy is that effective leaders respond to the subordinate employee’s needs. The leader is responsible for
assisting employees in defining goals and a path to achieve those goals (Northouse, 2016). When obstacle occur, the leader either guides the subordinate in creating a path around it or removing the obstacle completely. Leaders help subordinates achieve their goals by coaching, directing, and guiding them throughout the process. Based on the premise that the leader’s role is to help the employee eliminate or find paths around obstacles, one should consider leader behaviors that aid in alleviating perceived obstacles concerning career advancement in telework. Those obstacles include isolation, role ambiguity, and work intensification.

According to path-goal theory, leader behaviors are most effective when they complement the characteristics of the employee and the environment (Dyer & Wallace, 2017; House, 1996; Northouse, 2016). Researchers characterize teleworkers as highly skilled, have a higher degree of education (Groen et al., 2018), and autonomously motivated (Weinert et al., 2015). According to Weinert et al. (2015), telework is afforded to employees who are reliable and trusted by leaders as a result of previous performance. Given the typical characteristics of the teleworker, path-goal theory suggest that directive leader behaviors are counterintuitive to job satisfaction. Alternately, participative leadership behaviors are considered the most effective when employees are autonomously motivated, and tasks are ambiguous (Bickle, 2017).

Moreover, Lapierre et al. (2015) posited that the possibility gaining support from leaders decreases in the telework environment. Weinert et al. (2015) found that telework characteristics influence telework-enabled stressors that increases work-exhaustion and turnover intentions. According to path-goal theory, supportive leader behaviors help employees accomplish goals in stressful environments (Dyer & Wallace, 2017). Given the characteristics of the telework environment it can be suggested that the lack of supportive leadership behaviors contributes to the teleworkers concerns.
Similarly, achievement-oriented leadership behaviors are most appropriate when the leader and employee have elevated expectations for performance (Bickle, 2017). These employees are further characterized by a desire to be challenged. According to Sewell and Taskin (2015), teleworkers often overcompensating to create a virtual presence in the workplace to prevent exclusion from decision-making activities and stretch assignments. This suggests that teleworkers are inclined to be challenged and to participate in decision-making activities that impact the employee’s career. Given these characteristics, achievement oriented and participative leadership behaviors maximize the leader’s effectiveness.

**Transactional Leadership.** Much of early leadership research focuses primarily on transactional behaviors (Bass, 1985; Bass et al., 2003; Gordon, 2017; Prasad & Junni, 2016; Zareen et al., 2015). Prior to the insertion of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978) into literature, transactional leadership was highly regarded as the most effective model of organizational leadership (Gordon, 2017; Prasad & Junni, 2016; Zareen et al., 2015).

Transactional leadership is defined as a process of short-term social exchanges between leaders and followers based on contingent reinforcement of standards through either rewards or retribution (Bass et al., 2003; Burns, 1978). Bass et al. (2003) indicated that transactional leadership appeals to the employee’s self-interests and concentrates on extrinsic needs by building an explicit exchange relationship. It involves management characteristics such as setting clear expectations and providing constructive feedback (Bass et al., 2003). Moreover, Burns (1978) stated that employees receive rewards or retribution based upon effort. This is significant to the leadership archetype as scholars found that employees are not often self-motivated, but rather moved by rewards and penalties (Bargau, 2015). Under this leadership theory, leaders can complete required tasks, direct follower behaviors toward a common goal, and maintain the
organizational structure (Martin, 2015). This approach is most suitable for situations in which clear objectives are necessary.

Within literature, it is widely acknowledged that the transactional leadership paradigm includes three main constructs: contingent reward, active management by exception, and passive management by exception (Gordon, 2017; Zareen et al., 2015). Contingent reward refers to the set goals and reward employees for satisfactory performance (Bass, 1985; Bass et al., 2003; Gordon, 2017; Prasad & Junni, 2016). Management by exception is divided into active and passive management (Avolio et al., 1999; Moore & Newsome, 2019; Robinson & Boies, 2016). The constructs of transactional leadership are debatable as some scholars (Avolio et al., 1999; Den Hartog et al., 1997; Robinson & Boies, 2016) note only two: contingent reward and management by exception. According to Den Hartog et al. (1997), passive management by exception did not positively correlate with transactional leadership behaviors therefore it was excluded from the authors’ version. For the purpose of this study, management by exception will be discussed as a single construct following contingent reward.

**Contingent Reward.** Contingent reward corresponds to the extent in which leaders set and clarify goals and reward employees for satisfactory performance (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Moreover, it ensures that employees are aware of the expectations and fosters commitment of organizational members to accomplish specific tasks (Prasad & Junni, 2016). According to Sosik and Jung (2018), leaders can assist employees in reaching performance goals by displaying contingent reward behaviors which serves as a road map. In addition, they noted that employees need an idea of how to accomplish objectives therefore clarifying expectations becomes a vital component in initiating constructive transactions.
Robinson and Boies (2016) conducted a study to compare the effects of transformational leadership and transactional leadership on performance, effort, and task enjoyment. They investigated single components of each model using intellectual stimulation (transformational) and contingent reward (transactional) to develop their conclusion. These researchers performed two separate studies, the first with 78 participants and the second with 158, through which several differences emerged. Across both studies, participants in the contingent reward condition outperformed those in the intellectual stimulation condition in terms of generating ideas. Moreover, both the intellectual stimulation and contingent reward study groups showed increased willingness to provide extra effort when compared to the control group. Lastly, task enjoyment was higher among contingent reward participants in the first study, but no significant differences emerged in the second study. By examining the different leadership types against the control group, the researchers emphasized the potential positive implications of contingent reward on task outcomes.

The constructs of transactional leadership are similar in the area of performance-reward exchange. For the purpose of this study, the constructs of path-goal theory and transactional leadership are set to provide answers to the first two research questions. Within the realm of telework, a major complaint is that career advancement opportunities are incommensurate with the workers level of effort (Church, 2015; Felstead et al., 2003; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012). It has been reported that some leaders treat telework as a reward for achieving performance goals and consider it satisfactory for meeting the reward expectation (Church, 2015).

Glass and Noonan (2016) organized a study comparing weekly hours spent teleworking with promotions and salary growth. The researchers obtained data using sampling weights from
the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY) from 1989-2008. They found that within the first 40 hours of work, onsite workers’ and teleworkers’ earnings were comparable; however, in the case of overtime, earnings were drastically greater for onsite workers than teleworkers. Further, Glass and Noonan (2016) presuppose that the willingness to allow unpaid overtime may generate stronger salary increases in subsequent years. The researchers conjecture similar growth patterns for promotion and prior work devotion. In another study, Hoornweg et al. (2016) found a curvilinear relationship between the extent of telework and promotion and salary growth. They noted that the outcomes leveled off or even decreased with heightened levels of telework. The growing research corpus that suggests teleworking on a part-time rather than full-time basis provides the best outcomes for both the organization and employee supports this notion (Beauregard et al., 2018; Vega et al., 2015).

**Management by Exception.** Concerning management by exception, Moore and Newsome (2019) defined the active approach as one in which followers are monitored and controlled through forced compliance with expectations for performance and behavioral norms, rules, and regulations. According to these authors, active management by exception derived from Frederick Winslow Taylor’s initiative to improve organizational efficiency through active supervision, observation, and comprehensive instruction. Through this initiative, researchers found it necessary to focus on areas of exception including noncompliance among personnel and processes, mistakes, and deficient performance (Moore & Newsome, 2019). With this philosophy as a foundation, active management by exception behaviors aim to find and remove exceptions before or immediately after they appear (Moore & Newsome, 2019).

Alternatively, passive management by exception is an approach which requires leaders to intervene only when necessary to correct errors or substandard performance (Gordon, 2017).
According to Moore and Newsome (2019), management by exception disencumbers managers from monitoring employees and allows them to manage other business operations. Hasson et al. (2019) performed a study comparing the effects of self-other agreement (SOA) on passive leadership. According to the researchers, SOA reflects the leader’s self-awareness in terms of leadership capabilities and performance. Surveying 76 leaders and 211 subordinate employees, the researchers found that SOA or disagreement negatively impacted subordinate employee performance under the passive management by exception leadership style.

Gordon (2017) reported that transactional leaders fail to empower employees although they adopt a consultative approach. Focusing on the process means that transactional leaders pay close attention to efficiency therefore this approach is most appropriate in steady and predictable environments (Bass, 1985). Consequently, the emphasis on processes, rewards, and exceptions may cause short-sightedness among leaders thus hindering the leader’s ability to drive change (Gordon, 2017).

**Summary of Transactional Leadership.** Transactional leadership has been reported to have beneficial outcomes related to job satisfaction (Berkovich & Eyal, 2019; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Gordon, 2017; Hartley et al., 2019; Moore & Newsome, 2019). Berkovich and Eyal (2019) posited that transactional leaders can measure employee success against the organization’s existing reward-penalty system. Some researchers argue transactional leadership behaviors can enhance employee outcomes in the telework environment (Hartley et al., 2019). In contrast, researchers also contend that proximal distance and virtual communication attenuate the effects of this leadership style as it drastically reduces the leader’s ability to monitor the teleworker’s daily activities (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). Although arguments exist for both augmenting and attenuating effects of transactional leadership, contingent reward has been
shown to more effective in the telework environment that opposing models (Robinson & Boies, 2016). According to Bloom et al. (2013), studies showed that teleworkers worked longer hours and with more effort however they were less likely to receive a promotion. In this respect the concern is that employees who are rarely seen within the traditional office are forgotten or otherwise not considered for opportunities that may promote career advancement (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). In the present study, transactional leadership, specifically contingent reward behaviors, is incorporated to further evaluate its impact on career advancement.

**Situational Leadership.** Experts in situational leadership suggest that leadership is situational, and that a single leadership style can be perceived differently in varying contexts (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Carter et al., 2015; Ghasabeh et al., 2015; Vecchio & Thompson, 2017). Ghasabeh et al. (2015) noted that extant literature highlights the need for leaders to alter leadership styles and behaviors to match individual situations. They added that while some prevalent leadership principles are applicable, they must be modified to match specific situations as they arise. Telework presents a unique situation warranting specialized leadership approaches.

Situational leadership ties in with other contemporary workplace perspectives of effective supervision, including (a) the use of minimal supervision and self-guided teams when employees are sufficiently capable; (b) the notion that employee confidence, dedication, and professionalism can replace leadership; and (c) the assertion that effective leaders encompass both social intelligence and flexible behaviors (Vecchio & Thompson, 2017). The basis of the situational leadership theory is that there is no single best way to influence individuals or groups to accomplish goals; therefore, the leader must adapt their behaviors to meet the follower’s needs in varying situations (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Hersey &
Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al., 2008, 2013). Hersey et al. (2013) described situational leadership as an interplay between the amount of guidance and direction (task behaviors) a leader provides; the level of socioemotional support (relationship behaviors) the leader offers; and the performance readiness level of the individual. The leadership styles continuum (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Hersey, 1985; Hersey et al., 2008) includes:

- **Style 1 (S1).** The *telling* leadership style, also referred to as crisis leadership, is characterized by a higher-than-average amount of task behaviors and a lower-than-average amount of relationship behavior.
- **Style 2 (S2).** The *selling* leadership style is characterized by higher-than-average amounts of both task and relationship behaviors.
- **Style 3 (S3).** This *participating* leadership style is characterized by a lower-than-average amount of task behaviors and a higher-than-average amount of relationship behaviors.
- **Style 4 (S4).** The *delegating* leadership style is characterized by lower-than-average amounts of both task and relationship behaviors.

The crucial variable in the leadership situation is the relationship between the leader and the follower, and in order to maximize this relationship the leader should determine the task-specific outcomes required of the follower (Hersey et al., 2008). This allows the leader to determine the follower’s level of performance readiness, or the extent in which the follower demonstrates an ability and willingness to accomplish the task (Hersey et al., 2008). That said, performance readiness is dichotomized into two components—*ability* and *willingness* (Hersey et al., 2008). Ability is defined as the demonstrated knowledge (task understanding), skill (proficiency), and experience (ability gained through prior performance of the task) an individual
brings to the given activity (Thompson & Vecchio, 2009). Likewise, willingness is defined as the level of confidence (self-assurance), commitment (dedication), and motivation (desire) to perform the task (Thompson & Vecchio, 2009). The continuum of performance readiness (Hersey et al., 2008) includes:

- Readiness level 1 (R1). The follower is unable to perform the task and lacks confidence, or unable to perform the task and lacks commitment.
- Readiness level 2 (R2). The follower is unable to perform the task but confident, or unable to perform the task but motivated to try.
- Readiness level 3 (R3). The follower is able perform the task but apprehensive about doing it alone, or the follower is able but unwilling to apply it to the task.
- Readiness level 4 (R4). The follower is able and confident about performing, or able and committed to accomplishing the task.

**Telling.** The telling (S1) approach is the most appropriate leadership style for a follower in R1. Followers in the R1 group are unable and insecure, or unable and unwilling (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al., 2008, 2013). Using the telling leadership style, leaders can provide task information in inconsiderable amounts, reduce the fear of mistakes, focus on instructions, and provide step-by-step guidance for followers who are unable and insecure. Further, leaders can address followers who are unable and unwilling by stating facts directly, reinforcing small improvements, reinforcing consequences for nonperformance, and managing emotional levels.

**Selling.** The selling approach is the most appropriate for followers in the R2 readiness group. In this group, followers are unable but confident or willing to try (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al.,
Leaders can use persuasion to obtain “buy-in,” check for task understanding, explain the “why” and emphasize the “how” aspects, and explore related skills using the selling approach. This differs from telling in that the leader is providing an opportunity for dialogue and clarification for the purpose of obtaining buy-in from the follower.

**Participating.** The participating style is best suited for the third readiness level is R3 in which the follower is has developed the ability to perform the task but lacks confidence or willingness (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al., 2008, 2013). The leader using the participating style for able but insecure followers can be effective by establishing above-average amounts of supportive and facilitative behaviors. This includes utilizing two-way or multiway communication, inviting input from the follower, allowing follower-made decisions, and offering praise and confidence building conversation. Alternatively, leaders can share decision-making responsibilities with followers, offer “need to know” information, focus on results, and involve followers in the consequences of nonperformance to increase commitment for able but unwilling followers.

**Delegating.** The delegating leadership style is appropriately matched to followers in the R4 group (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al., 2008, 2013). R4 followers are those that are both able and confident or willing. This leadership style includes observing and monitoring as opposed to providing specific task instructions. Using the delegating style, leaders should resist overloading followers with tasks and responsibilities, receive updates, encourage autonomy and freedom for risk taking, and delegate activities.

The telework environment creates a unique situation in which leaders must adapt their behaviors. Given the unique nature of telework, the relationship between the leader and
employee may differ in some ways from that of in-office personnel, including behaviors that support career advancement (Mackenzie, 2010; Walker, 2010). Employing the same leadership style for both collocated and off-site employees is disadvantageous and can lead to employee disengagement, conflict, and the redefining of people as a mere source of production (Morris, 2008; Zaccaro & Bader, 2003). The concept of situational leadership is that there is no single best approach to leading, rather any leadership style can be more, or less, effective depending on the situation (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al., 2008, 2013). That said, telework is often offered as a reward or form of career advancement for high performing employees (Church, 2015). This suggests that there is an increased level of performance readiness among teleworkers therefore it may prove beneficial to investigate the leader’s effectiveness among teleworkers through the lens of situational leadership. The link between situational leadership and leadership in telework is the leader’s ability to adapt their approach to match the telework situation in such a way that sustains or improves the leader’s effectiveness.

**Adaptations of Situational Leadership.** Although this theory seems straightforward, understanding the specifics can be challenging because the authors developed multiple versions both together and individually. This leadership theory received a great degree of criticism that encouraged the authors to make many revisions (see also Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al., 2008, 2013). According to Dugan (2017), scholars criticized situational leadership as a theory claiming that it was only relatively precise, problematic, ambiguous, and largely based on informal theories; therefore, the creators replaced theory with model. Hersey and Blanchard continued to revise the model together until 1977 when they mutually agreed to run individual companies (Dugan,
From there, Hersey dropped model from the title, calling it Situational Leadership, while Blanchard made further revisions to the model which was named Situational Leadership II. Through this process, the leadership model has undergone various changes in terminology however the fundamental premise remains the same.

**Summary of Situational Leadership.** The premise of situational leadership is that no single best leadership style exists, and that the leadership style applied should match the employee’s readiness level (Carter et al., 2015). Moreover, the telework environment creates a unique situation in which leaders must adapt their behaviors. Telework is often offered as a reward or form of career advancement for high performing employees (Church, 2015). This suggests there is an increased level of performance readiness among teleworkers therefore it may prove beneficial to investigate the leader’s effectiveness among teleworkers through the lens of situational leadership. The link between situational leadership and telework is the leader’s ability to adapt their leadership styles and behaviors to match the telework situation in such a way that sustains or improves the leader’s effectiveness with the employee.

**Potential Themes and Perceptions**

According to Ting et al. (2020), career advancement is an instrument used to align the employee’s career aspirations with the organization’s objectives to uphold job satisfaction and commitment. While Ting et al. (2020) defined career advancement as a promotion to jobs higher on the management scale or to jobs with a larger scope of responsibility, Knuppel (2015) expanded on the definition suggesting that it is a small part of a larger career development scheme that includes increases in employee engagement and talent retention within the organization. Career advancement is comprised of external factors including salary and promotion, and internal factors such as self-awareness and job satisfaction (Choi, 2018; Saraih et
al., 2015). Furthermore, promotion factors extend beyond work performance and may include subjective elements such as social networking, workplace context, leadership behaviors and relationships, and embeddedness (Chattopadhyay & Choudhury, 2017; Enslin & Schulz, 2015; Marineau, 2017; Vega et al., 2015). The heterogeneity of telework and the variety of subjective promotion factors may provide insight in understanding why the highest performers are sometimes sidelined for promotion (Marineau, 2017).

According to Loveland (2017), a study spanning 16,000 employees within a publicly traded travel agency showed that teleworkers outperformed their office-bound counterparts by 13% yet remained 50% less likely to receive a promotion over their onsite peers. As stated by this author, executive leaders felt that teleworking had not yet reached the stage in which people believed it would not compromise career progression. Moreover, some scholars found that teleworking arrangements negatively impacted performance evaluations (Beauregard et al., 2019; Gajendran et al., 2015) which is a departure from the positive implications suggested by much of the research in this area.

Previous studies on the perceived career advancement of teleworkers is sparse and contradictory. Rather than examine objective career success, ongoing literature tends to draw attention to the self-reported benefits of telework (Allen et al., 2015; Bailey & Kurland, 2003). For instance, Gajendran and Harrison’s (2007) meta-analysis on the consequences of telework lacked dependent variables concerning actual career success; rather, it relied on the teleworker’s perceived career expectations. In addition, the few studies examining the implications of telework on objective career success yielded mixed results (Glass & Noonan, 2016; Leslie et al., 2012; Pigini & Staffolani, 2019). Moreover, little research that connects telework, knowledge sharing, and career advancement exists (Allen et al., 2015).
**Isolation and Networking.** Literature on teleworking highlights diminished career opportunities associated with telework and isolation as a significant drawback (Beauregard et al., 2019; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Nakrošienė et al., 2019; Vega et al., 2015). Additionally, Beauregard et al. (2019) suggested that organizational cultures that emphasize the importance of physical presence tacitly discourage ambitious employees from considering flexible work arrangements. Likewise, Wojak et al. (2016) asserted that virtual relationships in which communication is conducted solely via the internet cannot replace personal contacts. Moreover, they contended that virtual social relationships give rise to superficiality and contentions that can impede the teleworker’s performance. In addition, the authors found that this type of relationship between the leader and follower negatively impacts immediate problem solving and hinders the teleworking employee from participating in developing solutions.

Complementing this literature, Allen et al. (2015) stated that telework alters communication in such a way that leader-employee relationships may suffer. Similarly, Flesher (2016) described email, chat, and collaboration boards as passive means of communication that can have negative consequences due to misinterpretations in the absence of visual cues. That said, such notions are not concrete as other scholars suggested that virtual relationships and networking can be beneficial in this environment (Cooper & Kurland, 2002).

A study on the impact of physical proximity between leaders, peers, and teleworking employees (Sewell & Taskin, 2015) showed that respondents who telework reported overcompensating to create a virtual presence in the workplace to prevent exclusion from decision-making activities and stretch assignments. This counteracted the notion that teleworking increases productivity by reducing distractions at work as actions aimed at minimizing isolation effects, such as sending an abundance of emails, was a notable distraction in itself (Sewell &
Taskin, 2015). The importance of stretch assignments is considered in a leadership development study (Pandya, 2017) involving interviews with 43 senior managers across three organizations who revealed that challenging work opportunities presented early in their career led to rapid career growth. Moreover, the respondents of this study reported that accepting complicated assignments established future career progress by increasing their visibility within the workplace (Pandya, 2017).

In other works, Allen et al. (2015) reported that an online poll of 11,383 employees across 24 countries indicated that 50% of respondents believed that teleworking could mar future promotion opportunities. These scholars combined the discussion of promotion and professional isolation observing a direct link between the extent in which isolation is experienced by the teleworker and the extent in which they miss developmental opportunities. Allen et al. (2015) indicated that teleworkers lose informal conversations that influence knowledge sharing and learning opportunities. This is significant because the exchange of implicit information and knowledge sharing among employees is paramount to human capital development (Chirawattanakij & Ractham, 2015).

In contrast to isolation, Levine (2015) suggested that social networking is a useful tool in career planning. Levine claimed that most opportunities that could potentially bolster career growth such as pursuing leadership roles, serving on a committee, and applying for an award are typically unadvertised. It was further noted that committees often advertise opportunities with prospects in mind. Based on the social network perspective, who an employee knows is more important to career advancement than what they know (Marineau, 2017). Han and Van Dongen (2015) stated that while there is evidence that involvement in social networking can provide career advantages, its impact on career advancement is obscure.
Moreover, researchers posit that networking may not work in favor of promotion if it is not understood (Levine, 2015) or if one’s assessment of their social network is inaccurate (Marineau, 2017). Marineau (2017) launched a study consisting of 52 participants in technical call center and machine manufacturing companies to investigate the effects of network accuracy on career advancement. The researcher defined network accuracy as the individual’s accurate knowledge, based on their perception, about relationship ties within the organization. Through this study, Marineau established that both trust and distrust network accuracy have positive effects on career progression; however, it more positively impacted lower performing individuals than it did higher performers.

**Role Ambiguity.** Vega et al. (2015) found that creativity is causally linked to productivity. Tasks with undefined boundaries create opportunities for teleworkers to employee creativity to task accomplishment. Boell et al. (2016) indicated that not all tasks fit into a singularly focused design therefore reducing role ambiguity is important for teleworkers to understand their work-related responsibilities. Klecha (2019) defined role ambiguity as a lack of information regarding individual expectations related to one’s role, or a lack of feedback in regard to how the individual’s performance is perceived by others.

Birdie and Jain (2015) asserted that physical distance and infrequent communication between teleworkers and the organization significantly decreases goal clarity and contributes to role ambiguity. Alternatively, Bentley et al. (2016) stated that clarifying roles from the outset, coupled with intentional monitoring and leader intervention, is effective in preventing role ambiguity. Researchers found that teleworkers spend less time interacting with peers and organizational leaders resulting in limited interpersonal communication and knowledge sharing
(Bentley et al., 2016). These researchers found a positive correlation between the rate of role ambiguity and the amount of time spent teleworking.

**Work Intensification and Commitment.** Work intensification is a combination of extensivity (longer work time) and intensity (increased physical and mental effort; Felstead & Henseke, 2017). The idea that work intensification is a consequence of home-based work is prominent among telework literature (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). In a recent study on time pressure and telework (Thulin et al., 2019), 56% of participants in the analytical field felt constantly time pressed. Of the 56%, 74% reported working outside of normal work hours. As a result, Thulin et al. (2019) posited that telework is progressively expanding into off hours (evenings, weekends, and holidays). Moreover, Bloom et al. (2013) performed a randomized control trial of 994 call center operations and found that teleworkers significantly outperformed onsite employees because they committed longer hours to work and answered more calls. Even so, the survey indicated that the teleworker’s likelihood of promotion decreased. In another study, Felstead and Henseke (2017) showed that while telework may have positive implications on organizational commitment, it comes at the cost of work intensification.

In contrast, scholars studying the consequences of telework on work intensification found that non-teleworking leaders and peers believed that employees did not contribute their full work effort from home (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019; Sewell & Taskin, 2015). Sewell and Taskin (2015) emphasized that telework, when used on a part-time basis, was viewed as equivalent to being on leave by non-teleworking peers which consequently reduced information sharing across remote platforms and a heightened sense of invisibility. According to this research, negative opinions of telework diminished remote workers’ commitment to the organization and increased concerns that their involvement in important projects would be jeopardized. To overcome these
fears, respondents reported that they voluntarily accepted more rigid service level agreements which translated into increased tracking and monitoring (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). Similarly, study participants indicated that requirements for work availability beyond standard duty hours was an essential norm in demonstrating a commitment level tantamount to their non-teleworking peers. The notion that telework may have negative implications on perceived commitment is further supported by Boell et al. (2016) who asserted that managers are reluctant to adopt telework programs because it challenges their ability to assess the commitment of their personnel.

In addition, Cristea and Leonardi (2019) affirmed that face time improves one’s potential for career advancement as it serves as a strong signal of their commitment to the job and the organization. Their study included two large product distribution companies with global reach. Under this study, the researchers demonstrated that employees who are geographically separated from organizational leaders must engage in certain behaviors to demonstrate their commitment in order to receive better work assignments. Those behaviors include receiving higher education, dedicating more time to work, and increasing communication (Cristea & Leonardi, 2019). Moreover, the authors assert that such efforts, however costly and time consuming, were strongly connected to career advancement within the culture of both organizations.

In another study, Beauregard et al. (2019) pointed to traditional exchange relationships associated with telework practices, noting the presumption that employees offered higher levels of commitment to the job in exchange for increased autonomy. However, they found that work flexibility facilitated more “non-work-related activities” (Beauregard et al., 2019, p. 30) which led to increased commitment to roles outside of work. Previous research suggested that
antecedents including investment and socialization influenced organizational commitment. Beauregard et al. (2019) posited that increased autonomy and flexibility associated with extensive teleworking could lead to higher levels of investment and socialization in non-work activities thus altering the weight of exchange with work related consequences, including career advancement. Moreover, they asserted that extensive teleworking may undermine the employee’s identification with work.

**Communication.** With companies moving toward geographically disbursed teams, communication has shifted from face-to-face interactions to technologically supported means. Dispersed work arrangements have been characterized by technologically enhanced communication and holds relatively short lifespan (Tworoger et al., 2013). This means that leaders are dealing with computer-mediated communication which leaves them with few traditional means of establishing relationships (Tworoger et al., 2013). Gluckler and Schrott (2007) called the lack of face-to-face communication a “new communication constraint” leaders face with telework arrangements. According to Norman et al. (2019), communication mediated by technology is a social influence process that contributes to changes in attitudes, behavior, thinking, feelings, and performance of team members. Because of the lack of traditional communication, leaders are more focused on task completion, often at the expense of building strong leader-follower relationships. Balthazard et al. (2009) noted that the frequency and manner in which one communicates is often more important than personality traits when geographically displaced. Tworoger et al. (2013) also found that transactional leadership contributed to perceived employee satisfaction through the establishing of clearly defined expectations and goals. Early communication of these expectations and goals set the stage for positive performance and strong leader-follower relationships (Tworoger et al., 2013).
Performance-Based Monitoring and Evaluation. Organizations apply control mechanisms to ensure their objectives are met within changing environments. These mechanisms include management controls, defined as the process by which managers ensure resources are obtained and employed in the most effective and efficient manner to accomplish organizational objectives (Yanine et al., 2016). They can be formal, following regulations and defined procedures, or informal according to one’s relationship with organizational goals and information sharing. Formal controls involve both behavioral and output controls, which monitor whether workers are following task level prescriptions (i.e., behavioral) or achieving set targets (i.e., output; Groen et al., 2018).

Monitoring employee behavior is a major challenge within the teleworking environment with decreased possibilities due to a lack of visibility (Allen et al., 2015). It is commonly suggested in telework literature that a greater emphasis on output controls rather than input controls will be presented when employees begin teleworking (Felstead et al., 2003; Sewell & Taskin, 2015). The significance of establishing controls as a method of measuring performance is in the leader-follower relationship as clear performance measures for teleworkers can offset managerial concerns and trust regarding the lack of visibility (Allen et al., 2015). With regard to flexibility and control, telework arrangements increase flexibility for the employee and consequently managers may apply exiting controls to teleworkers (Peters & den Dulk, 2003).

Flexible Leadership. Leaders often find that their approach works well for one situation but not in another (Yanker, 1986). Leadership styles range from being completely hands on and directive to allowing complete autonomy. The first of these is focused on ensuring efficient, disciplined, and effectively measured activities to ensure smooth operation and task performance. The second involves encouraging teleworkers to think freely, ask questions when
necessary, and provide an environment in which teleworkers have the support they need to do so. The central element for leaders is the ability to determine which leadership approach best fits the circumstances present at the time (Chandler, 2006). According to Yanker (1986), one’s leadership style should match the style of the follower, meaning that the follower must be able to relate to the leadership approach being employed. For example, applying a participative style would not collaborate well with employees who are used to an autocratic style of leadership. Leaders who alter their leadership approach to align with the employee and the situation creates a climate of trust (Yanker, 1986). Experts suggest that flexible leadership is not always easy, but it is always necessary (Yanker, 1986).

