Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Strategies for the Effective Management of Human Resources Outsourcing and Performance

by

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MBA, Concordia University, 2011

MA, Concordia University, 2008

BA, University of Minnesota, 2004

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

Human resources (HR) outsourcing has become a norm that organizational leaders leverage as a strategic tool to achieve various business objectives. However, the outsourcing of specific HR functions generates unintended consequences and impacts the performance of internal staff. The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to explore the strategies used by HR managers to mitigate the negative effects outsourcing has on HR staff performance. The conceptual framework underpinning this research was transaction cost theory. Data were collected from 6 HR executives with experience leading HR outsourcing initiatives in the U.S. financial services industry. Primary data were gathered by conducting semistructured interviews with a set of 8 consistent, open-ended interview questions. Data analysis involved coding of the interview transcripts and analysis of company documents provided by the participants to identify themes. Member checking and methodological triangulation enhanced the credibility of the study. Three themes emerged from the interviews with HR executives as key strategies for managing HR performance: training, communication, and performance management. The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change by providing best practices and strategies to increase the effectiveness of HR outsourcing by mitigating its impact on the performance of HR staff. Furthermore, the effective management of HR outsourcing decisions may increase employment stability, positively affecting the lives of HR staff, increasing the profitability of U.S. businesses, and contributing to a stable U.S. economy.

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Dedication

To my doctoral committee, thank you for exemplifying that it really does take a *village* to guide a student through the doctoral process. Your support has been invaluable and your willingness to serve as sounding boards and provide encouraging feedback were pivotal to my perseverance. To my family, thank you for the light you have provided in my life that has made this challenging journey worthwhile. To my life partner, thank you for taking this journey with me and consistently yet gently pushing me toward the finish line; I will be forever grateful. To my friends and colleagues, thank you for your playful references to me as Dr. Dee before it became official. Those constant reminders of the goal when it was overshadowed by the difficulty helped pushed me to complete the program by keeping me on track and accountable for living up to your expectations. I am grateful to all who have guided, inspired, and encouraged me through this process.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The human resources (HR) function in U.S. businesses has continued to evolve over the last several decades, and perceptions of HR as an administrative and compliance function need to be challenged. HR professionals have gradually elevated their role in organizations, shedding the "paper pusher" image and moving into a strategic consultative position (Agwu & Ohaegbu, 2015). The contemporary HR function is now integral to business operations, with the responsibility of developing and implementing the strategic response required to survive in a competitive market (Khan & Mushtaq, 2015).

Changing expectations of the HR profession is forcing professionals in this field to operate from two ends of a wide spectrum: (a) providing functional HR transactional support and (b) executing strategic HR solutions. They perform transaction activities that are critical to business operations, yet business leaders view routine administrative work as a low-value service. However, the strategic dimension of the HR role helps organization's align talent strategies with the organizational objectives. The challenge is the emphasis placed on completing administrative tasks, which take precedence over strategic priorities due to their time consumption (Aldrich, Dietz, Clark, & Hamilton, 2015). The conflict between the two distinct HR identities has led organizational leaders to reprioritize HR functions and outsource low-value activities.

Background of the Problem

In a competitive business environment, executives in many departments must justify their business function. If organizational leaders fail to demonstrate the value their

department contributes to the overall financial performance of the enterprise, they are seen as unnecessary (Seroka-Stolka & Bubel, 2015). The unnecessary cost must be eliminated for economic viability and sustaining competitive advantage. The HR function is under scrutiny and professionals in this field struggle to defend the value they bring to enterprises. Although the administrative dimension of HR is vital to business operations, the question remains whether its execution by in-house staff is imperative. Many executives have chosen to leverage outsourcing strategies to reduce the cost of HR functions.

Researchers have examined outsourcing over the last several decades but found inconclusive evidence regarding its benefits. Outsourcing is expected to generate positive gains for organizations through decreased costs and leveraged vendor capabilities while allowing an organizational shift in focus to strengthen core competencies (Pratap, 2014). In practice, however, outsourcing is multifaceted with complex variables that are difficult to manage. Scholars have found that in some cases, outsourcing results have not demonstrated the degree of success demanded by organizational leaders (Butler & Callahan, 2014; Glaister, 2014; Norman, Christodoulidou, & Rothenberger, 2014).

Problem Statement

An increasing number of business executives are outsourcing transactional functions, and these noncore activities comprise approximately 75% of HR time (Karthikeyan, Bhagat, & Kannan, 2013). By the end of 2015, the business process outsourcing industry was valued at $135.9 billion, which forecasters estimated would rise to $155.2 billion by 2020 (Morea, 2015). The general business problem was that

outsourcing routine HR functions has affected HR managers due to the unintended consequences influencing the performance of HR staff. The specific business problem was that HR managers lacked strategies to mitigate the negative effects of outsourcing on HR staff performance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to explore the strategies used by HR managers to mitigate the negative effects outsourcing has on HR staff performance. The target population was senior HR managers of financial services organizations with experience in successfully implementing HR outsourcing strategies while charged with accountability for managing HR performance in the United States. A study sample was drawn from this target population. The potential for positive social change includes greater effectiveness with HR outsourcing decisions, employment stability positively affecting the lives of HR staff, and increased profitability of businesses contributing to a stable U.S. economy.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative method ideology was applied in this research via a multiple-case design to address the business problem of interest. This involved a systematic process of gathering and interpreting descriptive data to determine the meaning behind participant actions and behaviors in response to the described phenomenon (see Yin, 2014). Exploring management strategies to manage the negative effects of outsourcing on HR staff performance required an analysis of the experiences of individuals who had successfully managed this outsourcing. Quantitative methods were inappropriate for the

study because it would require the development and testing of hypotheses to examine relationships or differences among variables (Barnham, 2015). A mixed method was not inappropriate for the research because it would have involved both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. The objective of the study was to determine the meaning of the phenomenon of interest through collecting descriptive insights from individual experiences, rendering the quantitative and mixed method research designs inconsistent with the goal of the study.

A case study design can involve either a single case or multiple cases. A single case study design is focused on one case in an organizational context to identify the unique, holistic worldview applied to the respective phenomenon (Yin, 2014). A multiple case design is focused on gathering insights from two or more cases, which was applied in the current research. A multiple case study design is appropriate when the researcher seeks to obtain and test results from multiple cases (Yin, 2014). This study was focused on a refined dimension of HR outsourcing in the financial services sector; therefore, participants meeting the study criteria were not necessarily in the same organization. A single case study design was inappropriate for the research because it presented the risk of participants meeting the study criteria while not employed in one case or study site.

Other designs were considered but not chosen for this study. The purpose of an ethnographic research design is to explore the characteristics and behaviors of a population in a specific culture, which did not align with the current study. The focus of phenomenology is to identify themes relating to participant interpretations of the experience of a phenomenon (Barnham, 2015). This design may have been a viable

option for the study; however, phenomenology does not incorporate multiple data sources to gain a clearer understanding of a phenomenon of interest. The goal of this research was to identify and explore emergent strategies for the effective management of HR staff performance using multiple data sources; thus, phenomenological research was not suitable for the study.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: What strategies do HR managers use to mitigate the negative effects of outsourcing on HR staff performance?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies did you implement to manage HR staff performance following the organizational outsourcing of HR functions?
2. What outcomes were achieved by outsourcing HR functions?
3. What performance metrics did you use to measure HR staff performance effectiveness prior to the organizational outsourcing of HR functions?
4. In what ways have the strategies implemented affected the performance of HR staff since your company outsourced various HR functions?
5. What management approaches did you find worked best to ensure the performance of HR staff did not decline during the preimplementation and postimplementation of outsourcing HR functions?
6. What management approaches did you find were least effective in managing the performance of HR staff during the preimplementation and postimplementation of outsourcing HR functions?

7. How did your organization prepare to overcome barriers to the successful implementation of strategies designed to manage the performance of HR staff?
8. What else would you like to share about the effects of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff?

Conceptual Framework

Coase (1937) developed transaction cost theory (TCT) through his observation of the dynamic economic systems. The TCT framework supports business leaders as they seek to determine the most economical choice between procuring external services externally through a supplier (outsourcing) and owning the production of services and goods from within the company. TCT emerged as a new business paradigm forcing a shift in leader priorities surrounding the creation of economic gain and efficiencies versus than maintaining ownership of processes or services (Williamson, 1981). The key constructs of the theory are economic considerations, direct cost, and creating efficiencies. A fundamental assumption of TCT is that executives may outsource specific business functions due to perceived direct economic gain without considering the indirect cost. A central tenet of TCT is that the goal for outsourcing particular HR functions is to achieve favorable transactional costs or increase efficiencies by leveraging external vendors to manage HR functions (Butler & Callahan, 2014).

The performance of HR staff significantly contributes to the overall measurement of HR effectiveness. Leaders responsible for making outsourcing decisions consider operating cost a primary reason for implementing outsourcing strategies (Hanafizadeh &

Ravasan, 2017). The TCT facilitates greater researcher understanding of the rationale underlying a decision to outsource selected HR functions.

Operational Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this study and are defined for purposes of the research:

HR core competencies: Activities that align with the organizational strategy and contribute positively to the organizational culture, thereby generating competitive advantage to the enterprise (Khan & Mushtaq, 2015).

HR outsourcing: The organizational practice of contracting with an external provider to manage a set of HR tasks/functions with a focus on increasing competitive advantage (Jirawuttinunt, 2015).