**Relationship Building.** Relationship building behaviors include creating harmonious relationships, engaging in two-way or multiway communication, integrating employees into the process of developing action plans, and reducing emotional conflict (Bass, 2008; Daft, 2014; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981; Hersey et al., 2008). Allen et al. (2015) stated that telework alters communication in such a way that leader-employee relationships may suffer. Video communication perceivably enhances human relationships by fostering a sense of social presence (Long, 2010). Social presence implies that the telework environment can be viewed similarly to the physical environment by permitting individuals to feel connected and physically present with each other (Long, 2010). Video technology as a substitute for physical presence is up for debate as some scholars found that virtual relationships in which communication is conducted solely via the internet failed to adequately replace personal contact (Wojak et al., 2016). Virtuality requires trust to adequately function, and technology on its own is not enough (Long, 2010). Wojak et al. (2016) contended that virtual social relationships give rise to superficiality and contentions that can impede the teleworker’s performance. In addition, the
authors found that this type of relationship between the leader and follower negatively impacts immediate problem solving and hinders the teleworking employee from participating in developing solutions.

The Application of Leadership Behaviors

Kunnanatt (2016) defined leadership as one’s ability to influence others towards a common goal. Adding to this definition, Northouse (2016) conceptualized leadership as (a) a process, (b) involving influence, (c) occurring in groups, and (d) reaching common goals. Defining leadership as a process removes the trait characteristics of a leader and implies a transactional relationship between the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2016). Moreover, Northouse (2016) asserted that leadership as a process emphasizes a non-linear design thus highlighting the interaction between the leader and follower as each affect and are affected by the other. Hersey (2004) includes in the description of leadership that the way followers perceive the leader, as opposed to how leaders see themselves, defines leadership style. Hersey added that it is the follower’s perception of the leader that affects their behavior, not the leader’s perception of self.

With the growth of flexible work arrangements, increased self-management occurs and indicates a transition toward innovative approaches in organizing and managing work (Van Der Heijden et al., 2015). Costa et al. (2018) and Peters et al. (2016) found that indirect control procedures driven by autonomous motivation and trust are replacing traditional employment relationships. Leadership in the current business environment requires more complex approaches that involve multiple stakeholders (Coun et al., 2019). In addition, Wojak et al. (2016) argued that in order for teleworkers to accomplish organizational objectives, the “right form” of leadership must be applied (p. 35).
This study is outlined to explore various leadership behaviors and their relationship to career advancement in telework. Leader behaviors under path-goal theory and the follower’s motivational needs and environmental contexts together are explored to understand the impact the relationship between the two has on the problem. According to Dyer and Wallace (2017), the leader’s primary function is to bolster positive outcomes and rewards by establishing an unobstructed path to goal achievement. Further, Dyer and Wallace noted that the leader’s effectiveness depends on various situational factors and employee characteristics. Directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented are applied according to situational moderators (i.e., employee characteristics, and environmental characteristics) to maximize leader effectiveness thus improving the employee’s motivation, performance, and commitment.

Path-goal theory and transactional leadership are similar in that both focus in part on rewarding performance (Bass, 1985; Bass et al., 2003; Burns, 1978; Gordon, 2017; Zareen et al., 2015). Within transactional leadership, contingent rewards are afforded to employees who satisfy performance goals (Sosik & Jung, 2018). Similar to path-goal leadership, leaders using contingent reward behaviors define a clear path for followers to accomplish set goals (House, 1971; Northouse, 2016; Sosik & Jung, 2018).

Path-goal leadership also resonates with situational leadership. The most apparent connection between the two is the expectation for leaders to adapt their behaviors to meet the follower’s needs in varying situations (Blanchard, 1985; Carroll, 2017; Dyer & Wallace, 2017; Hersey et al., 2013; House, 1971; Northouse, 2016). The main premise in both situational leadership and path-goal theory is flexible leadership style maximize effectiveness as situational characteristics (employee and environmental characteristics) vary (Carter et al., 2015; Ghasabeh et al., 2015). Each component situational leadership styles (telling, selling, participating,
delegating) can be matched to the follower’s readiness level to improve the leader’s effectiveness and possibly influence the perception of career advancement among teleworkers.

The effectiveness of leader behaviors is explored to understand their impact on career advancement in the telework environment. Each barrier has a negative impact on career advancement in telework which subsequently influence turnover intentions. The major impediments to career advancement exist and the study is intended to examine the impact of effective leadership on existing barriers.

Summary and Conclusion

The analysis was used to explore the extent to which flexible and transactional leadership behaviors impact career advancement concerns among teleworkers. This was accomplished by connecting the leadership concepts provided by path-goal theory, transactional leadership, and situational leadership to the reported career advancement barriers among teleworkers. The researcher found causal linkages between leadership behaviors and the perception of career stagnation in the telework environment. Negative perceptions of career advancement in telework decrease job satisfaction and the attainment of many teleworking benefits including reduced turnover intentions (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Guan et al., 2017; Torten et al., 2016; Tschopp et al., 2014). According to literature, studies present mixed results on the impact of telework on career advancement due to the self-reporting nature of most telework studies (Glass & Noonan, 2016; Leslie et al., 2012; Pigini & Staffolani, 2019). A common theme is that teleworking employees perceive, and fear career harm associated with telework due to decreased visibility and divergent expectations (Beauregard et al., 2019; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Nakrošienė et al., 2019; Vega et al., 2015). These researchers found that some leader behaviors (excessive monitoring, decreased communication and knowledge sharing, lack
of trust) negatively impact job satisfaction and contribute to the perception of constrained career growth opportunities.

**Transition and Summary of Section 1**

Though telework has received a considerable amount of attention in literature, there has been little attention devoted to leadership behaviors that support career advancement in the telework environment. The literature review highlights the history of telework and three main leadership theories and models: path-goal theory, transactional leadership, and situational leadership. Connections between extant literature and this study through the identification of telework characteristics and the challenges of leadership in this environment. The next section outlines the research project that examines the relationship between leadership behaviors and career advancement in telework.
Section 2: The Project

Telework continues to increase in popularity as information and communication technologies (ICTs) improve and employees seek more flexibility with work (Morganson et al., 2010). While flexible work options have become available in 40% more United States companies over the past 5 years, only seven percent made it available to most employees (Global Workplace Analytics, 2018). Despite the wide acceptance of telework, many challenges have led to employee job dissatisfaction specifically concerning career advancement (Morganson et al., 2010). Researchers argue that reduced visibility in teleworking environments leads to increased work hours and career advancement opportunities that are incommensurate with the level of effort necessary to demonstrate their devotion to work (Felstead et al., 2003; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012).

The focus of this research project is to examine the relationship between leader behaviors and satisfaction concerning career advancement among teleworkers. This study expanded on the existing research of path-goal theory, transactional leadership, and situational leadership in the telework environment by determining if there is a relationship between the leadership styles and behaviors outlines therein and career advancement among teleworkers in the Greater Denver Area. Included in this study is the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, and a description of the participants. In addition, justification for the sampling method, sample size and type, eligibility criteria for participation, and relevance of the sample are provided herein. Further, the research method, research design, and rationale for the use of the chosen research methodology are discussed in this section of the study. Additionally, discussion concerning data collection, organization techniques, data analysis, reliability and validity are included. This section concludes with a summary and overview of Section 3.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to add to the body of knowledge by expanding the understanding of efficient leadership styles and behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. The general problem is explored through an in-depth study of leader’s approach to overcoming career development challenges and processes for teleworkers. Researchers have previously explored the adoption of telework; leadership emergence in teleworking environments due to psychological factors; management approach variations between onsite employees and teleworkers; and teleworker’s concerns over career advancement opportunities (Baruch & Nicholson, 1997; Brunelle, 2013; Charlier et al., 2016; MacDuffie, 2007); however, less attention is given to the behaviors and strategies leaders use to address career advancement challenges (Groen et al., 2018).

This multiple case study is intended to help reduce the gap between existing literature and current organizational practices by identifying successful career development strategies for current and future teleworking employees. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews to ascertain the firsthand experiences of leaders that have developed successful strategies to support career development for teleworkers. The author interviewed participants from three organizations to explore practical solutions to the career advancement concerns of teleworkers. Participants were identified through face-to-face meetings, personal email inquiries, and telephone conversations with organizational leaders.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary mechanism for collecting and processing qualitative data (Stake, 2010). This researcher sought to understand the daily realities of those being studied within the telework environment. The researcher selected a qualitative multiple case study to
address the specific questions pertinent to this study. Accordingly, the information garnered through a qualitative study is unique, complex, descriptive, and reflects a specified situation (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Creswell (2014) found that the qualitative study is best applied when examining real-world processes with indistinct boundaries. Stake (2010) noted that the researcher’s role varies between qualitative and quantitative studies in that the researcher of a qualitative study performs in a subjective and participatory capacity, while quantitative researchers rely on a structured and objective approaches. Thus, the researcher of this study was able to explore various organizational events, such as the career advancement process among teleworkers, using the qualitative approach.

Yin (2014) suggested that the researcher implements structured interviews as a data collection method to receive authentic accounts from the participants. This researcher’s goal was to better understand leadership behaviors that support career advancement among teleworkers from those who have traversed the problem within the Denver, Colorado area. According to Yin (2014), the researcher should develop a detailed plan, or case study protocol, for the project and perform an exhaustive review of academic literature relevant to the topic. Further, the researcher accessed information within the literature review to formulate research questions. As a precursor to mobilizing the project plan, the researcher obtained approval from the institutional review board (Creswell, 2014). The case study protocol ensured that each case study is performed is an analogous manner (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). This included measures to recruit participants, obtain informed consent to participate, prepare and conduct participant interviews, transcribe responses, analyze and categorize themes, and interpret the findings (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). The researcher developed and followed the case study protocol to ensure a consistent interview process.
Coyne (1997) noted that the sample selection in a qualitative study has a profound effect on the quality of the research. Stake (2006) noted that cases in a multiple case study should be relevant to the quintain, provide diversity across contexts, and provide ample opportunity to learn about the complexities and contexts. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants in accordance with study requirements (Morse, 1991; Stake, 2006). The researcher utilized purposive sampling to ensure that participants can be responsive to the real-world conditions that meet the information needs of this study. In addition, the researcher utilized organizations within the health care insurance, logistics, and finance industries to provide diversity. In keeping with Robinson (2014), sampling may occur through the use of contacts and referrals. The researcher utilized her contacts with the Department of Defense Health Agency, Denver Logistics Center, Merrick Bank, and Pulte Mortgage to generate listings of potential participants for this study. The researcher also accessed the internet to locate additional organizations that could provide potential participants that fit into the chosen research frame.

The nature of participation required that individuals had experience leading teleworkers through the challenge of career advancement, and that the organization in which this work was performed is located within the Denver, Colorado area. Creswell (2014) noted that researchers must gain permission from those with authority to grant it within the organization, otherwise known as gatekeepers. Prior to soliciting participation, the researcher obtained approval to conduct the study, including the survey protocol and data collection process, from the researcher’s university and organizational gatekeepers. The researcher obtained approval from Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to contacting gatekeepers. The researcher contacted organizational gatekeepers by sending informational letters or emails that contained information regarding the purpose of the study, time commitments, potential impact,
and methods to access results of the final research. A sample informational letter can be found in Appendix A.

Creswell and Poth (2018) noted the importance of providing an informed consent form to the participants detailing the potential topics to be discussed. Keeping with this, the researcher incorporated details regarding the study topic in the informed consent form. The informed consent form was emailed to the participant for review prior to conducting individual interviews. In addition to the details provided by the informed consent form, the researcher verbally reviewed the purpose of the study and the overall interview process with the participants. This included details regarding the compilation of the participant’s information into the final report. Creswell (2014) asserted that participants should be provided with a choice to sign or not to sign the informed consent form prior to proceeding with the interview. As such, the researcher ensured that the participants were informed of their autonomy with regards to their choice to participate. The participants were given the option to ask questions and either sign or not sign the hard-copy informed consent form upon meeting for the individual interview. Additionally, the researcher remained transparent in answering any questions related to the nature and purpose of the study. A copy of the informed consent form is attached in Appendix B.

The signed informed consent form was scanned to the researcher’s password protected hard drive and subsequently shredded with a micro-cut shredder. The digital forms are being maintained for a minimum of 5 years upon study completion and subsequently destroyed using the Digital File Shredder by StompSoft. Further, the researcher ensured that the identity of each participant was protected by assigning alphanumeric codes that can be linked to their associated organization.
The researcher completed all data analysis for this study. According to Shaw and Le Roux (2017), the researcher is responsible for upholding neutrality while conducting the study and interpreting data. Stake (2006) posited that it is nearly impossible to fully eliminate personal biases from a study as multiple case studies are often created to promote the quintain or to advocate the spread of its practices. The researcher maintained a value-free study by ensuring no professional or personal interests existed between the researcher and the organizations being studied. Moreover, Stake (2006) asserted that researchers have a responsibility to provide interpretation across the cases based on the binding concept—a theme, issue, phenomenon, or functional relationship that connects the cases. The researcher conducted a cross-case analysis to find commonalities between each case.

**Participants**

Understanding the phenomenon being studied depends on choosing the cases well (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). The researcher interviewed participants from three different organizations. The participants of this study were limited to Denver-based leaders who have successfully developed or implemented strategies to support teleworkers through the challenges of career advancement in a telework environment. Rashid et al. (2019) posited that researchers should know the cases well and the participants who will be approached. The researcher contacted gatekeepers at several organizations to discuss the study. This enabled the researcher and the organization to determine if their participation would be beneficial to the study. Further, discussing the study with gatekeepers facilitated rapport and a smooth process before entering the field.

Researchers must gain permission from gatekeepers prior to soliciting participation (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher contacted organizational gatekeepers to
request permission. After permission was obtained, the researcher invited members to participate by email. The email included a pre-interview screening survey to ensure the participant’s characteristics align with the overarching research problem. The pre-interview screening survey can be found in Appendix C.

Participants were contacted through email to schedule the interview at an appropriate time provided by the interviewee. Creswell and Poth (2018) noted the importance of providing an informed consent form to the participants detailing the potential topics to be discussed. Prior to meeting for the individual interview, the participants were sent a copy of the informed consent form by email to review. A signed copy was distributed to the researcher and participant prior to conducting the interview. Throughout this process, the researcher maintained email or telephone communication with the participants to establish a working relationship. Interviews were conducted through videoconferencing due to COVID-19 restrictions. Twelve respondents participated in the study. The interviews were audio recorded. Upon completion of the interview, the participants were asked to participate in a follow up discussion to review the interview transcript for accuracy.

The researcher followed the ethical guidelines outlined in the Belmont Report. The participant’s confidentiality was maintained by performing the interview in a setting approved by the participant. Further, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to be used in place of the participant’s identification information. All data were secured on the researcher’s password protected hard drive with access to the data being limited to those with a relevant need to know. The collected data is being maintained for a minimum of five years and will be subsequently destroyed using the Digital File Shredder by StompSoft to ensure that files cannot be retrieved after deletion.
Discussion of Method

The method selected for this study is a qualitative research method. The study is conducted to explore what leadership strategies and behaviors are effective to support career advancement with telework employees. With the qualitative method, the researcher can build a complex, holistic picture by analyzing words, pictures, reports, and detailed accounts of the participants in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, the qualitative research method is appropriate when evaluating firsthand experiences, individual and group behaviors, organizational operations, and interactions that influence relationships (Teherani et al., 2015). The researchers collect data through interviews to delve into the leader’s experiences through discussions and stories related to specific events, feelings, motivations, concerns, and claims (Cypress, 2018). Because in-person interviews were not possible, the interviews were conducted through videoconferencing. Based on this information and the non-numerical nature of the intended data, the author determined that a qualitative study is the best approach to support the research questions.

The quantitative method was considered based on the interest in leadership behaviors as it pertains to the stated problem however after further consideration, the author found that the quantitative approach would not fully support the purpose of this study. Quantitative research is conducted to evaluate hypotheses using numerical data and statistical analysis. It is undertaken with the assumption that measurements can be made from the collected data (Watson, 2015). The data is then analyzed to verify the measurements made and to identify trends and relationships (Watson, 2015). The data collected through this study were not measured numerically for hypothesis testing, therefore, the quantitative method was not the best approach.
The mixed methods approach was also considered. Mixed methods research combines the data collection and analysis styles from both qualitative and quantitative research however the purpose of this approach extends beyond combining methods (Watkins & Gioia, 2015). It integrates assumptions about methodologies, research questions, and data to form interpretations by combining the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research (Watkins & Gioia, 2015). Due to the quantitative component, the mixed method research is not the best approach for this study.

Discussion of Design

Using the multiple case study design, researchers can evaluate several data sources to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon including interviews, records, illustrations, and other historical data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Yin (2014) identified documents and interviews as sources of data which will be utilized in this study for triangulation. According to Campbell (2015), a “case” refers to an individual, situation, organization, or phenomenon. Yin (2014) noted that case studies are abundant in data and useful for researching relevant issues within a real-life context.

Stake (2006) described a multiple case study as one that incorporates several single cases, all similar in nature, under one target case. The problem being investigated, and the information sources are represented by the selected case (Bhattacharya, 2017). Researchers can provide analytical insight on the similarity and differences between each case (Yin, 2014). In multiple case study research, a single case is studied with attention to other cases and belongs to a collection of cases that share a common characteristic or condition (Stake, 2006). Stake defined a quintain as the phenomenon or condition being studied—the target. In a multiple case study, the
quintain is the target collection (Stake, 2006). The researcher selected a multiple case study for this research ensuring that each case in the study is categorically bound together.

The grounded theory approach focuses heavily on the development of new theories while the case study is intended to find patterns or irregularities in data that often form the basis for additional study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Researchers using this approach typically develop theories grounded in deep, structured, and systematic forms of data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher constantly compares information to reach a point of data saturation from which a theory can be discovered (Bhattacharya, 2017). This study is not meant to develop new theories therefore a grounded theory approach was not selected.

The phenomenological study is used to abstract the essence of an experience by exploring the meaning of a shared phenomenon (Bhattacharya, 2017). This approach necessitates that participants reflect on individual experiences in detail as a part of experiencing an event (Bhattacharya, 2017). This type of design is used to explore and understand culture therefore it was ruled out as the best approach for this study.

Similarly, ethnography is the study of people within the context of their culture (Wolcott, 2008). For this type of study, the researcher is typically immersed in the culture context being studied for a prolonged period, often a year or more, to better understand the culture or people in their daily lives (Wolcott, 2008). This knowledge is derived from documenting events, interviews, and studying archived materials (Wolcott, 2008). This is outside the scope for this study as it is not a cultural study therefore ethnography is not a sound choice.

Lastly, the narrative inquiry is used by researchers interested in understanding lived experiences through stories (Kim, 2015). The field text is essentially the stories, interviews, autobiographies, photos, journals, and other artifacts are the basic unit of analysis (Kim, 2015).
This approach is employed when researchers desire to understand why individuals create meaning in their lives in the form of a narrative (Kim, 2015). Understanding the meaning behind individual stories does not fulfill the purpose of this study and for that reason, the narrative approach was not selected.

**Population and Sampling**

Bazeley (2018) and Boddy (2016) asserted that it is not realistic to assume that a researcher can measure an entire population of interest to the study. Rather, researchers utilize a sampling of data from the aggregate population (Bazeley, 2018; Boddy, 2016). These experts explained that analytical methods are applied to the sample size to expand the results back to the aggregate population. The researcher utilized a purposive sampling method in this study. Purposive sampling strategies are non-random methods of ensuring that particular categories of cases within the total population of interest are represented in the final project sample (DeFoe, 2017; Robinson, 2014; Stake, 2006). The population size, sampling size and method, participant eligibility criteria, relevance of characteristics for the chosen sample are discussed next.

**Discussion of Population**

The target population for this study, the totality of persons from which cases may be sampled in an interview-based case study (Robinson, 2014), was limited to leaders performing in the Denver, Colorado area who have developed or implemented strategies to support career advancement for teleworkers. The researcher interviewed 12 participants from three organizations. Interviews were conducted until data saturation was achieved. Exploration and networking provided potential companies that fit the study criteria. This study excluded (a) leaders who did not have experience leading teleworkers through career advancement challenges and (b) leaders who were located outside of the Denver, Colorado area. The chosen population
provided an opportunity to more fully understand how managers adjust their leadership behaviors and styles to address career advancement challenges among teleworkers in the Denver, Colorado area. Individuals who have not lead teleworkers would not have been confronted with the challenges of career advancement in the telework environment therefore could not contribute relevant data to further understand the given problem. Similarly, leaders located outside of the Denver, Colorado area could not provide insight into how managers respond to career advancement challenges in this region.

**Discussion of Sampling**

The purposive sampling strategy was used in this study. The rationale for employing a purposive sampling strategy was that the researcher assumed, based on their understanding of the study topic, that specific categories of participants may hold unique and relevant perspectives on the phenomenon being studied (Mason, 2002; Robinson, 2014; Trost, 1986). The researcher selected this sampling method to allow participants to be chosen based on a predetermined set of characteristics relevant to the target population. Those characteristics were (a) individuals at least 18 years of age, (b) managers that have utilized strategies to successfully lead teleworkers through career advancement challenges, and (c) managers performing their duties in the Denver, Colorado area.

According to Dworkin (2012), the optimal sample size for a qualitative case study is between five and 50 participants. Similarly, a review of 500 qualitative studies identified an average sample size of 31 participants (Mason, 2010). Creswell (2007) suggested no more than four to five cases with three to five participants each to achieve data saturation. However, Bazeley (2018), Boddy (2016), and Merriam (2015) argued that data saturation can be achieved with as little as five participants. Although Dworkin (2012) and Mason (2010) identified optimal
participation values, Robinson (2014) argued that the actual sample size for qualitative studies is contingent upon data saturation. Data saturation is achieved by conducting individual interviews until no new data emerges (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Van Rijnsoever, 2017), and no greater understanding of the subject matter results from further investigation (Mason, 2010). Boddy (2016) posited that data saturation allows the study to become generalizable to organizations and individuals outside of the study population. Guided by these recommendations, the researcher achieved data saturation by interviewing 12 participants from three organizations. The researcher conducted interviews until data saturation was achieved.

**Summary of Population and Sampling**

The population and sampling method was intended to obtain information relevant to this study. The target population was limited to leaders in the Denver, Colorado area who created or utilized strategies to successfully lead teleworkers through career advancement challenges. The purposive sampling strategy allowed the researcher to select participants based on a predetermined set of characteristics relevant to the study. The researcher collected data until data saturation was achieved.

**Data Collection**

Creswell and Poth (2018) described data collection as anticipating ethical issues and gaining appropriate permissions, creating a sound sampling strategy, developing means for recording information, responding to issues, and securely storing data. The data collection plan included locating participants, obtaining access to participants, establishing rapport, purposeful sampling strategies, gathering data and recording data, exploring issues, and securing data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative multiple case study requires a range of data collection instruments to answer the research questions with maximum breadth (Stake, 2006). Collecting
data from multiple sources aids in triangulation (Yin, 2014). The combination of multiple data sources adds rigor, breadth, depth, and complexity to the study (Flick et al., 2004). The primary tool used in qualitative data collection is the semi-structured interview, augmented by participant observations, and organizational documentation including project reports, emails, and meeting notes (Stake, 2006). The researcher utilized semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions as the primary data source for this study. This method enabled the acquisition of unique information held by the participant, accumulation of aggregate data from multiple sources, and obtainment of new characteristics that have yet to be discovered (Stake, 2010).

**Instruments**

The researcher acted as an investigator to collect critical data (Stake, 2010). The researcher of this study was the primary research instrument. The researcher conducted individual interviews with participants which, according to Peters and Halcomb (2015), provides strong insight into the participant’s opinions, views, perceptions, and experiences related to the problem in question. Because in-person interviews were not possible due to COVID-19, interviews were conducted through videoconferencing.

Data were collected through verbal evidence obtained from 12 study participants during the interview (Yin, 2014). Creswell (2014) and Yin (2014) indicated that the questions administered to participants in a qualitative case study should support the research question. The researcher explored leadership styles and behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers located in Denver, Colorado through the research questions that were developed for this study. The researcher used three primary open-ended questions generated to support the research questions. Subsidiary questions were used to gain further insight into the participant’s views and experiences relevant to the primary question.
Creswell (2014) highlighted the importance of constructing an interview protocol that includes open-ended questions, encourages participant discourse, and directs the participant toward the information needed to answer the study research questions. Focusing on the mechanics of the interview itself can present challenges for researchers using qualitative interviewing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher used the interview protocol as a secondary instrument. The interview protocol, found in Appendix D, was utilized to ensure the same methods and questions were administered to each participant. The interview protocol contained an introductory statement, consent form, and list of open-ended questions.

**Data Collection Techniques**

The researcher collected data primarily by asking open-ended semi-structured interview questions regarding leadership behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. A recruitment letter including eligibility requirements was emailed to participating gatekeepers and distributed to managers within the organization. Eligible candidates were characterized as those employed in a leadership position that impacts career advancement for teleworkers. The researcher utilized an emailed pre-screening survey to certify the eligibility of potential participants. Agreeing and eligible participants were asked to review and sign the consent form attached in Appendix B. Participants were informed through the consent form that they will not be monetarily compensated, and that participation is voluntary therefore they can withdraw at any time.

The data were collected through interviews conducted via videoconferencing. The time requirement for the interview was approximately 30 minutes. The researcher and participant practiced confidentiality during in-person interviews by conducting the interviews from a private home office. The interviews were audio-recorded in entirety and the researcher took additional
notes in a field journal to capture any observations, perceptions, and impressions made during the meeting. Video recording was not used to avoid any potential distractions. Upon completion of the initial interview, the data were manually transcribed onto a Word document for coding and saved to the researcher’s password protected hard drive.

Creswell (2014) asserted that reliability in a qualitative study provides consistency and allows other researchers to achieve the same results when duplicating using the methods prescribed within the study. Researchers utilize methods such as member checking to confirm interview transcriptions are consistent with the intent and experience of the participant (Bazeley, 2018; Sigstad, 2014). Member checking is accomplished by distributing a copy of the interview transcript to the participant for review (Bazeley, 2018; Koelsch, 2013). The researcher implemented member checking to affirm the accuracy of the transcription. This allowed participants to review, clarify, or provide more information as desired. After the participant reviewed the transcript, the researcher conducted a follow-up interview over the phone to validate accuracy of the transcript and intent. At that point, the participant was asked to provide clarification or additional information if any exists. This method was used to support data saturation. All follow-up interviews conducted over the phone were recorded using the “Call Recorder” app which is equipped with transcription technology. Upon receiving additional information, the researcher conducted a second round of member checking to confirm the added information was accurately transcribed. The researcher conducted initial and follow-up interviews with participants until data saturation was achieved.

Data Organization Techniques

Resnik (2015) asserted that researchers have a responsibility to conduct all research and data analysis in an ethical manner. To uphold ethicality, the researcher completed the
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) prior to conducting the study and will comply with ethical guidelines stipulated by the Belmont Report. The researcher also adhered to the Belmont Report’s guidelines in terms of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. This included safeguarding the participant’s confidentiality and ensuring collected data is maintained on password-protected document files and data systems.

Immediately upon collecting data, the researcher becomes responsible for maintaining the participant’s confidentiality (Yin, 2014). After pre-interview surveys were collected, the participant’s identification information was compiled and attached to an alphanumeric pseudonym following an A1, A2, B1, B2 system. The alphabetic position represents the organization, and the numeric position represents the participant in the order in which they were received. This was done to simplify data compilation and sorting. A cross-reference document was created and maintained on a password-protected hard drive. The researcher made certain the participant’s legal name was not used on any research documents, notes, and reports. Data collected from the interview were transcribed and saved on a password-protected document.

The researcher may benefit from maintaining field notes that can be used later to support data analysis (Resnik, 2015). The researcher kept notes documenting observations made during the interview. Field notes were transcribed using pseudonym identifiers and saved on a password-protected Microsoft Word document. The notes were stored in a locked safe at the researcher’s residence. The researcher secured the sole key for this safe to maintain participant confidentiality and data integrity. Digital files obtained from the participants were stored in a password-protected folder on the researcher’s hard drive. The hard drive is secured by password only known to the researcher and stored in a locked safe located at the researcher’s residence.
Prior to submission, all participant identifiers were removed from any documents to prevent unintentional disclosure of sensitive information.

Stake (2010) recommended that researchers utilize electronic reporting for data analysis. Upon completing the interviews, recordings, and transcriptions, each transcription was entered into NVivo software through the researcher’s laptop computer. NVivo is a qualitative analysis program primarily used to process large volumes of data to establish emerging themes and codes. Data analysis was cataloged using a number and date system. Stake (2010) suggested maintaining hard copy records as a backup for data storage. All data documents and notes were secured and stored for a period of 5 years and subsequently destroyed. Digital files will be eliminated using the Stompsoft Digital File Shredder software and hard copy documents will be destroyed using the Aurora AU870MA micro-cut shredder.

**Summary of Data Collection**

This section detailed the data collection process. Included in this section are the research instruments, data collection techniques, and data organization techniques. The research instruments consisted of the researcher as an active participant and several physical instruments. The physical instruments consisted of existing literature, pre-interview survey, and interview guide. These instruments were used to ensure the main problem of the study is answered. Next, techniques for data collection consist of sending out surveys for recruitment and eligibility verification. Participants were selected based on characteristics that are relevant to the study. Following the participant interviews, the data were organized using pseudonyms to protect the participant’s anonymity. All raw data were secured using password-protected documents saved on the researcher’s hard drive. All field data were categorized by pseudonym identifiers to prepare for data analysis.
Data Analysis

Data analysis is essential in any research to explain the various concepts, themes, and methods used (Stake, 2010). Creswell and Poth (2018) described data analysis as the process of checking, refining, converting, and patterning data to discover meaningful information that informs conclusions and supports decision-making. The data analysis process began with thorough interview transcriptions, member checking transcriptions, and field note articulation. The data were manually analyzed and coded by colored highlighting. Stake (2010) noted that coding is a common to qualitative analysis and includes sorting the data by themes and topics relevant to the study. Following manual analysis, the researcher entered all transcribed data into NVivo coding software with the assumption that the program would produce additional codes not previously identified. NVivo is a computer-based qualitative data analysis tool in which raw data is coded to aid the researcher in identifying insight, themes, and concepts that may be useful to the study (Yin, 2014). The researcher compared the manual coding to the computerized coding for validation. Common codes were grouped and categorized by topic while noting the frequency of repeating terms.

Stake (2010) asserted that triangulation aids the researcher in understanding meaning and building confidence in the evidence by providing additional levels of validation. Yin (2014) described triangulation as the collecting of empirical data from multiple sources. Triangulation will be used to establish credibility by analyzing data from multiple sources. After the data were coded and triangulated for credibility, the researcher identified emerging themes that impacted leadership behaviors and strategies to support career advancement for teleworkers. The themes were compared to the constructs from the conceptual framework. The researcher then compared the themes to theories and models from the literature review.
Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are used in qualitative studies to ensure trustworthiness and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell (2014) associated qualitative reliability with consistency in the study approach and protocol. Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that researchers can apply comprehensive field notes, high-quality recording tools, accurate transcriptions of all files, and computer software to aid in data analysis to support reliability. Creswell (2014) attributed qualitative validity to the procedures employed that ensure accuracy of the findings. The researcher adhered to these recommendations throughout the study. The researcher used member checking and interview protocol in this study. The following paragraphs describe the strategic approaches to address reliability and validity.

Reliability

Consistency at every stage of the process is paramount to reliability in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Meticulous documentation of both data collection and analysis increase reliability and provides guidelines for future studies of a similar nature (Yin, 2014). The primary method of data collection for this qualitative study is semi-structured interviews. A facet of voluntary participation is that members who agree to participate in interviews may be different to those who do not, in ways unrelated to the sampling criteria (Costigan & Cox, 2001). With voluntary participation being central to ethical study practices, the self-selection bias in interview-based research cannot be circumvented (Creswell, 2014). The researcher remained aware of the possibility for self-selection bias and consider its influence on researcher findings and generalizability. Often with interviews, an intimate self-disclosure is required which tends to lead to a sample of individuals who are more patient, open, and interested in the topic than the general sample pool (Creswell, 2014). Researchers have found that women are more likely than
men to volunteer to participate in qualitative research with purposive sampling (Dindia & Allen, 1992). The researcher prevented the female bias by ensuring that an adequate number of male representation was present in this study.

Reliability is referred to as the consistency of responses to data sets with multiple coders (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher supported reliability of the through comprehensive documentation of the data collection process and analysis. Documentation of data analysis for this study included careful transcript coding and identification of themes, synthesis of common themes, interpretation of findings, and validation of findings. The researcher manually coded and entered data obtained through interviews. This data were subsequently entered into NVivo software to search for additional codes not found through manual coding. The researcher accomplished several iterations of coding and checking for themes relevant to teleworker career advancement as additional information was obtained.

Reliability was further augmented by using interview protocol. Interview protocols should obtain between five and seven open-ended questions geared toward responses that are relevant to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview questions were developed using the literature review and constructs from the conceptual framework. To support consistency, the researcher asked each participant the same interview questions. Reliability was strengthened through the documentation of fieldwork formalities, including participant qualifications, sample selection, participant interviews, and field notes. Yin (2014) described field notes as a common research tool used for interviews, observations, or documentation. The notes may be handwritten, electronically recorded, or typed (Yin, 2014). All field notes for this study will be stored apart from transcribed interview data.
The researcher utilized member checking to ensure the transcription accurately portrays the participant’s intent. Researchers utilize member checking to confirm interview transcriptions are consistent with the intent and experience of the participant (Bazeley, 2018; Koelsch, 2013; Sigstad, 2014). Member checking is accomplished by distributing a copy of the interview transcript to the participant for review (Bazeley, 2018). An additional method to support reliability is to conduct a pilot study (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2013). A pilot study is a small-scale version of the study accomplished in preparation for a major study, or to evaluate a potential data collection instrument (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2013). This study does not require a pilot test.

**Validity**

Validity is described as maintaining a strong level of exactness, achieved through the detailed expression of the participants’ and the researcher’s perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Guzys et al. (2015) listed four components of validity: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that validity can be achieved by applying structured processes and recommended at least two validation strategies be applied per study. The researcher applied a comprehensive strategy to support credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability.

Member checking is a viable option for researchers to support credibility (McGrane et al., 2018). Researchers utilize member checking to confirm interview transcriptions are consistent with the statements and experiences of the participants (Bazeley, 2018; Koelsch, 2013; Sigstad, 2014). The researcher used member checking to promote credibility and data saturation. Failure to achieve data saturation obstructs content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Saturation is indicated by the point in research at which no new themes emerge from data collection and when
additional interviews repeat or confirm the same primary range of themes represented by the group (Creswell, 2014). To expand the validity of this study, the researcher conducted follow-up interview questions and several rounds of member checking until no new data or themes emerge.

In addition to member checking, the researcher utilized triangulation to support validity. Triangulation is the process of collecting and analyzing empirical data from multiple sources (Denzin, 2009; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). Likewise, multiple external analysis of the same event and process validity is enhanced by utilizing several data sources (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Triangulation is a case study is understood to be a strategy to add rigor, breadth, complexity, and depth to the study (Flick et al., 2004). Fusch and Ness (2015) noted the linkage between data triangulation and saturation, stating that triangulation is a method used to achieve saturation. Denzin (2009) asserted that it is not possible for a single method, theory, or observer to capture all relevant and notable data. The researcher applied triangulation to strengthen validity by viewing all facets of the data. This included conducting research using multiple organizations in varying industries; employing interviews, member checking, and field notes; and performing multiple iterations and methods of data analysis.

External validity is the extent in which a study of the same sample can be generalized to a larger population (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To assure transferability, the researcher employed the same methods used to support internal validity of this study. In addition, the researcher provided a description of the event and study participants to ensure sufficient information is made available for other researchers to evaluate the generalization of the findings.

**Summary of Reliability and Validity**

This section described the meaning of reliability and validity, highlighting the importance of credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. The qualitative measures of
reliability included meticulous documentation of the triangulated data collection and analysis processes. The strategies for validity include saturation, triangulation of data, and member checking. The reliability and validity processes combined ensure the credibility and repeatability of the study.

**Transition and Summary of Section 2**

This section covered the study procedures specific to the researcher and the participants. Included in this is the study methodology and population sampling. Additionally, this section detailed the data collection and data analysis protocol, including the data collection instruments employed within this study. Lastly, the reliability and validity factors for qualitative research were explained in this section with specific measures that ensure the credibility of this study.

Section 3 concludes the study with the findings and interpretation of the collected data. It includes pertinent themes identified by the research, and the relationship between those themes. The concluding section will also discuss the application for professional practice and recommendations for actions and future research. Section 3 provides reflection, summarization, and conclusion of the research project.
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Teleworking opportunities continue to increase with industries such as finance and IT experiencing substantial growth in recent years (Mann & Adkins, 2017). Technological advancements provided leaders with the ability to concentrate efforts on critical skills and best practices within the workforce unhindered by geographical boundaries (Picu & Dinu, 2016). As work environments continue to shift, leadership strategies progress to accommodate these changes (Allen et al., 2015). Three leadership theories (path-goal leadership, transactional leadership, and situational leadership) and their relationship to career advancement within the telework environment are integrated into this study. Path-goal theory focuses on leadership behaviors that influence motivation, satisfaction, and performance to accomplish set goals (Bickle, 2017; Dyer & Wallace, 2017; Jeanes, 2019; Northouse, 2016). A key feature of this theory is the consideration given to followers and environmental characteristics to determine the most appropriate leadership behavior (Jeanes, 2019). The focus is on achieving established objectives which is a concept shared by the transactional leadership model (Bass et al., 2003; Northouse, 2016). Under both models, leaders create comprehensible goals for the follower in which rewards are offered (Bass et al., 2003; Northouse, 2016). Lastly, situational leadership experts (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al., 2008, 2013) noted there is no single best way to influence individuals or groups to accomplish goals; therefore, the leader must adapt their behaviors to meet the follower’s needs in varying situations.

A field study was conducted, and the findings are detailed in the following paragraphs. The themes are presented with a discussion of their correlation to the conceptual framework, research questions, anticipated themes, and existing literature. This section also includes an
application to professional practice and recommendations for future study. The researcher’s reflections, including personal and professional growth and biblical integration, close this section.

**Overview of the Study**

The findings of the research conducted are presented in this section. Using a multiple case study approach, the researcher explored leadership behaviors that were effective in supporting career advancement for teleworkers. A field study was developed to answer specific research question. The research questions focused on the leader’s experiences concerning effective behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. Three research questions were developed to address the problem of this study. The research questions include:

- What leadership strategies and behaviors, if any, were used to successfully support career development among teleworkers?
- What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus a traditional office environment?
- What challenges did leaders encounter and overcome when developing and supporting career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

Semi-structured interviews were used to gain insight into the participants’ experiences regarding leadership behaviors that support career advancement in the telework environment. Data were collected by interviewing 12 organizational leaders in the Denver, Colorado area. The study was not limited to a specific industry and included data system sales, health insurance acquisitions, and logistics. The industry was left unconstrained by design in order to capture a broader range of leadership experiences as it pertains to the topic of career advancement within the telework
arena. Deeper insight from the leaders’ experiences was obtained through the use of diverse participation.

A recruitment email was sent to five organizations with a brief overview of the study. Three organizations responded and granted permission to conduct the study. The remaining two organizations did not respond. A follow up email was sent to both nonresponding organizations two weeks after the initial email was sent. Neither organization responded to the second inquiry. Participants were identified by the organizations’ gatekeepers and were subsequently required to complete a prescreening survey to verify eligibility. Agreeing and eligible participants signed a consent form prior to the interview (see Appendix G). Each participant was assigned an alphanumeric pseudonym, which served as the participant’s identification code. The alphabetic position identified the organization while the numeric position referenced the participant, in random order.

The researcher used open-ended, semi-structured interview questions generated to support the research questions. Subsidiary questions were used to gain further insight into the participant’s views and experiences relevant to the primary question. A semi-structured process was selected to provide flexibility during the interview. According to Robson and McCartan (2016), semi-structured interviews provide freedom in sequencing the interview, giving the researcher more time for topics and questions. During the interview, the researcher noted observations and expressions to probe further questioning. Each interview was conducted using the Zoom app and was recorded using a handheld recording device. Upon completion of the interview, the researcher manually transcribed each recording. The researcher conducted member checking by emailing the transcript back to the participant. The participant reviewed the transcript for accuracy and responded during follow up with any clarifications or additional
information. To support confidentiality, all transcripts contained only the participant’s identification code. All interview transcripts are included under Appendix H.

Data analysis consisted of a meticulous review and thorough coding to generate a set of common themes adapted from the participant’s experiences and perceptions. The coding process revealed a series of shared perceptions and experiences of leadership behaviors that positively affect career advancement for teleworkers. With the number of repetitive themes, the researcher was able to fully achieve data saturation within the sample. Creswell and Poth (2018) described data saturation as the point in which the researcher no longer finds additional information that adds to the knowledge or understanding of the topic. Data saturation is discussed in more detail in the following section.

Reliability and validity were measured using a variety of methods. The interviews were audio-recorded which, according to Robson and McCartan (2016), impedes potential threats to the validity of the study. Similarly, data triangulation enhances the rigor of the research and counters any additional threats to the validity (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The researcher used data triangulation to strengthen the validity of this study. The researcher followed the interview protocol during each interview to ensure consistency. Creswell and Poth (2018) found consistency at every stage of the process to be paramount to reliability in qualitative research. To further guarantee reliability, the researcher used a common coding platform, meticulously transcribed each interview, and ensured data saturation was achieved. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), transcripts enhance the reliability of the study.

Following the manual coding process, the researcher analyzed codes generated from the NVivo 12 platform. The data were interpreted according to the research questions and applied to the problem. This process yielded several themes which were compiled and applied to each
research question. The top-level themes that emerged from this research include (a) intentional communication, (b) performance-based monitoring and evaluation, (c) flexible leadership, and (d) relationship building. This analysis included the relationship of the findings to the research questions, conceptual framework, and existing literature.

To ensure data saturation was achieved, the researcher continued to interview participants and analyze potential themes until no new themes emerged. According to Bhattacharya (2017), the researcher constantly compares information to reach a point of data saturation. The researcher continuously asked participants to add clarification or additional information if any were present. Data saturation is achieved by conducting individual interviews until no new data emerges (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Van Rijnsoever, 2017), and no greater understanding of the subject matter results from further investigation (Mason, 2010). At the point in which the interviews were concluded, each participant stated that no more information could be added. To further ensure data saturation, the researcher conducted several iterations of analysis to search for additional themes. While differing verbiage was used between participants, the researcher categorized data based on meaning and intent. The researcher identified repeated themes among the participant and determined that conducting additional interviews would yield comparable results.

**Presentation of the Findings**

Data for this study were collected through interviews with 12 organizational leaders across three organizations within the Denver, Colorado area. Data analysis was conducted with themes compared to the conceptual framework and research questions. The researcher found that the themes discovered through the study aligned with research questions, conceptual framework,
and literature. The emergent themes and their relationship to the study are discussed in detail below.

**Themes Discovered**

The top-level themes emerging from the collected data align with each research question and the framework. The emerging themes include (a) intentional communication, (b) performance-based monitoring and evaluation, (c) flexible leadership, and (d) relationship building. The relationship of the themes to the conceptual framework and research questions will be discussed in greater detail later in this section. As a final note, participants found that advantages or disadvantages existed primarily when some employees were teleworking, and others were not. Participant B2 suggested that the playing field was equalized in terms of career advancement during the COVID-19 pandemic because telework was forced upon all employees within the organization.

**Interpretation of the Themes**

**Theme 1: Intentional Communication.** When organizational leaders considered behaviors and strategies that were most effective in supporting career advancement for teleworkers, intentional communication was primarily mentioned. Eleven of the 12 participants, or approximately 92% of participants, discussed the effectiveness of communication as an intentional activity. Participants qualified intentional communication as being among the most effective behaviors in leading teleworkers through career advancement. Participant B2 stated, “There are people that just do their work, and you don’t really interact at all. They need that interaction, and a lot of them want that interaction, but they’re certainly not going to initiate it.” Similarly, participant C4 suggested that teleworkers often fail to communicate when assistance is needed because of a desire to figure it out and not be a bother which results in delayed and
subpar performance. This aligns with the conclusion drawn by Birdie and Jain (2015) who found that physical distance and infrequent communication between leaders and teleworkers negatively impacts career advancement.

Intentional communication was described by participants as behaviors that include discussing tasks and requirements and calling teleworkers to talk informally as a means of being personable and building relationships, using videoconferencing technology to create a sense of social presence, calling privately to discuss corrections, and holding team meetings over video for team building and rapport. The level and type of communication applied is aligned with the motivation and skill level of the teleworking employee. Participant B3 stated that one’s leadership approach depends on the employee and their attitude toward their work. Intentional communication enabled participants to understand the teleworker’s needs in order to develop a strategy for career advancement. This follows the premise of path-goal theory in which experts suggest there is a “best suited” leadership style determined by the individual’s motivation (Jeanes, 2019). Four leadership behaviors are present under path-goal theory: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. Participants described using each of these types of leadership approaches in terms of communication depending on the experience and motivation of the teleworker.

Communication was often described as directive or prescriptive when applied to newer employees or those lacking confidence or job knowledge. Several participants discussed the need to be directive or prescriptive when supervising an inexperienced teleworker. Participant B2 noted that in addition to inexperience, some employees lack motivation and prefer to be given instructions for each task. Directive leader behavior refers to a situation in which the leader explains what is expected of the employee and how to perform a given task (House & Mitchell,
1974). In this case, participants shared that they would employ a more directive leadership approach although it commonly was the least preferred method of supervising. Some participants compared the directive leader behavior to micromanagement highlighting the importance of understanding the teleworker’s values and needs to ensure the line between directiveness and micromanagement is not blurred. It is for this reason that intentional communication became a significant theme in relation to path-goal theory. Participants found that one could not appropriately lead or develop strategic plans for their employees without communication. In telework, communication is an area that suffers due to a lack of visibility and physical distance (Park & Cho, 2020). Participants noted that communication should be intentional and is the leader’s obligation to ensure the teleworker’s needs and values are addressed.

In addition to directive leader behavior, several participants specified the need to be supportive. One participant previously held the belief that all teleworkers appreciated autonomy but learned through experience that the assumption was not true. Several participants suggested that from their experience, teleworkers often desired supportive relationships. Supportive leaders are characterized by friendliness, approachability, and mutual respect (Northouse, 2016). Many participants asserted that leaders should be available and approachable so that teleworkers feel comfortable addressing their values, needs, and goals. Intentional communication was commonly mentioned as a method of allowing leaders to be perceived as available and approachable. Some participants qualified their efforts as successful based on the teleworker’s comfortability in approaching the leader to communicate their needs. Participants described some employees as those who appreciate autonomy and work well when left alone. In such cases, participants noted that less formal communication was more effective.
Further, participants shared that intentional communication meant involving teleworkers in decision-making activities in areas including work tasks and decisions that personally impacted the teleworker’s career. Participants shared that communication is instrumental in developing a career advancement plan for the teleworker. A3 stated, “I can’t help you if I don’t know what you want.” An important aspect of developing a strategic career advancement plan, according to participants, is garnering input from the teleworker. Participant B3 described a method of probing the teleworker to determine areas of value to the individual. B3 stated, 

I have that conversation. What do you value? What are you looking to do? How independent do you want to be? What roles do you want to take? And then you try to structure that when you make workload decisions.

B3 added, “We have people that want to get promoted too, and that’s competitive. You need bullets. You need stuff to do so I have to pass out the workload that way.” Participants shared that motivated teleworking employees contribute to the development of their leadership approach by providing input concerning their goals and needs. Participants stated that they are intentional about fostering a leader-member relationship that allows teleworkers to feel comfortable contributing to their leadership approach as it concerns the teleworker’s career advancement goals. Northouse (2016) described participative leader behaviors as one in which leaders create an environment that invites subordinates to participate in decision making and when the decisions impact the employee directly. Leaders will likely use participative leader behaviors when employees are autonomously motivated, and tasks are ambiguous (Bickle, 2017).

Lastly, several participants asserted that success is a motivator in the telework environment. Participants across all industries included in this study stated that more freedom and autonomy is afforded to those teleworkers that demonstrated greater levels of performance
and self-motivation. The common opinion among participants was that career advancement is an individual responsibility that can only be supported by leadership, not achieved. Participants expressed that leaders should present developmental opportunities or remove roadblocks that impede one’s career growth, however it is the responsibility of the individual to accomplish their career goals. According to Dyer and Wallace (2017), path-goal leadership holds that the leader’s primary function is to bolster positive outcomes and rewards by establishing an unobstructed path to goal achievement (i.e., clarifying objectives, eliminating obstacles, and improving job satisfaction). Achievement oriented leader behaviors are effective for employees who set high expectations for themselves and desire continuous growth (Bickle, 2017). According to Northouse (2016), leaders using achievement-oriented behaviors display a high degree of confidence that subordinates are capable of setting and accomplishing challenging goals.

Similarly, the notion of applying more or less formal communication aligns with constructs of the Situational Leadership model. Participants shared experiences that described the use of flexibility in one’s leadership approach, output-orientation, and intentional communication. Participants discussed employing a specific set of behaviors commensurate with the teleworker’s skill level and needs. Under the situational leadership model, the leader assesses the follower’s performance readiness level in terms of ability and willingness to perform the task and determines the appropriate style of leadership to implement (Hersey et al., 2008). The leadership styles outlined in this model are the telling, selling, participating, and delegating approaches (Hersey et al., 2008). Participants suggested that they provided more direction and were more involved in task activities with teleworkers that demonstrated a lack of ability. Similarly, these same participants discussed affording experienced teleworkers more autonomy over their tasks and schedules.
In addition, participants discussed the use of email and video technology to offer public praise for superior performance. As a component of transactional leadership, several participants discussed communication as a means of offering rewards for work efforts. This allowed leaders to fill in networking gaps that are created by a lack of physical presence. Participant C2 explained, “Usually we’ll bring in upper-level bosses and send emails with them on…or boost them up and give them more credit for it.” The idea was that passing names around to upper management and across teams allows superior performers to remain in front of mind when opportunities arise, or assistance is needed. According to Hartley et al. (2019), leaders offer contingent rewards such as monetary bonuses, promotions, and high-level projects for superior performers. Three of the 12 participants mentioned sending emails or otherwise notifying upper-level managers of the teleworker’s successes on work projects as a means of building connections between upper-level managers and teleworkers. Participant A1 suggested that frequently mentioning teleworkers by name when communicating with upper-level managers increases the teleworkers visibility and personhood. A1 noted, “When big bosses hear certain names repeatedly, those names are offered back as suggestions, or at least inquiries, for important projects.”

Several participants shared that being intentional about communication was the most prominently changed behavior. This adjustment was motivated by the ineffective communication that occurs when employees are physically distant. Participant C3 stated, “Some things that are different are the ways we communicate, how frequently, and how we monitor work behaviors.” Similarly, participant C4 noted, “I reach out probably more to the teleworker just to make sure they understand the assignment or find out if they have any issues or are hitting any roadblocks.” Moreover, C2 expressed, “I try to reach out more and let them know in a telework environment,
the things I used to pass on during watercooler conversations are still there.” Participants shared opinions and experiences concerning the loss of informal conversation and personability, which created a need for intentional communication in the telework environment. Several participants stated that naturally occurring conversation within the traditional office setting are lost to the telework environment, therefore leaders must fill in the gap by acting purposefully to generate those conversations. Participant A2 stated, “I don’t get to see their face daily to gauge their mood so a lot of times, I hear things when it’s too late.” Likewise, B3 explained, “I’ve always gone to great lengths to let them know I’m here…just to let people know they’re not alone because sometimes it can be a little lonely in the telework environment.” In such, participants shared that they were able to build and maintain trust in relationships that aided in improving performance and career advancement. Participant A3 found that, “Laughter is minimal because nobody’s around to crack a joke…Typing an ‘LOL’ doesn’t ring the same as the sound of actual laughter…It doesn’t have the same effect on building good work relationships with coworkers.”

In an effort to be more personable, participants noted that video technology was preferred over telephone conversations. Likewise, some participants shared that team meetings are held over videoconferencing to create a space for employees to build relationships and network. This is a behavior that was said to be created specifically to accommodate the telework environment as these behaviors occur more organically in the traditional office setting.

Birdie and Jain (2015) further asserted that infrequent communication as a result of physical distance leads to role ambiguity. With regard to role ambiguity, three of the 12 participants suggested that it is the responsibility of the leader to establish communication, and not the duty of the teleworker. Participant C2 expressed, “It’s the supervisor’s job to build that trust and communication. Sometimes we put that responsibility unduly on the subordinate, which
is wrong.” A study on the impact of physical proximity between leaders, peers, and teleworking employees (Sewell & Taskin, 2015) showed that respondents who telework reported overcompensating to create a virtual presence in the workplace to prevent exclusion from decision-making activities and stretch assignments.

Lautsch et al. (2009) emphasized that communication between leaders and teleworkers via ICT is more frequently used for monitoring and scheduling purposes versus information sharing and development. Consequently, teleworkers are often sidelined during advancement opportunities (Hill et al., 2003). Four of the 12 participants mentioned knowledge or information sharing as an important leadership behavior that impacts career advancement. Participant B1 referred to communication in the telework environment as an avenue for “information sharing, feedback, rapport, and direction, if needed.” Participant C2 stated,

I increased my ability to reach out to people and because of my position, I have more insight into what they need to do to advance. I try to reach out more to let them know that things I used to pass on during watercooler conversations are still there.

Allen et al. (2015) indicated that teleworkers lose informal conversations that influence knowledge sharing and learning opportunities. On the same note, Bentley et al. (2016) found that teleworkers spend less time interacting with peers and organizational leaders resulting in limited interpersonal communication and knowledge sharing. This is significant because the exchange of implicit information and knowledge sharing among employees is paramount to employee development (Chirawattanakij & Ractham, 2015). To counteract the impact of physical distance on information sharing, participants C2 and C4 emphasized the use of technology, specifically Microsoft Teams, to share information in real time.
Two of the 12 participants directly addressed networking as a positive outcome of intentional communication. Participant B1 suggested that intentional communication helps “level the playing field” between teleworkers and onsite workers in terms of networking by allowing information concerning upcoming opportunities to be passed along. Participant B2 affirmed that regular informal team meetings are necessary for team building and networking. B2 stated,

Other supervisors hold team meetings over the phone because it’s quicker, but I prefer having meetings over video. My team likes to talk, apart from business stuff. It’s like having lunch together and getting to know each other. It’s important.

In other ways, participants discussed “filling in the gap” for teleworkers who are unable to participate in the informal conversations that lead to networking.

Five of 12 participants discussed the significance of communication in relation to being neglected or passed over for career advancement projects or opportunities. Participant B2 stated, “I have to be intentional about keeping up with them and keeping them in mind so that I don’t skip them over just because I can’t see them.” In the same way, participant A2 explained, “I found that leading teleworkers through career advancement is different than leading employees I can see daily. The main difference is the informal conversation and the out of sight, out of mind issue that we run into with teleworkers.” B2 proclaimed, “It is easy, easy, easy to forget about people, until something happens, or they haven’t done something, and an issue comes up.”

Lautsch et al. (2009) highlighted a need for leaders to learn how to better support teleworking employees in an environment where they are frequently out of sight. The concern is that “out of sight” truly is “out of mind,” meaning that employees who are rarely seen within the traditional office are forgotten or otherwise not considered for opportunities that may promote career advancement (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). Participants found that in their experience, intentional
communication is an effective way to be present with teleworkers and to make it clear that they are valued. Experts suggest that promotion factors extend beyond work performance and may include subjective elements such as social networking, workplace context, leadership behaviors and relationships, and embeddedness (Chattopadhyay & Choudhury, 2017; Enslin & Schulz, 2015; Marineau, 2017; Vega et al., 2015).

Participants offered that the primary challenges found in their experiences with telework included the ineffective communication, difficulties building relationships, and role ambiguity. To overcome the challenges, participants discussed the use of intentional communication to clarify misunderstanding and to find resolution. Intentional communication was offered as a solution to a variety of challenges including building relationships and the lack of visibility. Additionally, participants highlighted the use of video technology to create relationships and foster teamwork. Some participants mentioned stepping out of one’s comfort zone to be available and personable. Some participants found that it was important to understand the needs of the teleworker from the teleworker’s perspective. This was accomplished through open communication with the teleworker.

The findings of this study showed that the intentionality of communication was considered an important and effective leadership behavior that supports career advancement for teleworkers. Communication is a behavior that is considered effective and important across all work environments however there is an emphasis on the intentionality of communication in the telework environment due to a lack of physical presence. Several participants offered opinions concerning the effectiveness of communication on career advancement for teleworkers. The most noted ideas presented were that intentional communication builds trust, allows teleworkers to feel comfortable addressing their goals and needs, maintains presence and connections, and
improves information flow. Participants expressed using communication strategically to enhance the performance of their teleworking employees based upon each individual’s motivation and skill level. This is a demonstration of path-goal theory and the situational leadership model. Likewise, participants discussed using communication as a means of providing rewards and correction when appropriate. This aligns with the contingent reward construct of the transactional leadership model. These finding are consistent with experts who found that teleworkers spend less time interacting with peers and organizational leaders resulting in limited interpersonal communication and knowledge sharing (Bentley et al., 2016). The participants of this study counteracted this phenomenon by using technology to enhance communication as an intentional leadership activity. As telework continues to increase in popularity, ICTs improve allowing the employees to communicate and seek more flexibility with work (Morganson et al., 2010). Participants stated that intentional communication effectively supported career advancement by created trust between teleworkers and leaders, creating rapport and comfort in conversations in which career goals can be discussed, sharing information and opportunities for growth, and improving individual performance by fostering an environment that is supportive and available.

Theme 2: Performance-Based Monitoring and Evaluation. When organizational leaders considered behaviors and strategies that were effective in supporting career advancement for teleworkers, taking a performance-based approach to monitoring and evaluating teleworkers was offered. Ten of the 12 participants, 83%, discussed the effectiveness of applying a performance-based approach to leading teleworkers. Participant A1 asserted, “I try to be goal-oriented and results-oriented, not clock-oriented. I’m in sales so I think people are motivated by success. There’s incentive for everybody to work hard when you’re driven by results and not
“Clock time.” Participant B3 mentioned, “One of the biggest differences is appearance, because people do look at appearances. How someone dresses or what they look like would play a part, and in teleworking none of that stuff matters. Output matters.” Similarly, participant B2 said, “Career advancement is more about output. What product are you putting out? You can tell when somebody is not doing their job. When that ball drops, it’s pretty loud.”