Noncore activities: Transactional work that is routine with low impact on organizational performance (Edvardsson & Teitsdóttir, 2015).

Operational HR practices: The day-to-day conduct of routine HR practices that are traditional and administrative (Khan & Mushtaq, 2015).

Retained staff: In-house employee who retain partial responsibility for outsourced functions (Kleinveld & Janssen, 2015).

Strategic HR management (HRM)*:* HR practices that align with the overall business strategy and enable the enterprise to achieve competitive advantages and improve business performance (Bagga & Srivastava, 2014).

Transactional HR activities: All routine HR activities including administrative functions such as payroll processing, benefits administration, staffing, training, and employment verification (Butler & Callahan, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of a study clarify defined boundaries and concerns related to the respective research. Despite the process and methodology applied in a doctoral study, uncontrollable factors may affect the outcome of the research. The following variables may influence the study.

Assumptions

Assumptions are unverifiable expectations and beliefs assumed to be facts (Grant, 2014). A fundamental assumption in the current study was that the participants would respond to the interview questions with transparency and honesty. The senior HR managers selected to participate were assumed to have knowledge and expertise conducive to the successful implementation of HR outsourcing strategies. It was also assumed that documents collected from the participants were accurate and reflective of their experience managing HR outsourcing engagements. The qualitative method applied in this study was assumed to support the clearer, in-depth understanding and insight sought surrounding effective strategies for managing HR staff performance.

Limitations

Limitations are the uncontrollable factors potentially affecting the validity of a research study (Staller, 2014). This current study presented several limitations. First, the small sample size could have impacted generalizability of the findings. Coupled with the

industry focus on the financial services sector, this could have produced results not generalizable across industries. The second limitation was that the study topic of outsourcing could have elicited negative emotions, affecting the manner in which the participants responded to the interview questions. A third limitation pertained to the structure of the qualitative method in that the allocated interview time may not have allowed participants to provide thorough responses.

Delimitations

A research delimitation denotes the boundaries of a study, which describes the defined scope of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). A goal of this study was to recruit a sample of credible experts operating in the financial services sector who had direct experience implementing and leading successful HR outsourcing strategies. A small sample size is appropriate for executing a qualitative study because it allows the researcher to establish a relationship with the participants with the aim of efficiently investigating a phenomenon in-depth (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the identification of practical management strategies enabling HR managers to mitigate the adverse effects of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff. The results of outsourcing remain unclear because available insight is from anecdotal sources (Butler & Callahan, 2014). The findings of this study may enable HR managers to anticipate outsourcing challenges and proactively manage the effects of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff. The findings can also enable

the creation of effective business management practices contributing to positive social change.

Value to Businesses

The results of this study can provide information valuable to organizational leaders considering the outsourcing of selected HR functions. The findings could also be beneficial to HR managers by providing strategies for combating the unintended effects of outsourcing at both the individual and organizational levels, thereby increasing the degree of outsourcing success. Leaders are currently rendering outsourcing decisions with assumptions not supported by research (Gunasekaran, Irani, Choy, Filippi, & Papadopoulos, 2015). Investigations have indicated a positive correlation between HR performance, business strategy, and organizational performance (Saha, Chatterjee, Gregar, & Sáha, 2016; Theriou & Chatzoglou, 2014). Understanding the effects of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff may better position business leaders to make more informed outsourcings decisions that could increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the respective enterprises.

Contribution to Effective Business Practice

Business researchers have historically structured studies to explore the effects of outsourcing on business outcomes rather than on staff performance (Quartey, 2013). The findings of this study can inform HR managers on the benefits and consequences of outsourcing actions as they relate to the performance of HR staff. HR managers may use the insights collected in the study to inform the design and development of HR strategies focused on decreasing the negative effects of outsourcing on such performance.

Positive Social Change

Positive social change is possible through application of the strategies emerging in this study. The potentially adverse effects of outsourcing on three key groups of stakeholders: employees, businesses, and communities could be mitigated. Outsourcing may affect employee well-being across multiple dimensions including job satisfaction, engagement, and morale (MoosaviRad, Kara, & Ibbotson, 2014). From an economic perspective, communities share in the success and failure of organizations because businesses contribute to the economic health of communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to explore the strategies used by HR managers to mitigate the negative effects of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff. The review of related literature was conducted to explore strategies used to ensure HR performance was not adversely affected by outsourcing practices. Seminal articles with a focus on the conceptual framework and concepts underpinning this research, as well as publications contributing to a foundational understanding of factors influencing business decisions to outsource selected HR activities are reviewed in the following sections.