These findings are consistent with existing academic literature. Peters et al. (2016) affirmed that individual productivity in the form of efficiency, productiveness, effectiveness, and work quality may be the single most important telework outcome to be considered. Groen et al. (2018) explained that the ability to monitor employee behavior is reduced with telework, and greater emphasis is placed on output controls. Others have found that the seclusiveness of telework makes behavior-based controls (i.e., time sitting at a desk) impractical; output-based controls may be more appropriate, conceding that the metrics for assessing job performance in terms of output are available (Kim et al., 2021).

One of the many documented challenges of leading teleworkers is the method in which leaders manage their employees. Participant A2 noted, “Since teleworkers are typically rated by output, performance is an important metric.” Park and Cho (2020) reported that some managers prefer to see their employees in the office as opposed to leading them by ICT, thereby placing a greater value on physical presence than high-level performance. They argued that supervisors are notably worried about the lack of visibility, and reduced control over employees as a consequence of telework. The participants of this study did not express feeling worried over reduced control, however, the lack of visibility was mentioned as a challenge to be overcome with the use of intentional communication. Participant C2 stated, “You really have no choice but to allow them a little more freedom. You are not seeing everything that they’re doing. You’re
just not monitoring the same way that you would in the office.” When asked to consider the least effective leadership behavior or strategy for the purpose of supporting career advancement for teleworkers, three participants stressed clock-watching as being “detrimental to morale” and a “poor use of time.” Participant A1 described clock-watching as counterintuitive and illustrated it with an example of marathon running. This participant explained, “…your objective is to finish the marathon...someone finishes in four hours and it takes somebody else five. What are you going to do? Make the person that only took four hours run for another hour?”

Burns (1978) described transactional leadership as a distinct strategy positing that the exchange of work and reward between the leader and employee maximizes gains for both the organization and the individual. Leaders offer contingent rewards such as monetary bonuses and promotions, and sanctions including negative feedback and corrective coaching for successful, or unsuccessful, achievement of set expectations (Hartley et al., 2019; McCleskey, 2014). When asked to share experiences concerning the participant’s treatment of superior and subpar performance, the common opinion was that superior performers were recognized publicly while subpar performance was addressed privately.

Participants stated that official rewards were predetermined by the organization and the supervisor’s capacity within the official reward system was limited to nominating deserving members. Participant B2 explained, “I don’t have any control over the formal system.” Participants noted that alternative methods of rewarding superior performance that fall within the supervisor’s purview include informing upper-level managers of the teleworker’s superior performance, applauding one’s effort and performance publicly among peers, assigning more challenging projects that will enhance job knowledge and experience, and offering more freedom and autonomy in managing assigned projects. Conversely, participants asserted that subpar
performance held commensurate consequences that ranged from admonishment to potential release from one’s position. Participant C3 declared, “Everything we do is dual purposed. It is for the benefit of the organization and simultaneously beneficial for the employee. It really is a transactional relationship if you think about it…If they perform well then opportunities arise.” Participant C4 stated, “It depends on the situation and in this case, the severity of the problem. It could mean losing their job if it’s bad enough.” Most often, corrective coaching and training was offered as a result of subpar performance. According to Berkovich and Eyal (2019), transactional leaders can measure success against the organization’s existing reward-penalty system.

Participants described career advancement in terms of individual roles. The common opinion was that applying a performance-based approach is highly effective in supporting teleworkers through career advancement. Participants shared that from their experiences, output is the most important metric to consider for career advancement purposes. Participants commonly believe that success acts as a motivator and that teleworkers will work diligently to succeed when they have individually set career goals. Several participants expressed feeling that the leader-member relationship is transactional in that the teleworker’s success is contingent upon their performance. One participant stated that leading teleworkers is dual-purposed meaning that benefits exist for both the teleworker and the organization when the teleworker performs well. That not only incentivized the teleworker to perform well but also the supervisor to lead well. The rationale for employing a contingent reward system is to devise an incentive mechanism through which employees expect their efforts to bolster performance and to be rewarded in turn (Hartley et al., 2019). Field experts assert that employees are motivated by rewards and other positive outcomes to put greater effort towards performing their jobs well (Bass et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2011). With that expectation, employees can minimize workplace
anxiety, fulfill their own interests, and focus on clear organizational objectives (Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012).

**Theme 3: Flexible Leadership.** Ten of 12 participants, 83%, discussed flexible leadership within their leadership approach to career advancement in the telework environment. Participant A2 stated, “I always try to be as flexible as possible in my leadership approach so that I can support all types of personalities and situations.” Participant A1 asserted,

You're going to run into all different kinds of people, all different kinds of employers, and all different kinds of leaders, and all the different kinds of co-workers, right. So it really depends on what it is that they want to do.

This opinion was common among participants. Participant B3 noted, “For me, when I lead, it just depends on the people that I’m leading.” B3 emphasized the importance of adjusting one’s leadership approach based on the teleworker’s attitude and ability. A2 answered, “Like in an office, teleworking employees have different needs, skill levels, and temperaments. You have to be able to adjust according to their professional needs and personality.”

The findings align with the constructs of path-goal theory and situational leadership. Path-goal theory highlights flexible leader behaviors consistent with follower motivation (Northouse, 1996). Path-goal theory assumes that leaders are flexible and able to adjust according to situational demands (Northouse, 2016). Similarly, situational leadership suggests the use of a flexible leadership model in which leadership style depends on the employee’s performance readiness level (Hersey et al., 2008). The premise behind situational leadership is that there is no single best way to influence individuals to accomplish goals; the leader must adapt behaviors to meet the follower’s needs in varying situations (Blanchard, 1985; Blanchard et al., 1985; Blanchard et al., 1992; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, 1988; Hersey et al., 2008, 2013).
The data collected in this study demonstrated many components of situational leadership. Participants discussed employing a specific set of behaviors commensurate with the teleworker’s skill level and needs. Under the situational leadership model, a balance between task and relationship behaviors is applied according to the employee’s level of performance readiness (Hersey et al., 2008). These leadership styles include telling, selling, participating, and delegating (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Hersey, 1985; Hersey et al., 2008). Task behaviors are described as the extent in which leaders engage in defining follower roles, providing instructions, establishing formal lines of communication, and creating organizational patterns (Bass, 2008; Daft, 2014; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981). This includes telling employees what to do, how to do it, when it should be done, and by whom (Hersey et al., 2008).

Participants shared that using a more directive approach with inexperienced teleworkers is preferred. Further, participants asserted their intentionality about communicating with teleworkers to the degree that is necessary based upon their ability to perform assigned tasks. Participants explained that being flexible is important in creating an environment in which employees feel confident performing tasks. Similarly, participants suggested that prescriptive conversations were conducted to provide direction. These behaviors are indicative of the telling leadership style, which corresponds with followers that are unable or unwilling to perform a given task (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981).

Participants described allowing teleworkers to participate in decision-making activities and delegating work as opposed to being overly hands-on with self-motivated and highly skilled teleworkers. In fact, one participant qualified delegation as the most effective leader behavior in supporting career advancement for teleworkers. Participant B2 shared an opinion regarding the usefulness of delegation, ranking it among the most effective leadership behaviors. B2 stated, “It
works really well when you have people that are self-sufficient.” Likewise, participants stated that allowing teleworkers to contribute to decisions made in areas that impact their career growth is a significant leader behavior that supports career advancement for teleworkers. Participant C3 shared, “They contribute as much as possible…I’m flexible in my approach so I try to meet them where they are. In that way, my employees’ kids dictate how I’m going to lead just by the nature of being themselves.” These behaviors reflect both participating and delegating leadership styles which correspond with followers who exhibit moderate to high readiness levels.

Flexibility as a leader behavior or strategy was often discussed in terms of flexibility in scheduling and level of directiveness. B1 shared that more freedom and flexibility is offered to employees who perform well. A1 stated,

I'm always on and I'm always off. That's how I choose to work, and that's the way I like to have employees work as well. They don't have to do that. If somebody wanted to work specific hours and not be bothered after hours, they have that right.

Allowing autonomy in work was a shared experience among these participants. A2 noted,

I like to think that telework is reserved for employees who have proven their ability to work autonomously, but with the pandemic we had to employ everyone remotely. That was a shift because we expect little training to be required in the remote field.

Similarly, B2 offered the following,

I value autonomy. My bosses make me happy if they leave me alone. I used to think everybody valued that, but lot of people want to be just told what to do, know what the expectations are, and be done. So I always try to figure that out.

The value of autonomy in telework is found throughout literature. Beauregard et al. (2019) noted that employees offered higher levels of commitment to the job in exchange for
increased autonomy. Additionally, Costa et al. (2018) found that indirect control procedures driven by autonomous motivation and trust are replacing traditional employment relationships. In the same way, increased flexibility is said to be an important non-monetary reward that is often favored by organizations (Mayo et al., 2008). The willingness of leaders to offer autonomy in telework has been a point of contention within literature. While some suggest that autonomous motivation is highly supported in the telework arena (Costa et al., 2018), others argue that leaders by and large are unwilling to relinquish control and authority within the context of telework autonomy (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). The findings of this study lean in favor of supporting flexible leadership behaviors and autonomy. Lastly, participants found that adopting a flexible leadership approach allows more autonomy where appropriate, coupled with intentional communication, was successful in overcoming the role ambiguity issue.

**Micromanagement.** Micromanagement was frequently mentioned as a negative leader behavior that disrupts trust and autonomy. When asked to consider the least effective leader behavior or strategy used to support career advancement for teleworkers, five participants discussed micromanagement. Participants qualified micromanagement as fluid, a slippery slope, and an ineffective use of time. A2 stated, “I guess micromanaging is somewhat fluid depending on who you’re managing and how much communication they appreciate. This is where you run into a bit of contention with roles and responsibilities.” B2 noted,

You cannot really overly manage somebody. I don’t want to say micromanage, that’s not effective anyway. It’s difficult to be prescriptive and directive without sounding like a micromanager. I need to do that sometimes because we have inexperienced people. I find it difficult because it’s hard to communicate.
The findings lend themselves to flexible leadership models such as situational leadership and path-goal theory as the degree of directive behaviors, thus frequency of communication, depends largely on the subordinate (Hersey et al., 2008; Northouse, 1996).

**Goal-Oriented.** Five participants discussed the significance of leading teleworkers according to set goals. A1 emphasized goal-orientation stating that an individual must set goals and work to achieve them. A1 stated, “It’s the supervisor’s role to support their employee by providing opportunities and guidance to achieve those goals, but it’s up to them to do the work.” This opinion was shared by participant B1 who suggested that teleworkers are responsible for deciding on and working toward personal career goals, while one’s leadership approach with that individual should be aimed toward supporting that endeavor.

**Theme 4: Relationship Building.** This theme is closely related to communication however there is significance in relationship building as a stand-alone theme. Again, 10 of 12 participants, 83%, suggested that relationship building is an important leadership behavior that supports career advancement for teleworkers. Participant B3 said this, “I think that whenever people are working together and you’re with that group of people all day long, some of your personality comes out and there’s a lot more of yourself that people may love or not love.” B3 discussed relationship building as a challenge for leaders in telework in which the lack of face time creates difficulties in knowing one’s team personally. C2 stated,

I think when you’re talking about advancing someone’s career, it’s a bit personal. I think through telework we miss the personal aspect of it. Even talking through video, it’s hard to be as personal as sitting down and looking at each other.

In contrast to task behaviors within the situational leadership model, relationship behaviors include creating harmonious relationships, engaging in two-way or multiway communication,
integrating employees into the process of developing action plans, and reducing emotional conflict (Bass, 2008; Daft, 2014; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981; Hersey et al., 2008). Participants discussed the significance of relationships in leading teleworkers through career advancement. Improving communication was commonly described as the primary tool for building healthy relationships. Participants noted that being available and supportive as a leader was paramount to the teleworker’s success. One participant asserted that clarifying misunderstandings and resolving conflict were among the most important behaviors for a leader in the telework environment.

Allen et al. (2015) stated that telework alters communication in such a way that leader-employee relationships may suffer. To combat the effects of physical distance, participants discussed the use of video conferencing as a tool to create a sense of presence and personability. Participant B2 explained, “We have team meetings on video. Other teams use the phone but my team likes to do it on video because they like to talk and connect.” This line of thought is supported in literature as video communication has been suggested to perceivingly enhance human relationships by fostering a sense of social presence (Long, 2010). Social presence implies that the telework environment can be viewed similarly to the physical environment by permitting individuals to feel connected and physically present with each other (Long, 2010). Video technology as a substitute for physical presence is up for debate as some scholars found that virtual relationships in which communication is conducted solely via the internet failed to adequately replace personal contact (Wojak et al., 2016). Likewise, Long (2010) suggested that virtuality requires trust to adequately function, and technology on its own is not.

**Trust.** Of the nine participants that mentioned relationship building as a significant leader behavior, five said that its effectiveness is related to trust. When asked to describe the
effectiveness of their leadership approach, B3 responded with, “I’ve been able to gain their trust and their output is a lot better.” Similarly, C2 noted,

I think anytime you have a good relationship with your employees, they’ll trust you a little more. When they trust you, they’re more comfortable coming to you with their needs as far as how to advance their career or to advance their job knowledge.

This is consistent with some expert’s interpretation of the situational leadership model who suggest that the leader must prepare and “earn the right” to intervene (Hersey & Chevalier, 2000). This occurs through practicing relationship behaviors and building trust. When leaders intervene without taking the time to assess the follower’s readiness, the follower may become defensive resulting in a declined performance (Hersey & Chevalier, 2000). This also aligns with literature in which scholars such as Ivanov (2020) qualify the lack of trust in virtual relationships as the number one reason for virtual team failures. Ivanov (2020) posited that extra effort must be made to build trust as bonds cannot be built informally at the coffee machine as it could in office. He further highlights that need to be intentional about finding innovative ways to build trust despite physical distance.

**Summary of Interpretation of Themes.** Four overarching themes emerged from the analysis of the data collected for this study. The emerging top-level themes include (a) intentional communication, (b) performance-based monitoring and evaluation, (c) flexible leadership, and (d) relationship building. Intentional communication was the most widely discussed leader behavior with 92% of participants offering opinions regarding the effectiveness and need for this particular activity. The prevailing opinion found within the collected data was that communication and relationship building should be performed intentionally within the
telework environment to enhance knowledge sharing, leader availability, networking, and trust while counteracting ineffective communication that occurs due to physical distance.

The second theme, performance-based monitoring and evaluation, was highly mentioned with 83% of participants offering that using a performance-based approach was preferred over a behavioral-based approach. Many participants shared that exercising a clock-oriented approach or behavior-oriented approach was ineffective and demoralizing to the teleworker. The common opinion shared among participants concerning the performance-based theme was that teleworkers are goal-driven, and that career advancement in the virtual environment is based highly on individual performance. This opinion was connected to flexible leadership which is discussed as the third theme.

Flexible leadership considered an effective leader behavior among 83% participants. Flexibility was discussed in terms of both flexible leadership approaches and flexible scheduling. A common opinion among participants was that one’s leadership approach depends highly on the attitude and aptitude of the teleworker. Many discussed the use of intentional communication for the purpose of correction and training, and autonomy as a form of freedom and trust for high performers. Several participants shared that their teleworkers directly influenced their leadership approach by discussing individual goals and needs, and by partnering with leaders to develop an attainable career plan. Flexible scheduling was another opinion shared by several participants. The prevailing thought was that output holds more significance than work hours. Participants shared that more flexibility is afforded to teleworkers because traditional rules and behaviors are difficult to enforce beyond the office setting. Similarly, participants shared that much of the focus is on goals as opposed to work time. Micromanagement was commonly thought to be an ineffective approach to leading teleworkers.
The final theme that emerged as a result of this study is relationship building. The effectiveness of this theme is discussed in terms of trust. Again, the effectiveness of this behavior lies in the intentionality of supervisors to build healthy relationships in the telework environment. Relationship building in a common leadership behavior discussed across various work environments however it is the intentionality of leadership to ensure relationships are built while being geographically separated that in significant. Participants found that building relationships with teleworkers in an intentional activity that results in trust and improved output. This aligns with literature in which scholars found that a lack of trust caused failures within virtual teams (Ivanov, 2020).

**Relationship of the Findings**

The research conducted focused on leadership behaviors and strategies that support career advancement for teleworkers. After conducting a multiple case study across three organizations, many themes emerged. These themes provided insight into the leaders’ opinions concerning (a) intentional communication, (b) performance-based monitoring and evaluation, (c) flexible leadership, and (d) relationship building. The following sections will apply those emerged themes to the research questions, conceptual framework, literature, anticipated themes, and the problem. The leaders interviewed provided their experiences and opinions that addressed each of the research questions. Some of the themes were not anticipated, which triangulation helped increase the validity of the study.

**Research Questions.** The research questions addressed in this study focused on the problem found within the teleworking environment in which unsupportive leader behaviors lead to high employee turnover rates and low participation in the telework program (Choi, 2018). The variables presented by several organizational leaders provided insight into the behaviors and
strategies that have been used to support career advancement for teleworkers. The following questions guided the researcher throughout the study to understand the problem and actions taken to adapt to changing work structures.

**Research Question 1.** What leadership strategies and behaviors, if any, were used to successfully support career development among teleworkers? Research question 1 was developed to understand common leader behaviors and strategies that have been implemented across organizations and industries to aid teleworkers in achieving their career goals. This question is explored through discussions with leaders at various levels who have developed successful strategies to support career advancement for teleworkers. The participants indicated four behaviors or strategies that have proven to be successful in supporting teleworkers through career advancement. Those behaviors and strategies include intentional communication, taking a performance-based approach, exercising flexible leadership, and building relationships. Within the discussion of the successful behaviors, ineffective strategies were also discussed. Those behaviors include micromanagement, taking a hands-off approach, and exercising behavior-oriented monitoring.

Participants indicated that intentional communication serves as the most effective strategy to lead teleworkers through career advancement. Intentional communication includes behaviors such as calling teleworkers to talk informally as a means of being personably and building relationships, using videoconferencing technology to create a sense of social presence, calling privately to discuss corrections, and holding team meetings over video for team building and rapport. In addition, participants discussed the use of email and video technology to offer public praise for superior performance. This allowed leaders to fill in networking gaps that are created by a lack of physical presence. The idea was that passing names around to upper
management and across teams allows superior performers to remain in front of mind when opportunities arise, or assistance is needed. Participants further noted that intentional communication allowed leaders to demonstrate their availability to teleworkers.

A major problem with communication was said to be the hesitancy of teleworker to disrupt coworkers or supervisors. Being too busy, or otherwise unavailable, was considered problematic as it created hurdles for both leaders and employees in the telework environment. Removing communication barriers and “reaching out” was said to be the role of the leader by several participants. Participants stated that intentional communication effectively supported career advancement by created trust between teleworkers and leaders, creating rapport and comfort in conversations in which career goals can be discussed, sharing information and opportunities for growth, and improving individual performance by fostering an environment that is supportive and available.

Participants agreed in large part that applying a performance-based approach to monitoring and evaluating was an effective strategy in supporting career advancement for teleworkers. Participants indicated that in career advancement, output is the most important metric. Similarly, participants shared that it is more effective to monitor performance than to monitor the clock, appearances, or other traditional work-related behaviors. The strategy was described as one that empowers and motivates employees to perform well. Participants shared that career advancement was in large part the responsibility of the individual to set goals and perform well to achieve them. This strategy was described by participants as one that allows teleworkers to maintain control of their performance and career growth.

Flexible leadership was also discussed as effective leadership behaviors that support career advancement. Flexible leadership was highly mentioned as a means of meeting the
teleworkers professional needs. Participants mentioned the fact that all employees are different and while some may prefer autonomy, others prefer more direction and supportive communication. Several participants indicated that their leadership approach was based on the individual. The majority of participants indicated that micromanagement was an ineffective approach that deteriorates trust and performance. Flexible leadership was qualified as effective in supporting career advancement for teleworkers by building trust, enhancing performance, and empowering employees.

Lastly, participants indicated that building relationships was an effective and important leadership strategy that supported career advancement for teleworkers. Participants shared that the physical distance created by telework diminishes working relationships between the teleworkers and the leader. As a method of counteracting this phenomenon, participants stated that it is important to apply innovative methods of building relationships in a virtual environment. A common theme among participants was the use of video technology to create a sense of social presence and personability. Even so, some participants claimed that while video technology is helpful, it did not fully replace in-person interactions. Building relationships effectively supported career advancement by fostering trust and demonstrating concern for teleworkers on an individual basis. Participants noted the importance of ensuring teleworkers understood that they were noticed and valued in the workplace.

**Research Question 2.** What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus a traditional office environment? The relationship between the leader and the teleworker is an integral component of the study and provides the foundation for understanding the differences in career development strategies between teleworkers and non-teleworkers. Participants indicated that their leadership
ideologies and approach remained largely intact while several components of their behavior changed to accommodate the telework environments.

Several participants shared that being intentional about communication was the most prominently changed behavior. This adjustment was highly related to the out of sight, out of mind phenomenon that occurs when employees are physically distant. Participants shared opinions and experiences concerning the loss of informal conversation and personability, which created a need for intentional communication in the telework environment. Several participants stated that naturally occurring conversation within the traditional office setting are lost to the telework environment, therefore leaders must fill in the gap by acting purposefully to generate those conversations. In such, participants shared that they were able to build and maintain trust in relationships that aided in improving performance and career advancement. In an effort to be more personable, participants noted that video technology was preferred over telephone conversations. Likewise, some participants shared that team meetings are held over videoconferencing to create a space for employees to build relationships and network. This is a behavior that was said to be created specifically to accommodate the telework environment as these behaviors occur more organically in the traditional office setting.

In addition, participants held that employees were offered more autonomy and flexibility in the telework environment. The primary reason for this change was that the virtual environment made traditional methods of supervising difficult to perform, and leaders were essentially required to adapt and output-based method of monitoring over behavior-based (i.e., time sitting at the desk). Applying a performance-based approach to supervising teleworkers was a common theme among participants. Participants found that this was the most effective method for supervising employees that are not visible, however some shared that performance metrics
were preferred over behavioral metrics both in office and in the virtual field. Participants stated that superior performers were offered more challenging projects and remained in front of mind for upcoming opportunities. Similarly, participants shared that maintaining a flexible leadership approach was important in the telework environment however many stated that this behavior was carried over from the traditional office setting and not created to accommodate the virtual environment.

**Research Question 3.** What challenges did leaders encounter and overcome when developing and supporting career advancement strategies for teleworkers? This research question was developed to understand leader behaviors and strategies that were developed as an effort to overcome challenges specific to telework. Participants offered that the primary challenges found in their experiences with telework included the lack of visibility (out of sight, out of mind), difficulties building relationships, misunderstandings in communication, impersonal communication, and role ambiguity. To overcome the challenges, participants discussed the use of intentional communication to clarify misunderstanding and to find resolution. Intentional communication was offered as a solution to a variety of challenges including building relationships and the lack of visibility. Additionally, participants highlighted the use of video technology to create relationships and foster teamwork. Some participants mentioned stepping out of one’s comfort zone to be available and personable. Some participants found that it was important to understand the needs of the teleworker from the teleworker’s perspective. This was accomplished through open communication with the teleworker. Lastly, participants found that adopting a flexible leadership approach allows more autonomy where appropriate, coupled with intentional communication, was successful in overcoming the role ambiguity issue.
**Conceptual Framework.** The conceptual framework provided structure for the research. It consisted of several leadership theories and models. The concepts included constructs of path-goal theory, transactional leadership, and situational leadership. The following sections will discuss the findings in relationship to the components of the conceptual framework.

**Path-Goal Theory.** According to Jeanes (2019), experts argue that there is a “best suited” leadership style that is based on the individual’s motivation. Four leadership behaviors are outlined under the path-goal theory: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented. Throughout the field study, participants shared opinions and experiences that were closely aligned with the constructs of path-goal theory. The prevailing themes that emerged from this study that are in alignment with path-goal theory are intentional communication and flexibility. Several participants suggested that their leadership approach depended on the teleworker being supervised. This was discussed in terms of motivation or attitude, ability, and goals. Participant B3 stated that one’s leadership approach depends on the employee and their attitude toward their work. Intentional communication enabled participants to understand the teleworker’s needs in order to develop a strategy for career advancement.

Several participants discussed the need to be directive or prescriptive when supervising an inexperienced teleworker. Participant B2 noted that in addition to inexperience, some employees lack motivation and prefer to be given instructions for each task. Directive leader behavior refers to a situation in which the leader explains what is expected of the employee and how to perform a given task (House & Mitchell, 1974). In this case, participants shared that they would employ a more directive leadership approach although it commonly was the least preferred method of supervising. Some participants compared the directive leader behavior to micromanagement highlighting the importance of understanding the teleworker’s values and
needs to ensure the line between directiveness and micromanagement is not blurred. It is for this reason that intentional communication became a significant theme in relation to path-goal theory. Participants found that one could not appropriately lead or develop strategic plans for their employees without communication. In telework, communication is an area that suffers due to a lack of visibility and physical distance (Park & Cho, 2020). Participants noted that communication should be intentional and is the leader’s obligation to ensure the teleworker’s needs and values are addressed.

In addition to directive leader behavior, several participants specified the need to be supportive. One participant previously held the belief that all teleworkers appreciated autonomy but learned through experience that the assumption was not true. Several participants suggested that from their experience, teleworkers often desired supportive relationships. Supportive leaders are characterized by friendliness, approachability, and mutual respect (Northouse, 2016). Many participants asserted that leaders should be available and approachable so that teleworkers feel comfortable addressing their values, needs, and goals. Intentional communication was commonly mentioned as a method of allowing leaders to be perceived as available and approachable. Some participants qualified their efforts as successful based on the teleworker’s comfortability in approaching the leader to communicate their needs.

An important aspect of developing a strategic career advancement plan, according to participants, is garnering input from the teleworker. Participants shared that motivated teleworking employees contribute to the development of their leadership approach by providing input concerning their goals and needs. Participants stated that they are intentional about fostering a leader-member relationship that allows teleworkers to feel comfortable contributing to their leadership approach as it concerns the teleworker’s career advancement goals. Northouse
(2016) described participative leader behaviors as one in which leaders create an environment that invites subordinates to participate in decision making and when the decisions impact the employee directly. Leaders will likely use participative leader behaviors when employees are autonomously motivated, and tasks are ambiguous (Bickle, 2017).

Lastly, several participants asserted that success is a motivator in the telework environment. Participants across all industries included in this study stated that more freedom and autonomy is afforded to those teleworkers that demonstrated high levels of performance and self-motivation. The common opinion among participants was that career advancement is an individual responsibility that can only be supported by leadership, not achieved. Participants expressed that leaders should present developmental opportunities or remove roadblocks that impede one’s career growth, however it is the responsibility of the individual to accomplish their career goals. According to Dyer and Wallace (2017), path-goal leadership holds that the leader’s primary function is to bolster positive outcomes and rewards by establishing an unobstructed path to goal achievement (i.e., clarifying objectives, eliminating obstacles, and improving job satisfaction). Achievement oriented leader behaviors are effective for employees who set high expectations for themselves and desire continuous growth (Bickle, 2017). According to Northouse (2016), leaders using achievement-oriented behaviors display a high degree of confidence that subordinates are capable of setting and accomplishing challenging goals.

**Transactional Leadership.** Burns (1978) described transactional leadership as a distinct strategy positing that the exchange of work and reward between the leader and employee maximizes gains for both the organization and the individual. Leaders offer contingent rewards such as monetary bonuses and promotions, and sanctions including negative feedback and corrective coaching for successful, or unsuccessful, achievement of set expectations (Hartley et
al., 2019; McCleskey, 2014). Tworoger et al. (2013) found that transactional leadership contributed to perceived employee satisfaction through the establishing of clearly defined expectations and goals. Early communication of these expectations and goals set the stage for positive performance and strong leader-follower relationships (Tworoger et al., 2013). When asked to share experiences concerning the participant’s treatment of superior and subpar performance, the common opinion was that superior performers were recognized publicly while subpar performance was addressed privately. Some participants stated that official rewards were predetermined by the organization and the supervisor’s capacity within the official reward system was limited to nominating deserving members. Participants noted that alternative methods of rewarding superior performance that fall within the supervisor’s purview include informing upper-level managers of the teleworker’s superior performance, applauding one’s effort and performance publicly among peers, assigning more challenging projects that will enhance job knowledge and experience, and offering more freedom and autonomy in managing assigned projects. Conversely, participants asserted that subpar performance held commensurate consequences that ranged from admonishment to potential release from one’s position. Most often, corrective coaching and training was offered as a result of subpar performance. According to Berkovich and Eyal (2019), transactional leaders can measure success against the organization’s existing reward-penalty system.

Participants described career advancement in terms of individual roles. The common opinion was that applying a performance-based approach to monitoring and evaluating teleworkers is highly effective in supporting teleworkers through career advancement. Participants shared that from their experiences, output is the most important metric to consider for career advancement purposes. Participants commonly believe that success acts as a motivator
and that teleworkers will work diligently to succeed when they have individually set career goals. Several participants expressed feeling that the leader-member relationship is transactional in that the teleworker’s success is contingent upon their performance. One participant stated that leading teleworkers is dual-purposed meaning that benefits exist for both the teleworker and the organization when the teleworker performs well. That not only incentivized the teleworker to perform well but also the supervisor to lead well. The rationale for employing a contingent reward system is to devise an incentive mechanism through which employees expect their efforts to bolster performance and to be rewarded in turn (Hartley et al., 2019). Field experts assert that employees are motivated by rewards and other positive outcomes to put greater effort towards performing their jobs well (Bass et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2011). With that expectation, employees can minimize workplace anxiety, fulfill their own interests, and focus on clear organizational objectives (Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012).

**Situational Leadership.** The data collected in this study demonstrated many components of situational leadership. Participants shared experiences and opinions that described the use of flexibility in one’s leadership approach, output-orientation, intentional communication, and relationship building. Participants discussed employing a specific set of behaviors commensurate with the teleworker’s skill level and needs. Under the situational leadership model, a balance between task and relationship behaviors is applied according to the employee’s level of performance readiness (Hersey et al., 2008). These leadership styles include telling, selling, participating, and delegating (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Hersey, 1985; Hersey et al., 2008). Task behaviors are described as the extent in which leaders engage in defining follower roles, providing instructions, establishing formal lines of communication, and creating organizational patterns (Bass, 2008; Daft, 2014; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981). This includes telling
employees what to do, how to do it, when it should be done, and by whom (Hersey et al., 2008).

Participants shared that using a more directive approach with inexperienced teleworkers is preferred. Further, participants asserted their intentionality about communicating with teleworkers to the degree that is necessary based upon their ability to perform assigned tasks. Participants explained that being intentional about communicating with inexperienced teleworkers is important in creating an environment in which employees feel confident performing tasks. These conversations were described as prescriptive and were conducted to provide direction. These behaviors are indicative of the telling leadership style, which corresponds with followers that are unable or unwilling to perform a given task (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981).

In contrast to task behaviors, relationship behaviors include creating harmonious relationships, engaging in two-way or multiway communication, integrating employees into the process of developing action plans, and reducing emotional conflict (Bass, 2008; Daft, 2014; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981; Hersey et al., 2008). Participants discussed the significance of relationships in leading teleworkers through career advancement. Improving communication was commonly described as the primary tool for building healthy relationship.

Participants noted that being available and supportive as a leader was paramount to the teleworker’s success. One participant asserted that clarifying misunderstandings and resolving conflict were among the most important behaviors for a leader in the telework environment. Participants described allowing teleworkers to participate in decision-making activities and delegating work as opposed to being overly hands-on with self-motivated and highly skilled teleworkers. In fact, one participant qualified delegation as the most effective leader behavior in supporting career advancement for teleworkers. Likewise, participants stated that allowing
teleworkers to contribute to decisions made in areas that impact their career growth is a significant leader behavior that supports career advancement for teleworkers. These behaviors reflect both participating and delegating leadership styles which correspond with followers who exhibit moderate to high readiness levels.

**Literature.** There were multiple themes that corroborated the literature review with findings of this study. The review of literature demonstrated a high level of interest in teleworking and the leadership styles that influence employee satisfaction and performance (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Dahlstrom, 2013; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Torten et al., 2016). In the review, communication was a crucial component for leading teleworkers. Scholars posit that physical distance and infrequent communication between the leaders and teleworker negatively impacts career advancement (Birdie & Jain, 2015). Moreover, Sewell and Taskin (2015) found that isolation from telework often leads to overcompensation to prevent exclusion from decision-making activities.

Participants described the challenges incited by physical distance and the methods used to overcome them. The prevailing challenge was a lack of communication and its byproducts including isolation, out of sight, out of mind mentality, difficulties building relationships, and ambiguity. The primary action taken by the participants to address these challenges was to become intentional about communicating with teleworkers and building relationships. B1 stated that by being intentional about communication the leader can proactively share information, provide feedback, build rapport, and offer direction when necessary. B3 shared that weekly team meetings are conducted over videoconferencing to allow team members to build relationships that bolster trust and teamwork. Participant C1 claimed to have never met teleworking team members in person and found that building virtual social relationships was extremely difficult.
Golden and Eddleston (2019) asserted that the teleworker’s reduced presence creates difficulties in collaboration and coordination causing leaders to infer a lack of concern for one’s job—a bias that may be weighed more heavily than production on the employee’s performance evaluation. To combat these challenges, participants keyed in on communication to establish trust and rapport across the team.

In addition to communication and relationship building, experts described the shift from behavior-oriented metrics to output control in the telework environment (Groen et al., 2018). They posited that the ability to monitor employee behavior is greatly reduced within the telework environment and emphasized the use of output controls as an alternative method of monitoring employees.

Several participants suggested using a performance-based approach with teleworking employees. Participants emphasized the fact that the lack of visibility forced a change in the leader’s approach to supervising teleworkers. While many claimed that their basic ideologies concerning organizational leadership did not change, they adjusted certain behaviors to accommodate the virtual work environment. This included focusing more on performance output as opposed to work behaviors. Many participants found this adjusted approach to effective stating that performance output is the most important metric for both the organization and the individual. While most participants focused on the effectiveness of measuring output, some found that there should be a balance between managing behavioral and performance measures. Participant C2 stated, “You would be a fool to sit back and just wait for a product to roll in. You got to be proactive, especially when you manage work assignments and report status to the big bosses.”
Several participants indicated that flexibility in their leadership approach allowed them to adjust their leadership style according to the teleworker’s motivation, ability, and goals. Extant literature highlights flexible leadership theories and models that support this opinion. Path-goal theory focuses on leadership behaviors that influence motivation, satisfaction, and performance to accomplish set goals (Bickle, 2017; Northouse, 2016). Leaders adjust their approach in accordance with follower and environmental characteristics (Jeanes, 2019). Path-goal theory closely resonates with many other theories of leadership including transactional leadership and situational leadership. Both path-goal theory and transactional leadership focus on achieving established objectives (Bass et al., 2003; Northouse, 2016). Under both models, leaders create comprehensible goals for the follower in which contingent rewards are expected (Bass et al., 2003; Northouse, 2016). This study focuses on the contingent rewards that support career advancement. The similarity between path-goal theory and situational leadership is the belief that a single leadership style will rarely work in all situations (Hersey et al., 2008; Jeanes, 2019).

Participants indicated that teleworkers inform their decisions concerning career advancement through their performance and motivation. It was expressed that greater opportunities are afforded to teleworkers who demonstrate high-performance and self-motivation. Those opportunities were described as increased autonomy and assignment of challenging projects that bolsters visibility, job knowledge, and experience. Moreover, participants shared that they are more hands-off with highly skilled, highly motivated employees than they are with unmotivated or unskilled teleworkers.

**Anticipated Themes.** During the development of the conceptual framework and review of academic literature, several themes emerged. The researcher anticipated finding these same themes during the data collection process of this study. The anticipated themes included isolation
and networking, role ambiguity, and work intensification and commitment. The following sections will delve into the themes that emerged from the data in relation to the anticipated themes.

**Isolation and Networking.** Extant literature concerning telework highlighted decreased career opportunities as a direct impact of isolation (Beauregard et al., 2019; Golden & Eddleston, 2019; Nakrošienė et al., 2019; Vega et al., 2015). Isolation was discussed by several participants as a challenge presented by telework. Participants described the use of video technology and intentional communication as methods to overcome isolation in the telework environment. Additionally, these participants stated that video conferencing was preferred over other methods of communicating because it most closely resembles in-person interactions. According to Flesher (2016), email, chat, and collaboration boards are passive means of communication that can have negative consequences due to misinterpretations in the absence of visual cues. Some participants found that even with intentional efforts to enhance interaction between organizational members, networking and relationships still suffered. This finding is consistent with academic literature in which experts contend that virtual social relationships give rise to superficiality and contentions that can impede the teleworker’s performance (Wojak et al., 2016).

**Role Ambiguity.** Birdie and Jain (2015) asserted that physical distance and infrequent communication between teleworkers and leaders significantly decrease goal clarity and contribute to role ambiguity. Role ambiguity was briefly discussed by some participants as a challenge experienced in the telework arena. Klecha (2019) defined role ambiguity as a lack of information regarding individual expectations related to one’s role, or a lack of feedback in regard to how the individual’s performance is perceived by others. Participants stated that intentional communication was effective in combating role ambiguity. Several participants
discussed the significance of discussing ones values, needs, and goals early to provide clarity for both the teleworker and the leader. These conversations allowed leaders to develop an informed approach to supervising and supporting teleworkers in achieving their career goals. Participants expressed the need for flexibility in establishing one’s leadership approach to meet a variety of individual needs and goals.

**Work-Intensification and Commitment.** It has been noted in literature that some leaders lack trust that teleworkers are performing their duties as prescribed while working from alternative locations without direct supervision (Park & Cho, 2020). Participant A2 stated:

> In the office, we can look out and see if our employees are engaged. You lack that ability with telework so you either have to call, email, or otherwise get in contact with your teleworker. Sometimes we send emails and wait to see how quickly they reply. If they don’t reply within a predetermined timeframe, it’s easy to assume they’re jacking off somewhere at home, not working. If I’m receiving emails and phone calls throughout the day from a teleworker, my assumption is that they are engaged in their work but if I have to reach out to them, who knows what I might think. I then would feel inclined to contact them to see what they’re doing.

Some studies observed that when behavior-based monitoring is prevalent, teleworkers may feel pressured to be unceasingly available to fulfill organizational needs (Kim et al., 2021; Major et al., 2008). Park and Cho (2020) noted that teleworkers who work diligently to earn their supervisor’s trust will experience a higher-quality leader-member exchange which in turn enhances their commitment to the organization. In contrast to these opinions, some participants felt that requiring teleworkers to establish communication for such purposes is ineffective.
Rather, participants noted that it was the responsibility of the leader to fill communication gaps to demonstrate that the teleworker is valued.

**The Problem.** The problem of this study is that some leaders may lack effective leadership strategies and behaviors to support career advancement for teleworkers resulting in higher turnover intentions (Choi, 2018). The researcher investigated this problem specifically in the Denver, Colorado area. A review of literature revealed that an individual’s attitude and expectations for career advancement greatly influence job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Belias & Koustelios, 2014). The findings of this study suggest that intentional communication and relationship building are significant behaviors that enhance teleworker’s job satisfaction.

Participants reported that these behaviors bolstered trust and allowed teleworkers to communicate comfortably with leaders. Participants noted that communication created space for leaders to adjust their approach with teleworkers according to their needs. Additionally, participants shared that being intentional about communication allowed leaders to emphasize the teleworker’s value to the organization. In addition, participants offered that focusing on performance rather than work behaviors allowed leaders to give teleworkers more control over their career growth. Participant A1 stated that employees desiring career growth will work hard to achieve it while those who do not share the same ambition will likely underperform.

Participants indicated that high performers receive contingent rewards that support career growth. Participants of this study shared that effectiveness of one’s leadership approach can be measured by the teleworker’s level of job satisfaction and turnover rate. Several participants indicated that they believed their approach to be effective because turnover among team members remained low.
Summary of the Findings

Throughout this multiple case study, the researcher sought to understand the effects of leadership behaviors and strategies on career advancement for teleworkers. By focusing on leaders across multiple industries, the researcher was able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of leadership behaviors that could potentially address the problem. The common themes that emerged from the findings were intentional communication, performance-based monitoring and evaluation, flexible leadership, and relationship building. The emerging themes addressed each research question for the purpose of addressing the problem. Intentional communication related to path-goal theory, situational leadership, and transactional leadership. It was ranked among the most effective leadership behaviors that positively impacted career growth for teleworkers. Taking a performance-based approach was mostly aligned with transactional leadership as participants found that focusing on output was more effective than micromanaging and clock-watching. Flexible leadership was discussed in terms of applying the right amount and type of leadership based on the teleworker’s needs. This follows the premise of situational leadership in which leaders assess the follower’s readiness level to determine the appropriate leadership style (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981). Lastly, building relationships and trust was counted as an important strategy that allows leaders to intervene and support teleworkers through career advancement. This follows the situational leadership model under which leaders must prepare and “earn the right” to intervene (Hersey & Chevalier, 2000). Participants indicated that the applied behaviors were effective in supporting career advancement while maintaining low turnover rates in the telework environment. The researcher achieved data saturation by conducting interviews until data were repeated and no added information emerged.
Application to Professional Practices

Work structures and commuting patterns are constantly changing (Kane & Tomer, 2015). Organizations often implement telework into the work structure to attract, motivate, and retain highly skilled employees (Morganson et al., 2010). Although the adoption of telework programs is reportedly increasing, there is evidence that organizational leaders and employees are reluctant to embrace telework (Allen et al., 2015; Boell et al., 2016). Some experts have reported a decrease in telework usage as a result of such hesitations in past decades (Matos & Galinsky, 2015). As evidence of this hesitation, Hewlett Packard, Best Buy, IBM, and Yahoo have restricted employee participation or abolished telework programs within the organization entirely (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016). Among the research that describes the benefits and drawbacks of virtual work arrangements, teleworkers reported negative feelings associated with the increased work effort and incommensurate career advancement opportunities (Groen et al., 2018).

The purpose of this study is to understand leader behaviors and strategies that positively impact career growth for teleworkers. This multiple case study focuses on various industries including logistics, health care acquisitions, and sales. Participants included members in various levels and types of leadership roles who shared their experiences and perspectives concerning behaviors that have proven to be both effective and ineffective in supporting career growth for their subordinates. The findings of the study will show its relationship to business practices and the potential implementation of strategies.

Improving General Business Practices

The study presented various themes related to the behaviors and strategies leaders employ to promote career development in the telework arena. These trends include being intentional
about communication, applying a performance-based approach to monitoring and evaluating teleworkers, maintaining flexibility in one’s leadership approach, and building cohesive professional relationships. Each of these themes are discussed in relation to business practices in the following subsections. Utilizing the results of this study, this section reveals areas for improving practices and further opportunities for growth.

**Intentional Communication.** One of the common themes presented in this study is the effectiveness of intentional communication on career growth. Robar (1998) posited that poor communication results in negative consequences throughout one’s career. Similarly, Birdie and Jain (2015) asserted that physical distance and infrequent communication negatively impacts career advancement for teleworkers. On the other hand, Arokiasamy et al. (2011) found that communication in terms of mentoring, social networking, and organizational support, are significant contributors to career advancement. In this study, many participants shared experiences that align with these findings. In a telework environment, a lack of physical presence creates challenges for employees, many associated with career growth. Effective communication allows teleworkers to interact with coworkers and leaders creating a sense of presence. Participants shared that communication must be intentional in a virtual environment to overcome the many challenges presented by physical distance. Leaders must communicate effectively with teleworkers to help build trust, strengthen professional relationships, create a sense of belongingness, and support career growth. Lastly, communication allows for proper goal setting which is the key to being successful in career advancement (Louissaint et al., 2021).

**Performance-based Monitoring and Evaluations.** In general, it is the leader’s responsibility to motivate their employees to perform to the fullest extent (Park, 2014). This duty carries over into the telework arena. Organizations utilizing telework programs depend on
leaders to implement policy, provide direction for teleworkers, and manage teleworkers to ensure they perform well (Lautsch et al., 2009). According to Kowalski and Swanson (2005), leader support can lead to positive outcomes on job satisfaction and performance, both being components of career advancement. Therefore, leaders should maintain support and conduct results-based performance evaluations as opposed to evaluating teleworkers based on behaviors, be it through increased emails, videoconferencing, or visits to the office. Kaplan et al. (2018) suggested that leaders should anticipate a decrease in communication and coordination with teleworkers therefore leaders must shift from behavior-based monitoring toward a performance-based system.

**Flexible Leadership.** Leaders often find that their approach works well for one situation but not in another (Yanker, 1986). The findings of this study revealed that leaders maintain flexibility in their leadership approach within the telework environment. Participants referred to their leadership approach as one that allows them to flex between managerial styles. These styles range from being completely hands on and directive to allowing complete autonomy. The first of these is focused on ensuring efficient, disciplined, and effectively measured activities to ensure smooth operation and task performance. The second involves encouraging teleworkers to think freely, ask questions when necessary, and provide an environment in which teleworkers have the support they need to do so. The central element for leaders is the ability to determine which leadership approach best fits the circumstances present at the time (Chandler, 2006). According to Yanker (1986), one’s leadership style should match the style of the follower, meaning that the follower must be able to relate to the leadership approach being employed. For example, applying a participative style would not work well with employees who are used to an autocratic style of leadership. Leaders who alter their leadership approach to align with the employee and
the situation creates a climate of trust (Yanker, 1986). Experts suggest that flexible leadership is not always easy, but it is always necessary (Yanker, 1986).

**Relationship Building.** Professional relationships have come to form the foundation of organizations and is essential for accomplishing work (Ferris et al., 2009). According to Dahlstrom (2010), there is concern within the telework context that online relationships are replacing face-to-face contact, thus disrupting normal interpersonal relationships. Developing high-quality work relationships can have significant positive implications for both the organization and the teleworker while low-quality connections can be damaging (Ferris et al., 2009). The findings of this study revealed that leaders believed there to be mutual gain for the organization and the teleworker when relationships are cohesive and produce positive performance. Likewise, experts found that high-quality relationships result in mutual understanding, mutual benefit, mutual influence, and mutual expectations (Roberts, 2007). Maintaining these positive work relationships require commitment and trust. According to Pratt and Dirks (2007), trust is the key to all positive relationships.

**Potential Application Strategies**

This multiple case study presented various themes from managers of teleworkers across multiple industries. The opinions and experiences of telework leaders provided insight to effective leader behaviors and strategies that support career advancement for teleworkers. The findings of this study could be useful in assisting organizations in strengthening leader behaviors to support career advancement and ultimately reduce turnover intentions. Each theme identified in this study are discussed in terms of application strategies below.

**Intentional Communication.** Communication serves four major areas within an organization: information sharing, control, emotional expression, and motivation (Dahlstrom,
Dahlstrom (2010) noted that the manner in which messages are sent can cause communication distortion and in telework, communication is often limited to written or speech electronically mediated through information technology. In existing communication studies, technology appears as a fundamental tool for managing professional careers from a distance (González Ramos, 2020). This study revealed the importance of understanding the degree of communication a teleworker needs and being intentional about providing the level and type of communication necessary. Examples of intentional communication found in this study include discussing tasks and requirements, calling teleworkers to talk informally as a means of being personable and building relationships, using videoconferencing technology to create a sense of social presence, calling privately to discuss corrections, and holding team meetings over videoconferencing for team building and rapport. The effectiveness of communication can be measured in the workplace by determining the level of understanding that employees hold concerning expectations and assigned duties (Crosling & Ward, 2001).

According to Louissaint et al. (2021), communication also allows for proper goal setting which is essential for career advancement. Leaders should help construct well-drafted plans while paying attention to critical benchmarks and the timeline necessary for career advancement (Louissaint et al., 2021). Although flexibility is often preferred, structure allows the subordinate to evaluate new opportunities within the context of their career plans. As a course of action, leader-subordinate dyad should regularly discuss and define goals while monitoring progress. Additionally, leaders and their subordinates should discuss the merits of opportunities that are offered to assure that it promotes career advancement.

**Performance-based Monitoring and Evaluation.** One of the many documented challenges of leading teleworkers is the method in which leaders manage their employees. Peters
et al. (2016) affirmed that individual productivity in the form of efficiency, productiveness, effectiveness, and work quality may be the single most important telework outcome to be considered. The findings of this study identified strategies leaders used to apply a performance-based approach to managing teleworkers. Leaders suggested that micromanagement was the least effective strategy in the management of teleworkers, specifically concerning career advancement. It was described by respondents as a waste of time and a detriment to morale which in turn decreases career advancement and increases turnover intentions. Rather, it is recommended that leaders maintain flexibility and evaluate outcomes as opposed to monitoring behavior including clock-watching and perceived presence. Groen et al. (2018) explained that the ability to monitor employee behavior is reduced with telework, and greater emphasis is placed on output controls. Others have found that the seclusiveness of telework makes behavior-based controls (i.e., time sitting at a desk) impractical; output-based controls may be more appropriate, conceding that the metrics for assessing job performance in terms of output are available (Kim et al., 2021).

**Flexible Leadership.** Changes in business strategies and improvements in technology are cause for leaders to adjust one’s approach. Ultimately, leaders are responsible for maintaining organizational requirements in ever changing environments. Flexible leadership not only responds to environmental changes but also the variety of employees and temperaments within the organization (Norton, 2010). According to Kaiser and Overfield (2010), leaders should be flexible in their behavior and respond in ways that demonstrate an ability to alter behaviors in the right way, to an appropriate degree, and to good effect. Moreover, Norton (2010) suggested that leaders should maintain the willingness and ability to learn from experiences, and to subsequently apply that learning to perform well under varying conditions. Ultimately, the
implication is that leaders should be willing to accept the notion that a varied skill repertoire is beneficial to their success as a leader, and to follow up this acceptance with action that fits the situation. This skill provides leaders with the ability to think critically about the needs of a situation and to craft an appropriate response.

**Relationship Building.** Relationship behaviors include creating harmonious relationships, engaging in two-way or multiway communication, integrating employees into the process of developing action plans, and reducing emotional conflict (Bass, 2008; Daft, 2014; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1979, 1981; Hersey et al., 2008). Improving communication was commonly described as the primary tool for building cohesive professional relationships. The findings of this study revealed that being available and supportive as a leader was paramount to the teleworker’s success. Additionally, clarifying misunderstandings and resolving conflict were considered among the most important behaviors for a leader in the telework environment. Allen et al. (2015) stated that telework alters communication in such a way that leader-employee relationships may suffer. To combat the effects of physical distance, the use of video conferencing is used as a tool to create a sense of presence and personability.

**Summary of Application to Professional Practice**

This section provided an overview of the application to professional practices and provided potential implementation strategies. The constant in the themes presented is communication. Effective communication allows teleworkers to interact with coworkers and leaders creating a sense of presence. It also serves four major areas within an organization: information sharing, control, emotional expression, and motivation (Dahlstrom, 2010). Leaders should practice effective and intentional communication to successfully support teleworkers in the achievement of their goals. Additionally, the use of performance-based monitoring was
addressed. It was recommended that leaders evaluate outcomes as opposed to monitoring behavior including clock-watching and perceived presence. This requires leaders to maintain flexibility in their leadership approach. Flexible leadership not only responds to environmental changes but also the variety of employees and temperaments within the organization (Norton, 2010). This skill provides leaders with the ability to think critically about the needs of a situation and to craft an appropriate response. Finally, the importance of maintaining high-quality professional relationships was discussed. Experts found that high-quality relationships result in mutual understanding, mutual benefit, mutual influence, and mutual expectations (Roberts, 2007).

**Recommendation for Further Study**

The researcher conducted a thorough review of the literature relating to leader behaviors in telework that support career advancement. The review was followed by a qualitative study from which opinions and experiences from telework leaders across multiple industries was obtained. The findings of the study and the literature review allowed the researcher to formulate recommendations for further study. First and foremost, this study was conducted using a small sample within the Denver, Colorado area. The examination of literature suggests that a gap exists between leader behaviors and their impact on career advancement for teleworkers. For a more comprehensive understanding, future studies could be performed across multiple regions or nationwide. Secondly, this study was conducted under the constructs of path-goal theory, situational leadership, and transactional leadership. To obtain a deeper understanding of leader behaviors and strategies that support career advancement for teleworkers, further studies could be conducted using alternative leadership theories or models.
Throughout the study, respondents discussed communication in great detail. It was noted that a hesitancy to disrupt coworkers at home contributed to ineffective communication in the telework environment. It was suggested that this hesitancy to communicate due to telephone customs and courtesies further disrupted the leader’s ability to create an environment in which the teleworker could accomplish set goals. Some participants noted a feeling of discomfort in followers who considered it disrespectful to telephone supervisors at home before 9 a.m. With the workday beginning at 7 a.m., this creates a 2-hour period of silence leading to delays in information sharing and other essential communications. As a result of this input, the researcher recommends that further study be conducted on the impact of telephone etiquette on the leader’s behaviors and strategies when managing teleworkers and supporting career development.

Reflections

This section reviews a reflection of the researcher’s experience with the research process and includes possible personal biases. This section includes discussion concerning the effects of this research on the personal and professional growth of the researcher. The concluding section includes the applicability of this research to the biblical perspective.

Personal and Professional Growth

This study stems from the researcher’s personal interest in flexible work arrangements and in leadership. Having retired from the military with many years of leadership experience and an inability to adopt flexible work schedules, the researcher took interest in the topic of study. Having an extremely structured approach to work and leadership, the researcher desired to explore alternative behaviors that would enhance job satisfaction and support career advancement. This study satisfied the researcher’s objective.
When research began, many participants discussed strategies to effectively support teleworking employees. The common themes presented throughout the study were familiar concepts. Nothing was presented in the way of a new theory or idea. The themes included communication, performance-based monitoring, flexibility, and relationships. Using the researcher’s previous knowledge and added information obtained through this study, the researcher understood that these concepts are discussed largely within organizations but are often dismissed. While it seems that knowledge is readily available, application appears to be more of a challenge. Many leaders provided answers to the interview questions that suggested full implementation of the discussed behaviors; however, the researcher was unable to determine if the input was in fact reflections from one’s actual leadership approach or a reconstruction of ideas that have been previously learned. From this understanding, the researcher has a new perspective on the topic and is better equipped to perform as a leader and a follower in varying work environments.

**Biblical Perspective**

The focus of this study was on leader behaviors that support career development for teleworkers. The premise is that an individual in a leadership position has the skills, tools, and information necessary to help less experienced members grow and achieve set goals. The challenge in telework is the visual absence forcing members to learn new ways to be effective while physically distanced. Teleworkers must trust leaders although they are unseen, and leaders must labor for their followers. There are many references in Scripture that lends itself to this concept.

The first concept is that true leaders look after and care for their followers. Acts 20:28 says, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made
you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” Leaders are humble enough to reach out to the needs of others. In the field of business, leaders have the ability to demonstrate selflessness and care for the needs of their subordinates. Nurturing leader-follower relationships and supporting the follower’s career growth is a display of caring for the needs of others.

The second concept is requirement for followers to trust leaders who are unseen. Scripture says that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). The concepts drawn from this verse are confidence, faith, trust, reassurance, and uncertainty. While this verse refers to our faith in God who is unseen to us, these concepts can be applied in the physical realm. Humans are flawed and often fail however it is possible to be hopeful and to trust that the one who leads will provide as promised. In the telework environment, physical distance creates doubt and uncertainty. It is essential in this circumstance for leaders develop an atmosphere of trust and credibility to allow followers resolve these fears.

**Summary of Reflections**

This section included discussion of the study in relation to the researcher’s personal and professional growth, and biblical perspective. With a background in military acquisitions, the researcher took interest in flexible work arrangements, leadership behaviors, and career growth. These topics were explored through the lens of telework and leadership strategies. Many themes were revealed throughout the study which deepened the researcher’s understanding of the topic. Of the themes that were revealed, the researcher found them to be common concepts discussed in the business arena but considered that they may be often overlooked. Further, the researcher found that leadership and followership are biblical concepts that can be applied to business. Scripture discusses leadership and followership in my aspects with one major application found
in the manner one follows Jesus. Leaders must serve and care for followers while followers must trust and have faith in leaders even when they are not visible. This is an important biblical concept that fits appropriately within the telework environment.

**Summary of Section 3**

The problem studied was the lack of effective leader behaviors and strategies that support career advancement in telework. Three research questions were developed to address the problem, relating to (a) the leadership strategies used to successfully support career development among teleworkers, (b) the differences in the leadership styles present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus a traditional office environment, and (c) the challenges leaders encountered and overcame when developing and supporting career advancement strategies for teleworkers. To investigate the problem, the researcher used a qualitative multiple case study and conducted interviews with organizational leaders who manage teleworkers across various industries. The interviews provided the researcher with the participants experiences within the Denver, Colorado area. These interviews were transcribed and reviewed for recurring themes. The themes were subsequently interpreted to find meaning.

The findings that emerged from the study were aligned with the researcher’s questions. With regard to the first research question, the results found that leaders implemented intentional communication, performance-based monitoring, flexible leadership, and high-quality relationship. These behaviors were successful strategies that promoted career growth for teleworkers. These findings aligned with the conceptual framework of the study with themes supporting path-goal theory, situational leadership, and transactional leadership. Concerning the second research question, the study results found that leaders were more intentional about communication in the telework environment than in the traditional office setting. It was revealed
that communication was often neglected until it was presented as a challenge. Leaders realized that communication is individualized and that it is the leader’s responsibility to maintain communication with the teleworker. Finally, the third research question addressed challenges with developing strategies for career advancement for teleworks. The primary challenge that was presented was the lack of personality and communication. Technology has provided a means of communication that nearly replaces physical presence however some participants found that it inadequately replaced face-to-face conversation. The lack of authentic laughter, impromptu conversations, and body language made it difficult for leaders to fully understand how to support teleworkers with their career goals.

After aligning the finding to the research questions, the researcher compared the academic themes to existing literature. An application for professional practices and proposed implementation strategies were also provided. The results were compared to method of improving general business practices and along with implementation strategies. Lastly, biblical implementation was incorporated into this section. The researcher found that leadership and followership are biblical concepts designed by God as principles of following Jesus. These same concepts can be applied in the telework environment with human interactions to the benefit of the organization and the individual.

**Summary and Study Conclusions**

This qualitative multiple case study addressed the gap in current literature regarding leader strategies and behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. Current literature supports discussion of telework from largely from the teleworker’s perspective. Discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of telework prevail within current literature which highlighted the overarching career stagnation concern. Research concerning leader behaviors that
support teleworkers through career advancement is lacking thus providing an avenue for this study to occur. This study was developed and conducted within the Denver, Colorado area and aimed to explore leader behaviors within a variety of industries. The study involved several industries including data sales, health insurance acquisitions, and logistics. Twelve leaders participated in individual interviews providing the data necessary to draw a valid and reliable conclusion.

The findings of this study showed that leaders across multiple industries applied similar strategies to leading teleworkers through career advancement. The general consensus was that communication played an instrument role in this effort. In fact, all of the participants discussed communication leading the researcher to draw conclusions based on its significance. Communication is a concept that is widely discussed and practiced within the business arena however this study found that is it the intentionality of communication in the telework environment that aids in the success of its employees. Physical distance between leaders and followers impedes the free flow of information and informal conversations. Technologically mediated communication allows flexible work arrangements to occur however it may come at the cost of building solid relationships. This study found that communication was the primary challenge experienced by leaders of teleworkers who sought to become more purposeful with their methods of communication.

The study also found that leaders rely on performance-based monitoring in the telework environment particularly where career advancement is concerned. Many participants noted the importance of performance monitoring over behavior monitoring as it produces a more reliable picture of the teleworking employee’s skillset and motivation. Several participants insisted that clock-watching and other behavioral monitoring activities were ineffective and a poor use of
valuable time. This includes excessive calling and emailing to ensure a teleworker is engaged in work related duties. The study found that leader’s believed performance metrics outweighed behavioral metrics in terms of career advancement and potential growth opportunities. Leaders demonstrated intentionality in workload assignments in which high performers are offered important projects that support career advancement.

Similarly, flexible leadership was found to support career advancement for teleworkers. Participants discussed the significance of maintaining fluidity in one’s approach to leading teleworkers. The lack of physical presence creates shifts in the work is conducted. Leaders are more apt to practice flexibility and find that it is a necessity given the shifts in work environments and leadership strategies with telework. Flexible leadership not only responds to environmental changes but also the variety of employees and temperaments within the organization (Norton, 2010). This skill provides leaders with the ability to think critically about the needs of a situation and to craft an appropriate response. Flexible approaches to leadership create an avenue for leaders to support followers with a range of needs, skillsets, and goals. Several participants noted the importance of allowing teleworkers to function autonomously and having a good understanding of which employees are able to do so. The primary benefit to career advancement with this specific leader behavior is that it allows teleworkers to participate in decision-making related to their career goals.

Finally, the findings of this study showed that building relationships within the telework environment was a notable challenge. This is largely related to the communication obstacle created by physical distance. The significance of this challenge is that the lack of relationship building degrades trust and morale among both vertically and laterally among team members. Participants emphasized the need for team work to help bolster productivity and cohesiveness.
Similar to lateral teamwork, leaders felt it was important to behave as a leader-follower team for the benefit of both the individual and the organization. Participants suggested that the leader-follower teams served a dual purpose in which positive behaviors mutually benefited the individual and organization while the converse held negative implications for both. The study found that leaders practiced intentionality in relationship building across the telework field to ensure trust and cohesiveness were present. When leader-follower relationships are strong and effective, career advancement is more likely to occur.

The researcher determined that based on the findings, this study could be duplicated across multiple regions to obtain a wider breadth of information. Secondly, this study was conducted under the constructs of path-goal theory, situational leadership, and transactional leadership. To obtain a deeper understanding of leader behaviors and strategies that support career advancement for teleworkers, further studies could be conducted using alternative leadership theories or models. Additionally, discussions around communication revealed a hesitancy to disrupt coworkers at home which perceptibly contributed to its ineffectiveness. It was suggested that this hesitancy to communicate due to telephone customs and courtesies further disrupted the leader’s ability to create an environment in which the teleworker could accomplish set goals. As a result of this input, the researcher recommends that further study be conducted on the impact of telephone etiquette on the leader’s behaviors and strategies when managing teleworkers and supporting career development.
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Appendices
Appendix A: Informational Letter

Dear Management Team:

As a student in the School of the School of Business at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to explore leadership strategies and behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and have performed in a leadership capacity in which they developed or implemented strategies to support career advancement for teleworkers. This research is limited to the Denver, Colorado area including outlying cities. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview. It should take approximately 30 minutes to complete the interview. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please complete the attached survey and return it by email to gsanders9@liberty to schedule an interview.

A consent document will be provided prior to the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Glory Sanders
Doctor of Business Administration Student
xxxxxxxxxxx@liberty.edu
Appendix B: Informed Consent

Title of the Project: Leadership Styles and Behaviors that Support Career Advancement for Teleworkers
Principal Investigator: Glory Sanders, Doctor of Business Administration Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years old and have performed in a leadership role over teleworkers in the Denver, CO area. In addition, participants should have developed or implemented strategies to support teleworkers in achieving their career advancement goals. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

What is the study about and why is it being done?
The purpose of the study is to develop a greater understanding of effective leadership styles and behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. The intent is to explore the leader’s approach to overcoming perceived career advancement challenges for teleworkers.

What will happen if you take part in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, I ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in a 30-minute (approximately), audio-recorded interview.
2. Participate in a 15-minute follow-up interview to review the transcription of the original interview for accuracy.

How could you or others benefit from this study?
Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?
The risks in this study are minimal. The possible risks and mitigation factors include:

1. Questions involving past experiences may potentially lead to distressing memories. To mitigate this risk, the participant may leave the question unanswered and move onto the next question.
2. During the COVID-19 epidemic, there may be risk of contracting the virus through in-person interviews. To mitigate this risk, participants will be able to participate in the interview using video-conferencing technology.
3. The participants will be required to provide personally identifying information such as their name and organization that may risk confidentiality. To mitigate this risk, all personally identifiable information will be secured on a password-protected and unshared document, and the participant will be addressed only by the participant code assigned.

How will personal information be protected?
The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After five years, all electronic and hard copy records will be deleted. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for five years and subsequently destroyed. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Glory Sanders. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at xxxxxxxx@ liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Mark Davis at xxxxxxxxx@liberty.edu.

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

**Your Consent**

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

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

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

Signature & Date
Appendix C: Pre-Interview Screening Survey

1. Are you at least 18 years of age?
   
   Yes____   No____

2. Have you performed in a leadership or supervisory capacity over teleworkers in which you developed or implemented strategies to assist employees in achieving their career advancement goals?
   
   Yes ____   No ____

3. Are you currently performing these duties within Denver, Colorado area (This includes surrounding areas within a 60-mile radius)?
   
   Yes____   No____

4. Are you willing to participate in a 30-minute (approximately) interview to provide input for the doctoral dissertation topic: “Leadership Strategies and Behaviors that Support Career Advancement for Teleworkers”?
   
   Yes____   No____

5. If you answered Yes to the previous questions, thank you! Please provide your contact information for follow up to this study and return it directly to gsanders9@liberty.edu.
   
   Name: _________________________________________________________________

   Email address: ___________________________________________________________

   Telephone number: _______________________________________________________

   Organization: ____________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Opening Statements: Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I know your time is valuable, and I appreciate your willingness to use it here. I am exploring three research questions relating to leadership behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. I will be asking you a few questions relating to each of those questions. Before we begin, I would like to define what I mean when I say “leadership behaviors” and “career advancement.”

Leadership Behaviors: Strategies and characteristics that makes one effective as a leader

Career Advancement: The process by which professionals across industries use their skill sets and determination to achieve new career goals and more challenging job opportunities.

- The first set of questions pertain to leadership behaviors and strategies that were implemented to support career advancement in the telework environment.

RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors were implemented that perceivably supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?
   
   RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?
   
   RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?
   
   RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?
   
   RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?
   
   RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?
• The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus onsite workers through career advancement.

**RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?**

RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?

RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?

RQ2c. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

RQ2d. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

• The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.

**RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?**

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?

RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges supporting career advancement for teleworkers?
RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

**Closing Statements:** This is valuable information that will greatly benefit my study. I really appreciate your participation in this interview. I will send you the transcription of this interview for review. When you receive it, please ensure that your statements are accurately transcribed to portray your intent and experiences. Additionally, please make note of any additional information you would like to include upon reviewing your statements. I will follow-up with you over the phone to discuss your review of the transcription. Again, thank you so much for your time and valuable input.
Appendix E: Permission Request Form

[Name of Recipient]
[Title]
[Company]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[Address 3]

Dear Sir/Ma’am:

As a graduate student in the School of Business at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Business Administration degree. The title of my research project is Leadership Strategies and Behaviors that Support Career Advancement for Teleworkers and the purpose of my research is to explore effective leadership strategies and behaviors that assist teleworkers in achieving their career development goals.

I am writing to request your permission to contact members of your staff to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey and contact me to schedule an interview. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to xxxxxxxxxxxxx@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Glory Sanders
Doctor of Business Administration Student
xxxxxxx@liberty.edu
Appendix F: Social Media Recruitment

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Business Administration degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to explore leadership strategies and behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. Participants will be asked to participate in a 30-minute audio recorded interview and 15-minute follow up member checking interview. If you would like to participate and meet the criteria below, please contact me at xxxxxxxxxx@liberty.edu to schedule an interview. A consent document will be emailed to you one week before the interview.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and have performed in a leadership capacity in which they developed or implemented strategies to support career advancement for teleworkers. This research is limited to the Denver, Colorado area, including outlying cities.
Appendix G: Signed Permission Request Forms

In order to maintain the original signatures, this appendix is attached separately as a PDF.
Appendix H: Signed Informed Consent Forms

In order to maintain the original signatures, this appendix is attached separately as a PDF.
Appendix I: Interview Transcripts

Interview Transcript – A1

Opening Statements:

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I know your time is valuable, and I appreciate your willingness to use it here. I am exploring three research questions relating to leadership behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. I will be asking you a few questions relating to each of those questions. Before we begin, I would like to define what I mean when I say, “leadership behaviors” and “career advancement.”

Leadership Behaviors: Strategies and characteristics that makes one effective as a leader

Career Advancement: The process by which professionals across industries use their skill sets and determination to achieve new career goals and more challenging job opportunities.

- The first set of questions pertain to leadership behaviors and strategies that were implemented to support career advancement in the telework environment.

RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors were implemented that perceivably supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?

RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?

We probably should take a half a step back here. I don't know if you understand my career and how I work. For your study here especially, I didn't start from an environment where I was going to the office all the time, so I've been working remotely and tend to work for technology startups in the past 15 years, something like that. So, they tend to be smaller organizations, and so I've been telecommuting for a long time, so the strategies...
that I would discuss are really more for just generally working with people rather than what happened during the pandemic.

So, I would have to say that something I always tell people is that I'm always on and I'm always off. And what that means is that that's the way that I choose to work, and that's the way I like to have employees that work as well. They don't have to do that, like if somebody wanted to work specific hours and didn't want to be bothered after hours, they have that right. But I tend to dial-in a dial-out a lot, so I'm a self-diagnosed ADHD, so I either I can't pay attention to something or I'm so into it that I'm hyper-focused that I can't pay attention to anything else. So, because of that, it allows me... It's actually a blessing at the end of the day, it's funny because it's kind of a diagnosis of a reflection, but it works very well for me, because when I work and I get on a roll, I can really crank, but then I crank for short spurts and then I will take a break and do something else for a little bit, and then I'll get back into it and I’ll crank again. So, when I'm leading my team, I'm always talking with them about the way that I feel that that's the best way to go, because I might go on vacation and I don't put work down, I'll don't mind checking my phone, I’ll bring my laptop with me and I'll poke around at work, I'm not going to sit there and be at the beach and you wake up and spend my whole day working, but I don't mind waking up with a couple of coffee and banging out a couple of things while I worked there, then I'll go to the beach and hang out with my family and all that kind of stuff, I'll come back in on the ocean, I'll grab my phone and check and see if there's anything, any fires burning here that I need to address and so forth, and then you go back to hanging out. So, in terms of a telework environment, I've worked with that and some people can do it and some can’t. You can either work from home or you can’t. Some people get too
distracted, and would rather work in a live environment than a very separate... For me, I've done this for 10 years and I would not want to go to the office every day. My company's headquartered in Australia. Australia is 16 hours ahead of us in the United States, so right now it's the middle of the night over there, and when it's 3-4 o'clock here, that's when they're waking up. Today's, uh what here, Tuesdays, so it'll be their Wednesday when it's 4 o’clock in the afternoon our time today, so it'll be there Wednesday morning. So, I oftentimes, I’ll have meetings all through night, 5 o’clock, 6 o’clock, put the kids to bed, the wife’s getting ready to go to bed, I might call somebody at the office because I can't reach them or there's some emails that came into them while we've been having dinner and hanging out, things like that. So again, I don't mind doing that because I also don't have a problem at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, dialing out and going to my son's basketball game. They all know I work as off hours too, so the flexibility, it's not like anybody's working less hours here. Some people are shocked when they hear that, it's like, Man, how do you get off a 2 o'clock in the afternoon? How come you don't have to be working? And it's like, it's because I'm going to be working in 9 o'clock tonight when a lot of conference call with people in Australia. We get our 40 plus hours a week in here for sure, but I can be very, very flexible and be able to work whenever I want to and that suits me very well.

RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?

No different from teleworking than it would be in a regular environment. So, I'm a sales guy, right? I run the sales division for a software company, and I tell my guys, you can sit by the pool and drink fruity umbrella drinks if you want all day as long as you're hitting
your numbers. So, they have numbers, that they’re supposed to hit and objectives they need to get to, and they can get there any way they want to. So, if they’re crushing their quota, and are at 200% of their goal, and they’re only working 10 hours a week, that’s fine with me. It's all about the numbers. Right. So, they're that good and can do that well, and that's... That's fine. So, I would just measure someone based on their goals, not based on how many hours you're working. You think of it... That's really kind of counter intuitive. Why does it matter? If you give someone a goal to hit, kind of like... I'm a big analogy guy, right? So, you picture a marathon and your objective is to finish the marathon, well if you finish the marathon, someone finishes in four hours, and it takes somebody else five... What are you going to do? Make the person that only took four hours, you're going to make them run another hour?

I try to be goal-oriented and results-oriented, not clock-oriented. So, I think it's... I don't like the fact that some jobs you can do that, right, 'cause you want to keep going, and people that are... The people that are in sales should be motivated by success, right, so they shouldn't want to keep going, and you kind of question a person if they want to stop after 10 hours because they hit their numbers, because typically you can be more successful, not only if you keep going, but a lot of times you have more incentives, the better you do. So, if you're making a percentage of sales and you get to your goal, everything you sell that's above your goal will oftentimes have a higher commission rate. So, if somebody stops you may want to have a conversation with them that says, “I don't know if you want to take the foot off the gas right now. You probably want to keep going.” But at the end of the day, if that's the goal that's been set for them and then
they're reaching a goal, and they've done it… congratulations. If you want to just relax then, then go for it. You know.

RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

Well, I try not to micromanage. When I hire people. I tend to hire people that are fairly early in their career…so 30 or younger. There's an old saying that if you give someone enough rope, they’ll hang themselves, right. So again, it's all about being successful. I'll let you do that any way you want... If you're not being successful, then I'll probably come in and just want to have a conversation with you that says, “What can I do to help?” instead of “Do this and do that.” I find cramming your agenda down someone's throat doesn't work. So, if you take an approach that says, “We're all in this together. Whatever you're doing is not working so let's talk about your style. Tell me about your strategies, how you're going about that, and let's see what we can do to maybe add or subtract some things that will maybe help you along the way.” Did you ever see the movie, Days of Thunder?

The race car movie with Tom Cruise. He’s kind of a Wild Wild West type of a guy. He's just out there and drives fast and loose and all those kinds of things. And the guy who's his track manager is an older guy has been around for 20, 25, 30 years longer than Tom Cruise has, and they're fighting all the time because they have completely different styles. So, he comes out and says, “This is what we're going to do... You're going to run 200 laps your way, and then we're going to run 200 laps my way. We'll see what one works better.” And sure enough, the way that he ran it—the older guy—the tires had less wear, and they didn't have to change them as much. It took less gas and all that kind of stuff, so
he ended up realizing that that was a better way to do it. But instead of cramming his style downtown Tom Cruises’ throat, he just basically allowed it to play out and allowed him to come to a realization that there might be a better way to do it. So, I think it's always better if people come to their own conclusions versus you use your own agenda, make them do it your way…people don’t tend to like that.

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

Well, I think that that's the key again is on your study, kind of fascinating to me, ’cause I'm guessing you're going to run into all different kinds of people, all different kinds of employers, and all different kinds of leaders, and all the different kinds of co-workers, right. So, it really depends on what it is that they want to do. So, it worked very well for us because those are just the kind of people that we hire. We are a pre-IPO technology company, so all the employees have stock in the organization, so if we do well, the organization does well, everyone stands to gain... As a result of that, so they're highly incentivized to not just show up and punch a clock and go to work and then punch out, and they're all mad when somebody tries contact them off hours. We're all pretty much available. Sometimes you get a message in somebody says, “Hey, and I'm not working tonight,” and that's fine as well. So, we try not to surprise people with those kinds of things, but at the same time, they know, just like me, they can dial-out in the middle of the afternoon if they want to...

RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?
We're growing rapidly, so the more success that we have, the more people we can hire and we like to hire from within. If someone's doing a good job, I want to give someone the opportunity to grow their career and get career advancement within the organization. So, having started out with just me and one other guy on the direct sales team, and he was out scheduling meetings for me, so I invited him to come along with me on those meetings. We could listen and learn and grow and figure how to close deals and move people along through the sales cycle. Now our company has grown to the point where we're probably going to hire someone else. So, what are we doing? We're going to hire behind him. Now he's going to have someone that's going to be working for him to schedule meetings, and then he's going to be the one to go in and have the meetings and close the business. All those kinds of things. So, career advancement, I have to say is probably what most people want, 'cause when you're advancing your career, you tend to make more money. Not everybody wants that, but we all have bills to pay and want to go on vacation and all that kind of stuff. So that's probably the best way to go about it.

- The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus onsite workers through career advancement.

**RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?**

**RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?**

Yeah, that was not super relevant because again, I’ve been remote for a long time, and so has my team. But I would say... Just my opinion on that is that there's no reason to change. Being results-oriented is always the way that I'll be... So, if you see when they're
not working and everyone's in that environment, you guys thinking on the fly here... I guess if there's anything I would say is, if you're in a team environment, not everyone's going to have the same amount of success. So, if you have someone who's not working really hard, but they're hitting their goals, it's going to be bringing the rest of the team down. They see, well, that person doesn't work that hard, they don't have to make as many calls or things like that, so it could negatively impact the people around them. When you're all remote, you can't really see what's going on or just reporting on the numbers. Have you ever heard of Alan Iverson?

You should go out to YouTube and type in “Alan Iverson practice” because he was an MVP and a hall of famer, all that kind of stuff. And he didn't. He wasn't attending practice as he was getting beat up on the court. He was sore. He was trying to save himself for the games, is what he was saying, but when all the other players had to go out and practice and he wasn't practicing... The coach was saying, “You’ve gotta lead by example. And these other guys weren’t as naturally gifted as you. They're going to have to work harder than you do, just 'cause you have more gifts than they do.” Right. He was saying, “What are we talking about? Practice? Do I really need to practice?” But when you're in a team setting like that and you're not there, and it's tough for the rest of the team to look at. So, if there’s anything I would say it would have to be the fact that if you're in a workplace environment, how you are working in the way that you go about your business, it's going to be seen more by other people. So, when you're in a remote environment, and then you just meet our team every once in a while and talk about your numbers and how you've been doing, people don't see how you got there. They just see the results and they can't tell the work it took to get there. Different people are going to
have different results, and I guess if you were all in one environment, it would be harder
to see some people not working as hard.

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?
They like it, I think is what they say anyway. We butt heads over once in a while, like
every organization. But for the most part, I try to lead from the top or lead from the front,
where I wouldn’t ask them to do something that I wouldn't do. I think that that's the key is
really they have to see you working hard too... They see you sitting back and cracking the
whip on them, but they don't feel like you're putting forth the effort... It's not going to
work. You just have to put the same effort forth that you're asking for.

RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the
development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?
Yeah, leadership is bi-directional. So, when you're a leader, I learn every day, and it's not
me being here to impart wisdom on everyone. The different styles that are out there and
approaches and ideas and things like that, if you squash that because someone's below
you, I don’t think that’s going to be received well at all, or... I don't think it would be
smart for a leader to do because you can get leadership and all shapes and sizes.
Everyone has something to contribute and listening to someone, allowing them to be
heard, helping them talk through their ideas... This just happened on Friday, I ended up
having to take up 45 minutes with one of my employees who had an idea. And honestly,
at the beginning, I didn't necessarily think it was... it was going to work. But I wanted to
let him see that I heard him, and I wasn't trying to squish him, otherwise he's going to
feel like a robot and he just has to go to work every day and shut up and get to work. And
that's not the kind of environment I want to foster here. So, I want him to be sure to know that he was heard.

RQ2d. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

Again, everybody's different. I know people…there's a reason that there's a rush hour. It's because many jobs require you to show up at a certain time and then stay until a certain time, and then you're free to leave. That's when most of the people are on the road. I would never want that. So, in terms of… I'm looking for people that want to work and have a flexible environment that are focused on what the results are. So, I think that how it promotes that is, is the flexibility to allow them to do what they want to do. If you gotta leave you go to the bank, or you got your kids soccer game and games in 2:30 in the afternoon. My gosh, please go to that game. I would never want somebody miss their kid’s game, but you just gotta make it up later. You know what I mean? And let's put the time in and, hey, how are your numbers? The numbers are good, don't even worry about putting the time in, your numbers are there. But if you’re falling behind if you want to go to your game, I’m going to respect family time as I’m a family guy myself. But you just have to be... You have to be able to police yourself in a telework environment so that people don't have to micromanage you. You have to be a self-starter.

RQ2e. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

“Nothing… looks good to me.”

- The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.
RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

Hiring is very critical, and I think that that's true for everyone. But I really don't see any less... You're going to talk about internet connectivity or equipment maybe... So, if someone doesn't have their own computer, you have to provide equipment. But again, that’s really company specific. So, it could be in an office environment and you have a company or equipment to provide there as well, so you may have reimbursement for things that a company might have to incur… for internet and cell phone, things like that, versus you just have office lines. But I think the world is changing that way dramatically, right. I haven't had an office phone or I'm not a home phone, probably 15 years. I think that everybody has cell phones anyway, but you may have to pick up all or part of your cell phone bill if it’s used that way... That's only fair, right?

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?

The only thing I’d throw to that is that if they feel more empowered, if they like their work environment more because they can work from home… It's all about employee satisfaction, especially if you have good employees. It's hiring the right people. You should always be hiring people that are better than you, or have the potential to be better than you. So, it's all about hiring the right people, so if you get a good employee, I wouldn't … You back in the 20-30 years, it was much more work environment that was done versus teleworking, I wouldn't have had a problem having somebody work from
home if they were going to be successful and that made them happier. And happy employees equal success, right? You want to stay and keep doing a good job and work hard, 'cause they don't want to lose their job. If they're not happy, they’re going to start looking for another job probably, you know?

RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges supporting career advancement for teleworkers?

Honestly, I think the reason it does for us is because we're a small, rapidly growing company so there’s opportunity for advancement if you do well. It has to do with how the company is doing. I don't know the telework is going to present an opportunity for more advancement than them being in the office.

RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

You know, I don't... Based on our discussion.

Closing Statements:

This is valuable information that will greatly benefit my study. I really appreciate your participation in this interview. I will send you the transcription of this interview for review. When you receive it, please ensure that your statements are accurately transcribed to portray your intent and experiences. Additionally, please make note of any additional information you would like to include upon reviewing your statements. I will follow-up with you over the phone to discuss your review of the transcription. Again, thank you so much for your time and valuable input.
Opening Statements:
Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I know your time is valuable, and I appreciate your willingness to use it here. I am exploring three research questions relating to leadership behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. I will be asking you a few questions relating to each of those questions. Before we begin, I would like to define what I mean when I say “leadership behaviors” and “career advancement.”

Leadership Behaviors: Strategies and characteristics that make one effective as a leader.

Career Advancement: The process by which professionals across industries use their skill sets and determination to achieve new career goals and more challenging job opportunities.

- The first set of questions pertain to leadership behaviors and strategies that were implemented to support career advancement in the telework environment.

RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors were implemented that perceivably supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?

RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?

I think that flexible leadership is the most effective. Like in an office, teleworking employees have different needs, skill levels, and temperaments. You have to be able to adjust according to their professional and personality-based needs. I like to think that telework is reserved for employees who have proven their ability to work autonomously, but with the pandemic we had to employee everybody remotely. That was a shift for us because typically we expect that little training is required in the remote field and were not as prepared for that as we probably should have been. Leaders had to learn how to lead
younger employees in the telework environment so the methods that were typically assigned to autonomous employees were no longer effective. That meant being more purposeful about communication and online training. It also unfortunately means a bit more micromanaging than what is typically appreciated when someone decides…. or is offered the opportunity to work remotely.

RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?

Since teleworker are typically rated by output, performance is an important metric. I like to see it as somewhat of a transaction. Perform well for us and we will offer opportunities and commensurate ratings in return. Perform poorly and the consequences will follow. As a leader I stick to the “praise publicly, admonish privately” mindset. I think that it’s important that employees see that they’re being recognized for their effort. We all appreciate that, I think. I would never embarrass anybody by calling them out in public. I think you create disgruntled employees that way and bad employees don’t produce great work.

RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

I would say micromanaging, but what does that really look like in telework. You have to be intentional about communication to some degree. There’s a thing about building rapport and trust, but how do you accomplish that effectively without intentional communication. I guess micromanaging is somewhat fluid depending on who you’re managing and how much communication they appreciate. I guess this is where you run into a bit of contention with roles and responsibilities. Teleworkers appreciate autonomy,
yet you would be a fool to sit in the dark until a project is delivered. In the office, we micromanage to some degree. We may take a peek outside of the office to check up on someone. If we see they’re not sitting at their desk, we may stroll around the office to see what’s going on. We can look out and see if our employees are engaged. You lack that ability with telework so you either have to call, email, or otherwise get in contact with your teleworker. Sometimes we send emails and wait to see how quickly they reply. If they don’t reply within a predetermined timeframe, it’s easy to assume they’re jacking off somewhere at home, not working. If I’m receiving emails and phone calls throughout the day from a teleworker, my assumption is that they are engaged in their work but if I have to reach out to them, who knows what I might think. I then would feel inclined to contact them to see what they’re doing. In a sense, that’s micromanaging their time, being less concerned output as I am about what they’re using company hours for. It’s a slippery slope and I would say that is highly ineffective use of your time as a leader and for the teleworker.

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

Well, I think transactional leadership is what it is. You perform well, you advance. You perform poorly and you don’t. Plain and simple. I’m looking for output. I want quality work. I don’t want to have to track you down for a status. I have my requirements outlined and if you operate within that window, then I’ll trust you with high traction projects that will help catapult your career. If I’m constantly having to correct you, check up on you, and so on, I’m not going to want to advance you into a more demanding role or project. Nor will I feel inclined to offer you more money or more flexible hours. In
fact, you may lose your ability to telework altogether. Flexibility is key though. Staying within the construct of my requirements, I find it important to know your employees and their needs so that you can adjust to support them. I had a supervisor a long, long time ago that really rubbed me the wrong way. She said, “This is how I’ve always done things and I’m not going to change that for you.” Wow! I learned quickly that I would never treat my employees that way. What a terrible example of a leader. It was very difficult to advance under that type of leadership because I had very little support and a lot of criticism. You can’t do that to your employees if you really want a high functioning team that works well together.

RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?

Just that communication is tricky. It should be intentional and meaningful. We get the intentional part but we often forget the meaningful part. If you’re just calling people to make sure they’re not jacking around then the communication is bothersome and degrading. You have to figure out what your employees need in terms of communication to maintain a healthy team.

- The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus onsite workers through career advancement.

**RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?**

RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?
The biggest thing is communication and connection. Output is output so there’s nothing to change there. I put highly qualified personnel in telework, not typically new people so output is expected on a more advanced level in the telework arena. Communication however needs to be much more intentional for the sake of networking and rapport. While these employees are proven capable, there is always an opportunity to grow and much of these opportunities are passed on through casual conversations that happen organically. If someone is in the office when an opportunity arises, they are more likely to get it because they’re there, visible, and pop into mind. Those in the telework environment are a bit easier to forget. I have to be intentional about keeping up with them and keeping them in mind so that I don’t skip them over just because I can’t see them. A lot of times too, these opportunities are not one-directional. There may be opportunities passed around from another team or supervisor that could benefit my employees, but often teleworkers never hear about them. You can’t keep up with everything so unfortunately, I do think teleworkers miss out on more just because they’re not physically present. In that way, leading teleworkers is different that office staff.

Follow up question 1: How effective were the adjustments made to accommodate the virtual work environment?

I’ve not had any issues so far. The morale is good and production is good. We have not had much of a turnover due to unfavorable work conditions. In fact, turnover is pretty low. I would say that means the approach is effective.

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?

“They are very responsive as my approach is highly based on them.”
RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?

Again, it’s just about being flexible. I meet with every team member regularly to talk about their needs, goals, etcetera. It’s important to know your employees so that you can properly lead them. It’s even more important with teleworkers because you miss those important informal conversations where you get to see their personalities and share information. You lose a lot of that personability through telework. It’s difficult to network and share ideas so those types of meetings are very important. In that way, I suppose the teleworker sets the tone in a lot of ways for how I’m going to approach my leadership with them. If they would rather work autonomously and are capable of that, I won’t bother them too much. If they enjoy conversation and need more interaction then I’ll be more inclined to make contact and so on. It’s not just about personality, but also about performance. If they are doing great then no need to bother them. If they are not performing well or I can see problem that is likely to arise, I will be much more intentional about conversation.

RQ2d. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

It helps by making sure employees are not forgotten and that information is shared. It helps to maintain good rapport so that the teleworker enjoys working for you and sees a future in the company. That helps with performance and ultimately advancement for the employee.

RQ2e. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?
The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.

**RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?**

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

I found that leading teleworkers through career advancement to be different than leading employees I can see daily. The main difference is the informal conversation and the out-of-sight, out-of-mind issue that we run into with teleworkers. Intentionality in conversation and inclusion is a must. Sometimes it’s hard to know how well the teleworker is doing in areas outside of performance metrics. I don’t know if they’re enjoying their job or if they are considering leaving. I don’t get to see their face daily to gauge their mood so a lot of times, I hear things when it’s too late. If a teleworker has made up their mind to quit, I would never know it until the day they turn in their notice. This is where intentional communication comes into play.

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?

I try to make myself as present as possible for the teleworker. I try to let them know that I’m here and that I care and value them. I walk a fine line though where too much communication seems overbearing, but not enough seems dismissive. It really depends on the employee, I guess. I always try to be as flexible as possible in my leadership approach so that I can support all types of personalities and situations.
RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges supporting career advancement for teleworkers?

I think it helps career advancement for the teleworker by giving them an avenue to discuss and plan their goals and strategies. If someone tells me they are looking for more meaningful and challenging work because they want to grow, then I will seek out those opportunities for them. I always try to make time for phone calls. It can sometimes take up a lot of my time because sometimes people just need to vent their frustrations or talk about anything else. It could be getting clarification on a job assignment, discussing goals, or just chewing over the weather. Either way, I try to be as personable and available as possible.

RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

“No. I think that’s all I have.”

Closing Statements:

This is valuable information that will greatly benefit my study. I really appreciate your participation in this interview. I will send you the transcription of this interview for review. When you receive it, please ensure that your statements are accurately transcribed to portray your intent and experiences. Additionally, please make note of any additional information you would like to include upon reviewing your statements. I will follow-up with you over the phone to discuss your review of the transcription. Again, thank you so much for your time and valuable input.
Interview Transcript – A3

Opening Statements:

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I know your time is valuable, and I appreciate your willingness to use it here. I am exploring three research questions relating to leadership behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. I will be asking you a few questions relating to each of those questions. Before we begin, I would like to define what I mean when I say “leadership behaviors” and “career advancement.”

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- The first set of questions pertain to leadership behaviors and strategies that were implemented to support career advancement in the telework environment.

RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors were implemented that perceptibly supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?

RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?

Oh boy. Well… I think there are a lot of things we do that are effective and we just don’t realize it. It’s like asking someone the break down their daily behaviors to find the one or two things that made the day good. I guess that’s why people do studies like this, huh? So, I think in all relationships, whether it be work or home life, communication can make or break it. You gotta talk as much as possible. Not everyone is going to like it but it’s what makes work relationships work. Like, how are you going to help anyone succeed in their career if you don’t talk to them to help them succeed on tasks? To advance in your
career you have to build up on the everyday things. You have to be good at your job. You have to know what you’re doing. Right? So yeah, communication is a big one.

Another important thing we do as leaders is give good feedback. We have to let them know exactly how they are doing. If they’re doing bad at their job, you have to let them know. Allowing someone to continuously be bad is really the supervisor’s fault. If they’re doing great, well, you have to let them know that too. You have to provide more ways for them to succeed. Giving them more responsibility and work that’s going to get them involved with important people really helps grow someone’s career. In our office, we have mediocre projects that don’t require a lot of thinking and a lot of conversation. All tasks are important of course but there are tasks that seem mundane and, well, simply won’t get you noticed. Those tasks are usually reserved for people who are learning or people who just want to collect a paycheck. Some people don’t have any desire to move up the ladder so they’re perfectly happy doing those things. The feedback would be something to the effect of, “You’re doing great with these simple tasks but it’s not going to get you promoted.” And then you could ask if they want more challenging work. They’re usually pretty good about letting you know exactly what they want. So I guess those are kind of the two I would say are pretty important behaviors for leaders to have: communications and feedback. Also, assigning work accordingly helps put the right people in the right places.

RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would do you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?

I think I kind of touched on that already but just to reiterate…I would say feedback is important. I guess that’s all a part of communicating. And, also passing out work to
people with the appropriate skill and desire to perform well. I’m not going to waste my time giving heavy weighted projects to people that can’t carry the load. That makes everybody look bad. Not only are they not getting promoted but I might get fired for horrible management skills. (Laughs). You really want to weed out the people who don’t want to be there. We only have so much room for people to stay put in mundane roles. We need go getters, people that are charged to succeed. That’s what our business is built on.

RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

Again, misaligning work with improper skill level. That includes their motivation also. It’s really bad for everybody when that happens. Like I said, if it’s a matter of inexperience…that can be fixed. You can’t fix a bad attitude towards work. Being content and having no desire to advance isn’t necessarily a bad thing, but if you let that turn into a bad attitude and laziness then it’s like a cancer that spreads throughout the organization.

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

I think it’s helpful because it puts the right people in the right places. It puts the stronger people behind the heavier projects while weaker performers carry a lighter load. Those carrying a heavier load will move quickly up the ladder. They will learn more. They will have more opportunity to network and rub noses with people who make decisions. They will gain trust and may even be asked to help make some of those big work-related decisions because of their firsthand knowledge and experience.
RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?

“No. I think that covers it.”

- The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus onsite workers through career advancement.

**RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?**

RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?

Only to the degree that I have to. What I mean is that I don’t have two separate ways of leading. I am a certain type of leader and that’s based on my experiences and beliefs. I do what I believe is best depending on the situation. I’m not one of those leaders that believe that my way is perfect and that I don’t have to change for anybody. Actually, I like to think that I am very flexible and that’s what makes me a good leader. I like to be versatile so that I can be effective in a variety of situations. You know. So, in a telework situation, some things that I value as a leader look different in the way that it’s carried out. Communication for example, I have to make it a point to reach out each day to communicate with my team. In the office, I walk in and greet everyone. We have regular staff meetings where we spend time at the front and back ends to talk casually then we get to business. We see each other. We smile are each other. We compliment and praise each other. We can see when someone is having a bad day and we can take a minute to encourage each other. Those things are missing with telework. You can’t see people and vibe off of each other.
Laughter is minimal because nobody’s around to crack a joke. Nobody wants to get on a teleconference and crack a joke. It’s too formal. You get on, talk business, and get off. Especially if you’re in mixed company with people outside of the team. If that situation were to occur in person, there’s still more opportunity to make small talk because you can talk individually as opposed to a teleconference where you are live and speaking to everyone at all times. You’d have to send a private chat or something to communicate privately in that group setting and even then, it’s not talking. It’s typing. An “LOL” doesn’t ring the same as the sound of actual laughter. You know. It doesn’t have the same effect on building good work relationship with coworkers and rapport in the office. That obviously has a huge impact on performance and job satisfaction. When people like where they work, they like to work. That’s what I always say.

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?

Nobody’s ever told me if they liked, or disliked, me as a leader. If I’m basing my answer on behaviors and performance, I would say that they are responding well. I have guys that are shooting up the ladder and are performing really well. I also have people who are not moving up the chain very fast, or at all. But, that’s the beauty of organizations like ours. Promotions are competitive and everybody gets to move at different paces. If you want it, you gotta work for it. And, when you work for it, the chances are, you’re going to get it…eventually. If you don’t really want it, trust me, it’s not going to be thrown into your lap. We have very little performance and personnel issues. Turnover is generally low so I take that as a sign that people like where they are. As far as telework goes, the pandemic gave everyone a chance to experience it. Some people love it and some hate it. Younger guys, your millennials and younger are all onboard with telework. Older folks
seem to enjoy the office more and are really wanting to return. I think that has to do with comfortability more than it does my leadership approach, but that’s just an observation I made. I would say that since nobody is really wanting to run away from telework for reasons other than personal preference, I could assume that my approach to leading teleworkers is intact.

RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?

Hmm…. Well, this is where feedback is really important. I always ask my team if they have feedback for me as a leader during annual and semi-annual performance review conversations. This gives them the opportunity to tell me how well I’m leading them and if there is anything I can do to better support them. Now, I’ve gotten more feedback than I originally expected. People do speak up if you give them a platform. With telework, I’ve found that I’m getting more feedback. It could have something to do with the fact that it’s more comfortable to make requests when it’s not face to face. I don’t really know. But, they will let me know if there’s a project they want or an opportunity they’re seeking. I had one person tell me that he appreciated being able to work autonomously and asked me if I would give him a chance to prove that he could do so. I was okay with that because that’s what I actually hope for. I need a team of people that can take a task and run with it. I want them to be able to be creative but also meet the criteria. It takes a huge load off my back when I don’t have to hold everyone’s hand.

RQ2d. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?
It allows…well not only allows, but demands that people take responsibility for their career growth. If you want it, you gotta speak up and work for it. I can help you. As a team lead, I have some ability to align opportunities with the right people. But, I can’t help you if I don’t know what you want.

RQ2e. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

“Nothing really.”

• The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.

RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

Yeah, now that we talked a little, I’m realizing how much of a challenge we deal with when people are removed from the office. The main thing being the loss of personhood and authentic relationships. There’s very little you can do to replace that. I mean, we have technology but that really only goes so far. How do you replace a handshake? How do you substitute a smile or a moment of encouragement when someone needs it? You can’t really. At least, I can’t think of any good way to do it. It makes the relationship between office members really stiff. You gotta find a way to break that down and become real people again…not just a face behind a monitor or a voice on the phone.

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?
Well, before the pandemic we would have occasional informal lunch meetings. No work talk, just people eating together. Of course these meetings are not mandatory but I’ll tell you, people show up. People want that interaction. They want to know that they are a part of the team. They want those relationships. More routinely, during weekly staff meetings we always take time in the beginning to talk casually and crack some jokes. I try to make it as comfortable as possible so that everyone can come out of their shell. It helps, I think.

RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges supporting career advancement for teleworkers?

It goes back to what I said before. You have to be able to talk to people. You have to know your people and what they want. Building relationships is really the backbone to all of this. It makes people comfortable. It creates trust. It makes a way for feedback. It helps weed out the people that don’t really want to be there. It just makes the team stronger.

For each person on that team, it gives them a platform to communicate their wants, struggles, and all of those things. That’s necessary if you’re going to work together to build someone’s career. You know.

RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

Man, I don’t think so. I think we talked about everything.

**Closing Statements:**

This is valuable information that will greatly benefit my study. I really appreciate your participation in this interview. I will send you the transcription of this interview for review. When you receive it, please ensure that your statements are accurately transcribed to portray your intent and experiences. Additionally, please make note of any additional information you would like to include upon reviewing your statements. I will follow-up
with you over the phone to discuss your review of the transcription. Again, thank you so much for your time and valuable input.
Opening Statements:

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I know your time is valuable, and I appreciate your willingness to use it here. I am exploring three research questions relating to leadership behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. I will be asking you a few questions relating to each of those questions. Before we begin, I would like to define what I mean when I say, “leadership behaviors” and “career advancement.”

Leadership Behaviors: Strategies and characteristics that makes one effective as a leader

Career Advancement: The process by which professionals across industries use their skill sets and determination to achieve new career goals and more challenging job opportunities.

- The first set of questions pertain to leadership behaviors and strategies that were implemented to support career advancement in the telework environment.

RQ1. What leadership styles and behaviors were implemented that perceptibly supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?

RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the most effective?

Really, delegation would be one of the biggest. It works really well when you have people that are self-sufficient and I don’t think it works as well when you have people that aren’t…it works for us because you’re not there and people are reluctant to call into the job all the time to ask for help, so I think that was probably the biggest.

RQ1b: Within the construct of your leadership approach how would you respond to both positive and subpar performance by your teleworking employees?
You respond to it the same. You have to use the phone more and tools like video conferencing. It’s really easy to sit at your house and shoot off an email and that’s the wrong approach. I think that’s fine for the good stuff but I think that’s really poor for the negative performance to provide feedback. I think you have to be careful with that. One of the things that I actually do, because you know the nature of our work, people will give you crappy documents that you have to give back all marked up…I won’t send them a marked up document to stew on until we have a conversation first. I’ll say, “I’m sending you this back and I do want you to look at it. Here’s where I’m coming from with it.” And then we’re going to talk about it, and we’re going to use this tool [video conferencing]. I don’t just shoot it back because then they’re going to stew over it. I always try to have the conversation first. Normally if you were in an office you’d just give it right back to them and get right into all of it.

For positive performance, is there a system for recognition and reward?

I don’t have any control over our formal system. In any event, it’s no different from the telework environment. It’s an award system. I can put somebody in for an award and they’ll get it, but that’s independent from the way we work. But for telework, we have a team meeting on video. Other teams use the phone but my team likes to do it on video because they like to talk and connect, so if someone does something really good I like to point it out to the team. I also point it out to them personally; I tell them. I like to do more of that now because people are more disconnected. It’s really stuff I should have been doing anyway, I just think about it more now because you don’t really have that opportunity to be in a group.
RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

You cannot really overly manage somebody. I don’t want to say micromanage, that’s bad. That’s not effective anyway. I find it very difficult to be very prescriptive and directive, and I need to do that sometimes because we have inexperienced people. I find it difficult because it’s difficult to communicate. It’s a lot easy to communicate and give feedback when you’re face to face and you can tell if somebody’s getting it or not, so when you’re being prescriptive, “no, this is how this works,” and you’re doing some type of training thing, you just don’t get that feedback, even over these tools. You just can’t tell if somebody’s getting it or not, so I find it hard to be prescriptive, so you have to lean on, “okay, you’re in charge of it. I mean, I can’t do for you.” I find that more difficult [in the telework environment].

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership styles and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

I’ll ask people, “What exactly do you want? What do you value? Are you looking to be a contracting officer here? Do you value autonomy?” I value autonomy and I’ll tell my boss that every time. “You’re going to make me happy if you leave me alone.” I used to think everybody valued that, and that’s not true. A lot of people want to be just told what to do, know what the expectations are, and be done. So I always try to figure that out. I have that conversation. “What do you value? What are you looking to do? How independent do you want to be? What roles do you want to take?” And then you try to structure that when you make workload decisions. We have people that want to get promoted too, and that’s competitive. You need bullets; you need stuff to do so I have to
pass out the workload that way. If someone is content, “Hey, I just want to sit here and do my job, I don’t care if I get promoted.” Well, from the work assignment, this is kind of high visibility so you’re going to give it to somebody else. That’s just part of it. It’s the same whether you telework or not telework. You need to do the same things but [teleworking] really forces you to have to reach out to somebody. It’s not going to happen on its own. In the office, you have the opportunity walking past each other to say, “hey, something came up.”

RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

“Nothing to add.”

- The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus those onsite workers through career advancement.

RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?

RQ2a. To what degree did you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?

I think with teleworkers, it’s easy to be out of sight-out out mind and so what I try to have to force myself to do is reach out to the people who you wouldn’t hear from otherwise. There’re people that just do their work, and you get it, but you don’t really interact at all. And they need that interaction, the people that do that, and a lot of them want that interaction but they are certainly not going to initiate it. So I think it’s important to initiate that interaction with people to get feedback or really just to reach out and say, “Hey, I see you’re here and I value you.” It is EASY EASY EASY to forget about
people, until something happens or they haven’t done something and an issue comes up. People can sit there and do nothing for a really long time and it’s easy. (chuckles) And that’s really hard to manage. I think where you need to be is manage outcomes. Here’s your assignment, here’s your outcome, here’s your thing…and manage it that way.

XXX who teleworks told me the story that he’s supposed to be a VP; I’m supposed to be in on everything. They have these pop-up meetings and I’m not there, I’m not involved. He couldn’t be effective in that position. It just wasn’t for him so he’s now a consultant for another company.

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?

I would like to say “fine” I think. They don’t tell me if not. I think it all boils down to a communication thing. Communication is more difficult if people are not willing to reach out. I used to telework 2 days a week in this job but I quit teleworking for a really long time because nobody would call me. They’d be like, “Oh, he’s teleworking today,” and they wouldn’t call me. I’d come back to work on Friday and I telework on a Tuesday, and I’d have people lined up. I asked, “why didn’t you send this to me the other day” and they were like, “Oh, I didn’t want to bother you when you’re teleworking.” I was like, “No, I’m working. You pick up the phone.” And so, I thought that was really bad. I quit doing it for that and other reasons. And then of course we had a forced similar situation and I’d like to think that I’m effective. I mean, I hope I can do it now. I think they respond pretty well. I hope they respond pretty well. But again, that’s the only real difference I see is just that communication. I try to be cognizant of how each person wants to be communicated with, but I think they respond well. They might say differently.
RQ2c. In what ways do teleworkers contribute or participate to the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?

I don’t think teleworking makes a difference from my perspective. I think it’s the same which makes it pretty easy. You ask them what they want and what motivates them and you try to accommodate that in your leadership style. So I don’t think that’s different between telework and not telework.

RQ2c. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

I think for the most part, they are more effective than not doing it. I don’t think it’s as effective as being in person. I think you do lose. Between the advantages and disadvantages, I think there are more advantages to being with the people with the feedback you get. I think it’s easier. Probably because you’re used to it.

RQ2e. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

In terms of advantages or disadvantages to telework and career growth, I think in this environment with everybody teleworking, everyone’s in the same boat. The mandatory teleworking levels everything. I don’t think you can say there is an advantage or disadvantage because everybody is in the same boat. In general, just in my experience, out of sight-out of mind. I think that’s a real thing. If the boss doesn’t see you, I think you have bigger hurdles to overcome for self-promotion, to shine. If you say I want to get promoted, I want to do this, I want a bigger project… If there’s a whole bunch of people sitting in a room having this conversation and you’re on the phone, its different. It really is.
The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.

**RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?**

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

I think it’s the communication. I think communication is harder. It’s a little more impersonal. You have to make a decision to do it and some people are really good at it. Some better than others. I prefer when people reach out to me. Employee XX does a really good job at it. He reaches out to me and says, “This is what I have going on.” And initiates the conversation. You get that so much when you’re face to face because people will bring it up just when you’re having a conversation. It’ll naturally happen. These conversations generally don’t go to that. You generally pass information. You just not sitting there talking. Right. You can say how was your weekend but it doesn’t naturally evolve into “hey, what kind of opportunities are available?” The conversation from my experience just doesn’t naturally evolve to that. I have to think about it and say, “Hey, I need to talk to somebody this because there’s just not the opportunity.” When you the office, someone comes in and shuts the door it can come up and just naturally say, “Hey, do you think you want to do more or do you want to do this.” It just hasn’t happened [in telework].

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?
By the nature of our work, because we produce documents and do a lot of peer-reviews, I try to make that more robust. I try to do that to encourage the team to help each other more. And I need to start holding the team more accountable for that because people are getting a little bit lazy helping their coworkers. They’ll review stuff but they’re not doing the same review that they would want performed for them. I find that a bit challenging. I’m getting some stuff that I shouldn’t be seeing and it’s like hey, it’s been peer-reviewed twice. Really? Well they didn’t do you any justice. Teamwork in person is a little bit stronger. I think they support each other more. I mean, they’re all in the same boat too. They don’t want to call and bother each other. I’ve heard them say, “Well, I don’t want to bother anybody.” I just don’t think it’s as strong. I think it started strong but we’ve had some additions and subtractions and integrating people is the biggest challenge. I HATE IT. IT’S HARD and I DON’T LIKE IT.

RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges support career advancement for teleworkers?

Well, I guess it would be up to them. There’re things you can do but for the most part, it’s up to the employee. Right. My approach to it is to find out what people want and try to work towards that and give them as many opportunities as I can, but they have to take advantage of that. So, to me, I think career advancement is about giving people opportunities to advance. And in this case, I think it’s there because there’s a lot more autonomy so for stuff like that, you’re responsible. It’s yours. It’s set. So, manage it that way. We have a structure too where I can give opportunities, but I have no decision-making authority when it comes to advancement. That is very centralized.

RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?
In terms of reaching out and talking to people, with these experienced people, they should be reaching out on their own to do that. So, I will sit there and if I have newer people that I know will need help, I get specific. I had a contractor that I gave something to the other day and I told them, before I had them dive into the weeds, I said, “do this, this is the task that needs to be done and go to.” I gave him two people for assistance and I copied them so there’s none of this “I’m sorry to bother you.” I try not to be directive to them on it but I want everybody to notice that this things going on and you guys are going to have to essentially conduct training. I try to set that expectation that you guys are kind of working on this together.

**Closing Statements:**

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Leadership Behaviors: Strategies and characteristics that makes one effective as a leader

Career Advancement: The process by which professionals across industries use their skill sets and determination to achieve new career goals and more challenging job opportunities.

- The first set of questions pertain to leadership behaviors and strategies that were implemented to support career advancement in the telework environment.

RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors were implemented that perceptibly supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?

RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?

Communication. Keeping in touch with everyone. Making sure that I either email, or if the opportunity allows, to call. If the opportunity was there to either send and email or call, I would always call first to get everybody used to that.

RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?

Positive performance, I try to praise openly so that others can see best practices. I try to do that as a team or individually. And then for subpar, I’ve had to have some private
conversations about those things and I try to keep it private with a phone call and just explain what my intent is. I do think that with leadership just in general, if you explain your intent and what the end goal is then it helps the purpose that you’re trying to achieve.

RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

I haven’t really had anything that would least effective. It’s really geared toward the attitude of the individual. I don’t think it’s just clustered toward teleworking. It’s based on individual attitudes. So, if I was approaching someone with a poor attitude, which I did a couple of times with people that just get discouraged in a teleworking environment, I just give them all of the great things that we’re able to do (chuckles) because of telework and just try to foot stomp the positives.

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

Career advancement is more about output. What product are you putting out? Especially in the contracting career field, you can tell when somebody is not doing their job. When that ball drops, it’s pretty loud. In that regard, I don’t think there’s….well, I don’t know. I don’t think it weighs that much into advancement. It definitely hasn’t hindered me in advancement. I’ve even changed jobs in the teleworking environment from one teleworking situation to another. So that’s… and I think it’s leadership styles in general, it doesn’t change that much. If there’s a micromanager in the office environment, they’re going to be a micromanager in the teleworking environment too. And, probably more so. And it’s also for the other side of that. If you have a supervisor or leadership style that’s
very hands off and you don’t really talk to your employees or have face to face contact with them in the office, you’re probably not going to do that with them when you’re teleworking. So (Chuckles) I haven’t really seen that much change. I haven’t seen anything hinder anyone from getting promoted.

RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?
“No. Probably won’t be able to remember what I said.” (Chuckles)

- The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus onsite workers through career advancement.

RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?

RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?

Well, I think the leadership starts with who you’re leading. For me, when I lead, it just depends on the people that I’m leading. If I have a person that needs contact then I’m going to have more contact with them regardless if it’s in the office or teleworking. And if there’s people that like to work a lot more independently and not be bothered, then I’m probably going to do that in a telework environment as well. But I’ve also gone to great lengths to let them know I’m here. “Hey, you may not need me but I’m here if you need to talk about anything, vent, or whatever.” Just to let people know they’re not alone because sometimes it can be a little lonely in the teleworking environment.

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?
It’s gone very well. Even from peers and those that I lead, it’s gone very well. I have taken a very proactive approach. If I’m in a meeting I can tell from voices if someone has been given a task if they understand or don’t understand what the task is. And, I’ve been very successful with emailing that individual later and explaining more on a one-to-one environment how to accomplish the task that they’ve been given. It’s worked very well. I’ve been able to gain their trust and their output is a lot better.

RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?

In what we do every day, it goes on to what they’re doing. What are they doing every day? What’s their function? What’s the output of their job? I don’t think teleworking has a ….. So my team is spread all over the United States and there’s one particular individual who comes to mind when I think about this. It’s not about teleworking, it’s about willingness. It’s an attitude and if you have a willingness to learn…And I’ll just throw this out there. If you’re in an environment that’s mostly women, don’t take everything personal. Our voices fluctuate, we say things differently and if you’re taking it personal and your feelings are hurt, we probably need to talk offline to make sure there’s no misunderstanding because that can be a huge challenge in teleworking. So far, it’s been good (Chuckles) and I do have a team of all women. We’ve had a couple of little snags but nothing that lasted very long.

RQ2c. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

One of the biggest differences is appearance, because people do look at appearances. How someone dresses would play a part and in teleworking, none of that stuff matters. In
that regard, I could see where that would be a difference and it may even be nice because it’s an even playing field. I don’t have any complaints about the teleworking environment. There are challenges but there’s nothing that I haven’t been able to overcome yet. It’s been really nice.

RQ2d. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

Yeah, I’ll add this. I think that whenever people are working together and you’re with that group of people all day long, some of your personality comes out and there’s a lot more of yourself that people may love or not love. It may not have anything to do with their professional output or what kind of employee they are, but it says something about the kind of person that they are. You don’t really get to see what kind of people they are. I haven’t met face-to-face one person on my team. (Chuckles) I’m waiting. I’ve only seen them on camera. It’s been fascinating to go that route and have the relationships that I do because it’s nerve-wracking when they see me. First, you put in your mind what people are like or what they look like and then you see them face-to-face and you’re like “hmm, I’m not sure about that one.”

- The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.

RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?
Some of the challenges are understanding the intent of whose delivering the message...who the speaker is. I’m talking about email and all kinds of communication. Knowing where they’re coming from, Sometimes the tone of an email, or even the tone of their voice on a call can really throw things off. You have to be extremely deliberate about clarifying and I’ve changed the way I communicate to be much clearer whenever I am working in a teleworking environment. Which isn’t a bad thing.

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?

Another thing I did was pull two people together who have worked together for year…I wasn’t a part of the group. They didn’t know much about me. I’ve only been there for a short time. I had to get out of my comfort zone to develop those relationships with people. When confrontations happen, it’s sticking with it to a good ending instead of getting off the phone mad or sending an email in all caps. It’s just the attitude that can show through those nonverbals that are missing when it comes to an email. There have been some challenges but we stick it through and we figure it out. [finding resolution, being intentional about tone, clarifying misunderstandings]

RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges support career advancement for teleworkers?

It develops your leadership skills. I think if you can communicate in a teleworking environment then communicating in an office environment should not be that difficult. But, maybe it is. Maybe there are people that a little bit more brave when it when they’re in the comforts of their home with their pets around. I think that teleworking can make the skills that you need for career advancement stronger.
RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

“Not. No. I don’t have anything.”

Closing Statements:

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Leadership Behaviors: Strategies and characteristics that makes one effective as a leader

Career Advancement: The process by which professionals across industries use their skill sets and determination to achieve new career goals and more challenging job opportunities.

- The first set of questions pertain to leadership behaviors and strategies that were implemented to support career advancement in the telework environment.

RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors were implemented that perceptibly supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?

RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?

Umm…probably just being able to understand what they need to succeed. That’s pretty centered on talking about what their goals are and how they can get to where they are trying to go. In my experience, people who want to see success will let you know what they’re after. The one’s you have to force the conversations with don’t really want it that much and its just a huge waste of time. I’m a believer in having an open door policy where people can talk to me by phone or email whenever they need something but I do not believe in chasing people down to figure out what they want for their future. They
have to be self-motivated. What I rely on as a supervisor in telework are tasks and how they’re working them. I know sometimes people are shy and that might hold someone back from having conversations and asking for growth opportunities so if I see someone performing better than others, I will give them a call and ask the question. You know? Like, what are your long term and short-term goals because I recognize growth potential in your work. That type of thing. Moving up the ladder is kind of a self-endeavor in my opinion. I will support you as a leader and help you find opportunities that will help you along your journey but you have to take the initiative by putting out quality work and…or… letting me know if you’re after something specific.

RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would do you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?

Easy. If you’re great then I will be a champion for you. I will help you get to wherever it is you want to go by giving you every opportunity I am able to. That means sharing your name and work, introducing you to people, making recommendations on your behalf, and giving you important projects that will help your career pick up steam. If you aren’t great, well…we’ll be having some private conversations about how you can improve or possibly moving along to a position elsewhere that matches your skillset.

RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

I can’t stand having to babysit and micromanage people. If you’ve asked for a job, you should be able to perform it. Of course there is room for training and learning new things and processes, but I’m not holding your hand. I simply don’t have time for that. Anyway, I don’t know who would want that from a leader. I mean, I wouldn’t. I would feel
insulted in I were being micromanaged so yeah… that’s what I would call the least effective.

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

Well, it works because people can take care of their own careers. I am here to support you, not build it for you. I love to see people really succeed when they’ve gone after it with everything they got. That doesn’t mean they have to do it alone, but THEY have to do it. Leaders help with guidance and opportunities, but the work comes from them.

Success should be a huge driver, and I am convinced that this mindset requires them to work hard for it.

RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?

“No. I think this topic for me is pretty cut and dry. Do a good job and speak up!”

- The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus onsite workers through career advancement.

RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?

RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?

The only thing I can say that looks different is the way we all communicate. There’s obviously less facetime so we’re using technology more. Some people think that technology based communication is bad, per se, but I actually prefer it. I think having less communication suits my taste better but I know that’s not how everyone is. We have our
regular team meetings and we get to talk and goof around a little bit there, but other than that it’s all business. I think people appreciate that in telework because there’s already enough going on. I don’t think people want to be bothered. I’m always on if someone needs me but I’m not calling just to chew over the weather or check up on you. We can do that briefly when we do talk about work-related things.

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?

“I think they appreciate it. It works great for us. We have a solid team and everybody feels respected and trusted to get the job done without being bothered.”

RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?

Like I said before, if they want it they have to let me know. We have infrequent one-on-one meetings to talk about these things, usually during feedback sessions. I am not in your brain so if there’s something on your mind that pops up between these feedback sessions, you have got to let me know…otherwise it’s lost. They let me know and I will do everything in my power as a leader to help them along. It’s different for each person because success means different things to different people.

RQ2d. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

It helps by giving the people who really want to succeed a fair opportunity to do so. It always really bothered me when I see people who could care less about moving up in the company but have a go-getter supervisor who basically force feeds these opportunities to them. It’s wasted and the people that really do want it have to compete with people who could care less. I’m not forcing any opportunities on anyone. I don’t think it’s fair to
create competition with people who don’t have the motivation to ask for it or who don’t really want it but just don’t want to say no and look bad.

RQ2e. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

“Nothing.”

- The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.

RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

Because of my preferences in leading teams, I personally did not find leading teleworkers to be challenging. Some things are different, but I wouldn’t necessarily call it a challenge or a detriment to the individual. I’ve been doing this for a long time and I find that leading teleworkers is a lot less stressful and much more productive than being in the office.

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?

NA

RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges supporting career advancement for teleworkers?

“I mean, it’s pretty much the same as the last set of questions.”

RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?
“No. Thank you for letting me share my opinion. I hope it helps with everything you’re working on.”

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RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors were implemented that perceivably supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?

RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?

(Laughing)… I’m sorry. I just feel like this question is so hard to answer. There are so many ways to lead people and so many personalities that I just don’t see any one strategy as being the best. My strategy is to be responsive. I don’t have a set leadership plan. I begin structuring it upon meeting an employee and learning about them. In telework it’s a little difficult because you don’t get as much time with each employee, but I still make time to speak with them and learn about what’s important to them. I’m VERY VERY
VERY fluid in my approach. I believe is responding appropriately to support and lead your employees is the best method.

RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would do you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?

There’s an understood standard of how we do these things. Corrections should be done respectfully and kudos are passed around in public. Again, I respond to people so if someone is struggling I think empathy and training go a long way. I just hate to see good people leaving because they made some mistakes and didn’t get the training and empathy they needed. Honestly, it cost a lot of money to hire and train new people. You may as well try to build up the one’s you have. If someone is succeeding, well hey, that’s great. Just let me know what you need from me.

RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

“This is just like the most effective question. I don’t think there is a least effective. It depends.”

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

I think because everyone is different, you can really make leading individualized and personal. I think that strengthens rapport and trust and really helps you work well together as a leader and employee team. I feel a great deal of person success when I’ve helped my employees gain within the company. I think we should think of our job as a partnership with the employee and with the organization. It’s kind of like you’re the glue that keeps everything together. When you look at it that way, it makes you really want to get to know your employees and be the partner that they need for everyone to benefit.
RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?

“Umm… no.”

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**RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?**

RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?

I have to adjust the way I create relationships with people. I’m a huge people person so I always want to know that my team is doing well and enjoying what they do. That’s important to me. I try to emphasize personhood because we are inundated with emails and electronic communications. I put a great deal of effort into making sure my team knows they are valued and have an outlet if they need it. I need them to be able to let me know when they need something because angry and overwhelmed employees are not consistently productive.

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?

As far as I can tell they all either like it or have accepted it. (Chuckles) I mean, I’m not entirely sure. We have tons of informal communication and formal communication. I think there’s a healthy balance. Productivity is good so I suppose it’s not a problem.

RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?
They actually direct a lot of it. You can’t take away my personality or experience, but I let them tell me through verbal communication, how well they’re working, and through their personalities. I do try to really gauge each person to figure out how to best support them.

RQ2d. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

RQ2e. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

“I don’t have anything else.”

- The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.

RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?

“No real big challenges. There are obvious obstacles with communication and trying to keep strong professional relationships, but you can either find a way around them or let those things defeat you.”

RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges supporting career advancement for teleworkers?
I just try to pay more attention to communication and the relationships within the team, both laterally and vertically. If there is an area that needs attention, I give that to it. It helps to normalize telework and decrease those feelings of isolation and being invisible.

RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

“Uh, no. I don’t think I do.”

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- The first set of questions pertain to leadership behaviors and strategies that were implemented to support career advancement in the telework environment.

RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors were implemented that perceivably supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?

RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?

Probably a virtual participative leadership strategy, which encourage cohesiveness through togetherness. I make it point to get involved in the group activities to lead from the front, but I welcome creative solutions. With this strategy we build trust in the team, increase morale, but also give them a glimpse at leading.

RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would do you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?
Ummm, I think the overall response or approach to both positive and subpar performances are the same. We want to help sustain the positive performance and correct or mitigate the subpar performances. So, for the positive performance I make sure to praise in the public and allow them more responsibility also some flexibility. Now with subpar performances I try to make sure I can understand what the root cause of the subpar performances. If it is just lack of knowledge, then I do what I can by getting someone to help bring that individual up to standard, but if it is due to attitude or lack of accountability then more drastic steps are needed.

RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

The least effective leadership style and behavior is that of totalitarian or authoritarian, I am not sure if they are the exact same thing, but to paraphrase the kind of leader who just bark out orders attached to the “or else” sentiment and is often ready to show the pecking order. In the virtual environment that does no good, because it puts a bad taste in the subordinate’s mouth and it doesn’t show them they are valued, which I think is crucial in a teleworker.

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

With participative leadership I think by leading by example and making the team part of the creative solution process I encourage to take small steps in becoming more and more of a leader themselves, which is annotated on their appraisal and help their own career advancement.
RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?

“No, I think I am good.”

- The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus onsite workers through career advancement.

**RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?**

RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?

I know many leaders would say there is no different and they probably have this perfect leadership approach that is one size fits all. That is not the case for me, because the way I go about teleworkers and onsite employees are different. For teleworkers I make it a point to only have meetings when necessary and to have realistic expectations on availability. Using these same two points for an onsite worker it is very easy to see them in passing and ask if they have moment for a quick informal meeting and the expectation of their availability is different since we are staring each other in the face.

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?

“From what I can tell it seems like they appreciate me making sure they are involved and respecting their time when they are teleworking.”

RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?

It allows the teleworker to be as involved as they want, while being able to award them with greater responsibility. We have morning meetings Mondays and Wednesdays, which
allows us to set and monitor goals to include those of career growth. We use the appropriate channels of communication to plan and execution of the plans.

RQ2d. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

Yes, I think the approach does well in supporting career advancement, but it does take work and it does take initiative. Just the same all the great work that teleworkers accomplish can just be considered standard or even overlooked if the transparency in communication is not there.

RQ2e. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

“Thank you. I have nothing else to add.”

- The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.

**RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?**

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

Honestly, I think one of the biggest hurdles or challenges is remaining fair and available to both my teleworkers and onsite workers. I would be a liar to say that it is not easier to build a rapport with those individuals I see every day, but just because it easier doesn’t mean to don’t have to put the extra effort in those under me that telework. So, when it came to career advancement strategies we looked at three important things to help me
help them track and document the great they are doing. Those three things were communication, trust, and attentiveness on all parties involved.

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?

“With us making sure to focus on the three things communication, trust, and attentiveness it has even the board when it comes to awards and promotions between teleworkers and onsite workers.”

RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges supporting career advancement for teleworkers?

I think just by making the informed and conscious decision to recognize a different in onsite and teleworks, but being flexible to adjust how to lead in order for both to be successful within my organization have seen better results in career advancement for teleworkers showing out of sight, out of mind is something to fight against, because teleworking when done right can be a powerful effective tool for any organization.

RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

“Nothing to add, just thank you for the opportunity.”

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RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?

In my profession you have to do 80 hours of continuous education for certification and really we work with the defense acquisition university for continuing education. They also have a platform for tracking their education and help maintain their certification. That’s one way to measure their success or at least track it. Another way is, we have a policy department that they record their trainings through so it’s a way for management to know what’s going on as far as their continuing education. A more local thing is on the job training to help them achieve their goals to vamp their skillsets. Teams training was
very successful. In fact, Microsoft Teams was very useful is I wanted to walk somebody through something they haven’t done before. It’s easier to bring it up on teams versus bringing them to my desk or take them to another office where we can put something on a larger screen to walk through it. So, I think the technology was helpful in some of those ways.

RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would do you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?

Positive, that’s really easy. Usually we’ll being in upper level bosses and send emails with them on it, talking about “thanks for the great job,” or boost them up and give them more credit for it. I really don’t need their kudos much at this point in my career but some of the younger people do.

Poor performance can be a little bit harder, but I’ve done MS Teams meeting where we discuss things that need to be corrected. We’ve done group performance feedbacks on Teams with my boss. We’ve done them together with the entire group to discuss how they could improve as a whole. I prefer MS Teams than trying to handle performance issue by phone. We don’t always use video because some people don’t prefer it but I like to use it because it gives a more personal touch.

RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

(Chuckles). Although I’m former military, I’m not a big fan of directional leadership style where you’re micromanaging. I have a pretty mature workforce so I spend a lot of time proving people with direction of where I want them to get to and let them go. If they run into problems then I’ll get a little more directional or hands-on. I check in but I try
not to get into every minute detail unless they need more or have questions, or I see something going sideways. They’re pretty good at knowing that I’m leaving them alone unless it’s something that needs to get done so they’ll come to me in a lot of cases where they need me to jump in. They may be in a meeting with someone they can’t get their point across to. That tends to be my leadership style, towards end goals, objectives, and standards and letting them try to achieve them.

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

Having them do continuing education online, if you really think about it, classroom settings is where people typically get their education. We’ve flown to Washington D.C. for training and even accomplished local training in the Denver area. That wasn’t possible so if online training wasn’t available, it would have stifled people’s promotions or ability to take on larger projects. Having those options through technology allowed those people to continue to pursue their career goals instead of being blocked off until they’re in the office. Telework allowed us to keep employee’s education and career growth going during the pandemic and allowed us to keep our mission going.

RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?

“No. I don’t think so.”

- The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus onsite workers through career advancement.

RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?
RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?

You really have no choice but to allow them a little more freedom. You’re not seeing everything that they’re doing. You’re just not monitoring the same way that you would in the office as you’re stopping by their desk or they’re stopping by your desk. You do miss that one-on-one, unofficial, causal type conversation. You can call them watercooler conversations, whatever you want. You have to make more of a conscious effort to make sure that you engage with them on those sort of subjects because it’s not happening in a natural way as it would in an office situation.

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?

I think they responded well. They kept in touch. Our projects have continued to proceed. Our people have managed to maintain their certifications to succeed. We have different levels of certification, we had one complete their level 3 training that he needed to get to…one of our junior employees. I think they adjusted just fine. This younger employees is a millennial so the idea the idea of working remotely is not as intimidating as it was for some of my older employees. They’re all intelligent professionals that work for me so technology, they’ve been using it for a while with their jobs so that part was easy. Trying to get employees to come back to the office after the pandemic will probably be more difficult. You’re seeing that in the private sector already. Millennials are choosing to quit rather than go back to employers who are not as flexible with telework. That seems to be the ending of the covid pandemic.

RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?
One of the great things I got in this feedback from my boss—we had some availability issues and people were hesitant to come to me because I was so busy—it allowed me to adjust my leadership style. I started by letting them know that I’m never too busy for them. My job is that. Letting them know that other people were using me and I wanted to them to have great access to me, and knowing that I needed to reach out to them a little bit more. They may not have gotten what they needed from me due to telework. I wasn’t reaching the people I needed to reach so it was definitely an adjustment on my part to check in a little bit more and to reach out and make sure I was available.

RQ2d. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

I talked about increasing my ability to reach out to people and I think obviously because of my position, I have a little more insight into what they need to do to advance to where I am. So, I could try to reach out more and let them know in a telework environment, the things I used to pass on during watercooler conversations are still there. I just need to reach out and make sure those things happen and make sure they achieve those goals whether it’s official through feedback or unofficial where I’m just checking in and giving them advise ranging from 401K to professional growth. There’s a whole gambit of things I could offer them just by checking in and having these conversations.

RQ2e. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

“No, I don’t think so.”

- The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.
RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

I think when you’re talking about advancing someone’s career, it’s a bit personal. I think through telework we miss the personal aspect of it. It’s hard to, even talking though a video, it’s hard to be personal as sitting down and looking at each other. Like right now, I can’t see your arms. You miss some of the body language and I miss some of that feedback to me. You’re not getting that read on somebody’s morale or mood for the day. Those type of things are important in leadership and helping people along the way and supporting them. You do miss out on that with telework. That is a challenge.

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?

I’m not sure that I have always. I’m a pretty easy-going person. I try to be personable and open to communication. I try to offer kudos when people deserve it. I try to give at least a personable touch and I’m not just like Tuesday morning, “Hey, can you do this for me?” I at least try to reach out and bridge the gap of the weekend…hoping you didn’t get stuck in the rain, etc. Just try to make some sort of connection. I think connection building takes more of a precedence sometimes, especially with telework than it would with in an office space where it occurs more naturally. I guess that’s our job as leaders to figure out how we cross that divide, not how our employees cross that divide.

RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges support career advancement for teleworkers?
I think anytime you have a good relationship with your employees, they’ll trust you a little more. When they trust you, they’re more comfortable coming to you with their needs as far as how to advance their career or to advance their job knowledge. They feel comfortable asking you questions about how you achieve things. I recently had somebody that we interviewed and, unfortunately, she didn’t get the position but she felt comfortable coming to me and asking how she could improve. She asked for advice on whether she should go outside of the organization or stay within. They have to be able to come to you with real issues. You’re going to be more successful with some than others. Some people are just uncomfortable talking to people who are not family or friends, but you do your best. Some respond real well and some are a little more closed off. That’s the way you help them out. Anything is relationship building in this business, for the most part, whether you’re trying to hire somebody or do business with somebody else. A lot of it just comes down to relationship building.

RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

“No.”

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Leadership Behaviors: Strategies and characteristics that makes one effective as a leader

Career Advancement: The process by which professionals across industries use their skill sets and determination to achieve new career goals and more challenging job opportunities.

- The first set of questions pertain to leadership behaviors and strategies that were implemented to support career advancement in the telework environment.

RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors were implemented that perceivably supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?

RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?

Flexibility and open communication. You can’t manage everybody the same and you can’t know how to manage someone to achieve the goals they want if you don’t talk to them. It’s the supervisor’s job to build that trust and communication. Sometimes we put that responsibility unduly on the subordinate, which is wrong.

RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would do you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?
Positive – I give them meaningful work that will help advance their knowledge and career. I give public praise and monetary rewards when it’s available.

Negative - This comes with some difficult but private discussions. It all depends on the severity of the negative output. We may have to have more training, or it may boil down to dismissing them from the position. There’s a wide range of consequences that could occur but I try to be proactive so that we don’t have many of these issues.

RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

Being absent, distant, overly critical, and micromanaging. None of those things promote a healthy working relationship, which you really need in the telework environment for positive output. Micromanagement shows a lack of trust and if there’s no trust then they shouldn’t be teleworking.

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

I think everything we do is dual purposed. It is for the benefit of the organization and simultaneously beneficial for the employees. It really is a transactional relationship if you think about it. We take care of the organization, and the organization takes care of us. In that sense, it is my job to ensure my employees are provided opportunities to achieve their career goals. Again, transactionally… if they perform well then opportunities arise. If they do not, then they will see doors close. Public praise of course brings light to their name. When the big bosses hear their names repeatedly for good things, they’ll know they can be trusted with more responsibility, and they will remember those names.
RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?

“Nop. I’m good.”

• The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus onsite workers through career advancement.

**RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?**

RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?

I don’t have to adjust my entire approach. I think I would supervise using the same flexible, available, and transactional ideology whether in or out of the office. Some things that are different are the ways we communicate, how frequently, and how we monitor work behaviors. Obviously, if they are in the office I can see if they’re sleeping or watching their phone instead of working. Remote workers can’t be seen so their performance output holds much more weight in terms of annual appraisal ratings. I think that’s a good thing to be perfectly honest because I believe that’s what work is about. I think we get too caught up in the workplace drama sometimes and that muddies our perception of somebody regardless of their performance. They could have excellent output but our opinion of them based on appearances and other things can have an affect on their rating unintentionally…or maybe even intentionally.

Follow up question: How effective were the adjustments made to accommodate the virtual work environment?
“They are effective I guess because they’re necessary. You can’t achieve the organization’s goals or the teleworker’s career advancement goals if you aren’t flexible, intentional, and transactional. Those are kind of cornerstone pieces.”

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?

“Good. It works well for everyone.”

RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?

They contribute as much as possible. What I mean is, I will have conversations with them to determine what they want to achieve and we’ll develop a plan together. I’m flexible with my approach so I try to meet them where they are. In that way, my employees kind of dictate how I’m going to lead just by the nature of being themselves. Some things are hard set, like, I’m not going to change my ideology or standards, but my directiveness or supportiveness is pretty fluid just depending on what they need.

RQ2d. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

“This creates a comfortable and trusting workplace that I think employees value. In turn, they produce well. When their needs are met, they meet the organization’s needs. Like I said, it’s give and take.”

RQ2e. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?

“No.”

• The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.
RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

RQ3a. What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

The biggest challenge is getting to know the employee on a level that allows me to jump in and be the type of supervisor they need. We’ll eventually get there but so much is lost when you don’t interact in person every day. You can try to make up for those things, and with some intentionality you can eventually do that, but it might take a bit longer in the telework environment.

RQ3b. How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?

Purposeful and intentional relationship building in team meetings and one-on-one conversations. I try to have everyone in the office together at some point whether its for a weekly meeting or a luncheon. It’s important to me that people do get to see each other even if it is minimal. That’s not always possible though and in those cases, we have to make the best use of technology to stay connected and build relationships.

RQ3c. How did your methods for overcoming challenges support career advancement for teleworkers?

“It helped in the way of trust and rapport. Networking still suffers, I think. But in some ways, people are more inclined to work harder and stick around if they have community.”

RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

“No.”

Closing Statements:
This is valuable information that will greatly benefit my study. I really appreciate your participation in this interview. I will send you the transcription of this interview for review. When you receive it, please ensure that your statements are accurately transcribed to portray your intent and experiences. Additionally, please make note of any additional information you would like to include upon reviewing your statements. I will follow-up with you over the phone to discuss your review of the transcription. Again, thank you so much for your time and valuable input.
Opening Statements:

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I know your time is valuable, and I appreciate your willingness to use it here. I am exploring three research questions relating to leadership behaviors that support career advancement for teleworkers. I will be asking you a few questions relating to each of those questions. Before we begin, I would like to define what I mean when I say, “leadership behaviors” and “career advancement.”

Leadership Behaviors: Strategies and characteristics that makes one effective as a leader

Career Advancement: The process by which professionals across industries use their skill sets and determination to achieve new career goals and more challenging job opportunities.

- The first set of questions pertain to leadership behaviors and strategies that were implemented to support career advancement in the telework environment.

RQ1. What leadership strategies and behaviors were implemented that perceptively supported the career development of teleworkers and in what ways were they successful?

RQ1a. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership strategies and behaviors did you find were the most effective in supporting the teleworker’s career goals?

I don’t know all of the different leadership styles, but I’ll try to explain it. We just try to make sure that the teleworker or the office worker have some type of metric that I can use to measure them off of. That being said, for the teleworkers, since they’re not face-to-face, I don’t get to see them in the office, it takes a whole lot more engagement to make sure that we’re on the same page and that the whole team is on the same page. I reach out probably more to the teleworker just to make sure they understand the assignment or find out if they have any issues or hitting any roadblocks. I do that much more with
teleworkers than I do with people in the office which I can see are working away, or pounding away, and it looks like everything is on track and they’re good to go. So just from that style alone I meet a little bit more engaged with the teleworker although they are very much in an autonomous position just to make sure that they don’t have any questions or need any assistance with any of the assignments that they’re doing.

RQ1b. Within the construct of your leadership approach, how would do you respond to both positive and subpar performance by teleworkers?

Well…the positive side is relatively easy. Normally, teleworking is an indication that the worker performs well. You wouldn’t really put someone in a telework position who hasn’t proven that they do good work without needing someone to be watching them.

Since the pandemic, things have sort of changed. Everybody is teleworking so you have a mix of people that excel on their own and people that need more direction. It’s not often that we have someone who is just bad, but we have several that need work…for lack of a better term. The ones that perform well get bigger responsibilities. They are the ones I look to when big projects come down the line. Big projects don’t necessarily mean they are a lot more work, but just that it requires more skill. We have some projects that aren’t huge in dollar amount, but their significance come with a short turnaround requirement where a lot of people are watching to make sure it gets pushed out as quickly as possible. Other projects have dollar amounts in the millions so of course everybody on top is watching and scrutinizing. Our high performers take those projects because I trust that they will do a good job. For them, that’s a win. The people on top start remembering who they are because of the work they’ve done. That, of course, leads to favor when it comes promotion time.
Poor work is more challenging, I suppose. You know, it really depends on the person and the situation. If a deadline is missed or work is not up to par because of a lack of experience, well that’s easy. I can offer more help and training. Depending on what it is, I can either do it [training] myself or assign someone to work with them. If it’s just out of pure laziness or neglect for the job then things get a little hairy. Again, it depends on the situation and in this case, the severity of the problem. It could mean losing their job if it’s bad enough. Usually it doesn’t go that far and we can fix it by having a conversation. That’s the biggest thing. You have to talk to them and teleworking sort of makes people forget how important talking to each other actually is. You don’t see each other and you’re not seen. That makes disappearing really easy… on both sides. It seems like teleworkers might think they can get away with slacking off because they’re not seen and communication doesn’t happen as frequently. There’s less accountability that way. The same goes for leaders. We have to make sure that we don’t disappear because we’re busy. We still have to remember that communicating with our workers is a part of our role and that it makes a difference is not only performance, but in their attitudes and how much they enjoy working for you.

RQ1c. During your time leading teleworkers, what leadership styles and behaviors did you find were the least effective?

Hands off altogether and going off the assumptions that they’re going to work autonomously and wait for the end result. I’ve come to learn that after talking to them that they actually ran into a whole lot of hurdles. It wasn’t a pride thing for them, they just wanted to be able to learn and do it themselves without being a bother, but it could have been a whole lot easier had I just communicated earlier and more often, just to help
them get passed that. It would save them time on an assignment, and they could move onto something else. It would allow me to understand the different hurdles and trends that they may be having issues with that I could train better in the future.

The ineffective was due to a lack of experience in the telework community from my part. It’s also new territory for us and how we’re doing operations now. I definitely think it’s the lack of experience and learning the best ways to do something. We were still in a lot of that learning phase and a lot of ineffective methods were being used.

RQ1d. In your opinion, how did the leadership strategies and behaviors you implemented support career advancement for the teleworker?

We have a few new employees and for them this strategy was highly effective. A lot times they would hit roadblocks and spin their wheels trying to figure out a way or search something to kind of figure out how it was done in the past. So just being able to get in touch with them and engage with them and figure out what the issue is actually expedited their time and problem solving on what the issue they were dealing with. For the more veteran folks, I would say it’s effective. Maybe not as effective as the new ones. Most of them know what they’re doing already as they’ve been doing this for a few years now and so engaging with them is honestly more of an update. I don’t know if it adds progress to their efficiency since they’re pretty efficient as it is. But, it gives me a better understanding of where they are; how soon the assignment might be done…and so I use it more for communication and updates more them helping them progress through any issues they might be having.

I think it makes them more efficient at their job. If you open up telework to everyone, not just senior veterans, a lot of the newcomers just don’t know what they don’t know. If you
don’t have that communication, that engagement with them, they always get stuck not knowing what they just don’t know, making mistakes and stuff that could create a bad image if you allow that to go on. I think being engaged early and training on the spot from different problems that they run into allows them to be a better employee altogether. That makes their work better as they go because they are learning and they know the different steps on how to do certain assignments that we give them. It makes their end result a lot better than it would be if I just left them on their own.

RQ1e. Before moving on to the next section, would you like to add any additional comments?

I like the idea of how we’re going in the industry with teleworking and being able to get the job done remotely at a very efficient pace. I think as time goes on, we’re going to become more efficient at honing some of our policies because right now it’s geared a lot toward traditional work. Once we get the balance just right, it’s going to allow us to operate more smoothly.

- The second set of questions pertain to the differences between leading teleworkers versus onsite workers through career advancement.

RQ2. What differences in the leadership style, if any, were present in supporting career advancement in the telework environment versus that in a traditional office setting?

RQ2a. To what degree do you adjust your leadership approach with teleworkers as opposed to onsite employees?

I would like to have more capabilities to see each other although we may be a distance away. Telephone calls work; we’ve been doing it for decades now so it still works but I think what I would like to do is to be able to see face-to-face so that way we can actually
pull up a document inside a virtual platform and actually look at the document. We can look at what we’re doing and verify things versus talking on the phone then sending Microsoft comments back and forth. I would like to be able to pull it up and look through it together that way we both understand and are on the same page (i.e., MS Teams).

With teleworkers, I don’t have that ability to get out of my seat and run over to their cubicle and talk about a problem or hand them a hot issue as I do with the traditional office worker. I can go and I can explain it and know that they understand. I can let the run with it to help put out different fires that may arise. I think that’s one of the downfalls that we have to find a way to do better with the remote community. It’s very easy to trust someone I can go talk to because I’ll know they understand and they’re on it versus sending an email and having a phone call with someone and trying to explain it over a…not in a face-to-face atmosphere. I think some of that has to do with personal preferences sticking with what we’ve always kind of been used to in the business world. I definitely think we need to find a way to balance that trust across both arenas. It’s just my nature to trust someone that I can walk over to and explain it, knowing they got it.

Follow up question: How effective were the adjustments made to accommodate the virtual work environment?

We moved to MS Teams and that allowed us to be very effective. It allowed us to see each other and share documents that needed to be corrected. It was effective for training because we were able to see the training in real time versus just an audio version. The technology that was brought on has bolstered the effectiveness of our teleworkers in general.

RQ2b. How did teleworking employees respond to your leadership approach?
So far, so good. They like the intentional engagement with them on the tasks that they have at hand. They’ve gotten comfortable being able to explain their issues and things that they don’t understand versus just trying to figure it out on their own. I think it’s built some cohesiveness between us in general just being able to say, “hey, I can rely on them and they can call me up anytime they might run into an issue or something they don’t understand.”

Concerning negative responses to my approach, I have a couple older people on the team who have been doing this for 30+ years and technology is not their strongpoint at all. Working from home is not a strongpoint, but after we all got forced into it with COVID, we all had to adapt. I learned that for them it was a change of habit. Adjusting is very hard so my approach with them was to help them just to be able to adapt. They still have issues every now and then with technology but for the most part, their work and efficiency has been on par with their output in the office.

RQ2c. In what ways do teleworking employees contribute or participate in the development of your leadership approach when it pertains to their career growth strategy?

RQ2c. Overall, how did this approach to leading teleworkers support career advancement?

In our office, career advancement is about meeting and exceeding mission goals. Being engaged and intentional communication with the teleworker put them in a position where they could keep up with anyone in the office as far as meeting milestones, staying on top of their metric, and achieving the business mission.

RQ2d. Before moving on to the next section, if you could add anything else to the discussion at this point, what would it be?
“No. I think I’m good.”

- The final set of questions pertain to the challenges leaders face and overcome while supporting the teleworker’s needs for career advancement.

**RQ3. What challenges do leaders encounter and overcome with career advancement strategies for teleworkers?**

**RQ3a.** What were some of the challenges you encountered while developing and implementing career advancement strategies for teleworkers?

I don’t think our policies were quite in place to support telework on a long-term basis. That’s related to work hours; how they get things done; how quickly they need to respond to emails. There was a lot of ambiguity where it concerned the role of the teleworker. It was a challenge to make sure that metrics were in place and they understood what they needed to do to meet them while working remotely.

**RQ3b.** How did you overcome these challenges and what was the outcome of your effort?

Getting input from the teleworking employee and how the work environment looked from their standpoint helped. Taking on the role myself, doing some teleworking gave me a lot of good insight as to ways that we could do things better to make sure that there’s no lack on their part due to a policy not being in place or something not being specifically communicated to them on how they can stay effective as they look to progress their careers.

**RQ3c.** How did your methods for overcoming challenges supporting career advancement for teleworkers?
When it comes to appraisals, you don’t see much of a difference between those in office and those working remotely. Those who are effective in the office, we have the tools in place for them to be equally as effective in the remote field. They didn’t miss any marks, bouses, or pay raises when it came to end of year appraisals due to working from home.

RQ3d. Before I conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

“No.”

Closing Statements:

This is valuable information that will greatly benefit my study. I really appreciate your participation in this interview. I will send you the transcription of this interview for review. When you receive it, please ensure that your statements are accurately transcribed to portray your intent and experiences. Additionally, please make note of any additional information you would like to include upon reviewing your statements. I will follow-up with you over the phone to discuss your review of the transcription. Again, thank you so much for your time and valuable input.