Literature Review Approach

A comprehensive search for existing literature with information relevant to the current study was performed. The primary databases used for the search included ProQuest, Academic Search Premier, ABI/INFORM Complete, and Business Source Complete, and Google Scholar. Articles relevant to the research topic and those providing

insight on potential research methodologies were reviewed. Key search terms and phrases aligned to the current research included *transactional cost theory and HR outsourcing, HR performance and outsourcing, HR effectiveness, operational HR and outsourcing, and strategic HR and outsourcing, qualitative method, case study, purposive sampling,* and *general research methods.* The results generated over 1,800 articles published from 2014 through 2018. To ensure the articles represented peer-reviewed material, all publication were cross-checked using the Ulrich's Periodicals Directory for this confirmation.

Table 1 provides a summary of the literature reviewed and cited in this study. Walden University requires the citation of relevant and current literature; consequently, 85% of journal articles cited must be within 5 years of expected CAO approval and include a minimum of 60 peer-reviewed scholarly articles. Of the total articles reviewed for this research, 95% percent are within this 5-year parameter. The study includes 166 citations, wherein 142 or 85% are peer-reviewed journal articles published within 5-year criterion thereby meeting the Walden's literature review requirements.

Table 1

Literature Review Summary

Source Type	</=2013 (outside range)	>/=2014 (within range)	Total
Detailed sources			
Peer reviewed sources	6	142	148
Books	1	4	5
Dissertation	0	0	0
Other sources	1	12	13
Total	8	158	166

The organization of this section starts with an overview of the theoretical framework underpinning the study and a discussion of alternate theories influencing the research topic. Following, the review of the literature focuses on trends impacting the outsourcing industry. Then, the discussion moves to changing HR role transitioning from operational focus to strategic. Next, I present a review of literature relating to HR outsourcing models affects HR performances. Finally, the discussion concludes with an overview of the trends impacting the financial service sector.

Transactional Cost Theory

The decline in economic market growth during the 21st century has intensified the competitive pressure among financial services organizations. Many leaders in these organizations have introduced practices that aim to attain an acceptable level of financial results. One approach that may have a direct impact on efficiency ratio metrics is outsourcing. Leaders responsible for outsourcing strategies have based their decisions on the perceived achievement of cost benefits (Sim, Avvari, & Kaliannan, 2016). The TCT is foundational to understanding the strategies financial services organizations use to achieve sustainable success.

Economic theories, such as TCT, provide information relating to studies on HR outsourcing. For instance, business management studies often reference economic theories to explain business practices and decisions focused on cost reduction and driving efficiencies (Williamson, 1981). TCT provides a framework for understanding and assessing the opportunity to generate value through HR outsourcing (Klaas, Clendon, & Gainey, 1999).

Economic considerations. Executing outsourcing engagement introduces various cost elements. Leaders often overlook the costs of outsourcing; business leaders must account for the cost of activities leading up to the execution of the outsourcing agreement as well as postimplementation costs (Abdul-Halim, Ee, Ramayah, & Ahmad, 2014; Kar & Pani, 2014). If the cost of outsourcing is underestimated, companies lose the opportunity to attain the expected cost benefit (Butler & Callahan, 2014). Scholars relying on TCT urge organizational leaders to evaluate the various cost dimensions of outsourcing that are above and beyond simple production costs to understand the economic value of different sourcing strategies (Kiviajärvi & Toikkanen, 2015). Researchers have used TCT as a framework to measure the cost of various transactions across multiple dimensions. The theory is composed of the following four dimensions: (a) degree of asset specificity, (b) level of uncertainty, (c) transaction frequency, and (d) transaction cost (Yap, Lim, Jalaludin, & Lee, 2016). Organizational leaders are more likely to outsource specific functions viewed as favorable across all of these dimensions.

Asset specificity. Organizational assets are important differentiating drivers enabling sustainable advantages. Asset specificity refers to an asset that is unique to the business operation; therefore, a third party cannot manage the activity or the organization will run the risk of losing its value (Williamson, 1981). The central premise of asset specificity is the degree of asset specificity. Lower asset specificity implies that, in the marketplace, organizational leaders may easily acquire capabilities through a third-party vendor who can manage those assets with greater efficiency and effectiveness (Yap et al., 2016). Business leaders view traditional HR functions on administrative tasks as an

expense. HR is viewed as a reactive administrative function, contributing to the perception of HR function as an expense rather than a valuable investment (Khan & Mushtaq, 2015). Through TCT, the implication is that companies may benefit from outsourcing low-value and routine HR tasks.

Asset specificity extends beyond technology capabilities to include the availability of resources and human capital. Tate and Bals (2017) argued that intangible assets, such as employee knowledge and skills, may contribute to the competitive advantage of an enterprise. The perceived rarity of these intangible assets may influence the decision of organizational leaders to elect choices that allow for greater control of these resources rather than reliance on external partners (Foerstl, Kirchoff, & Bals, 2016). Functional interdependencies between critical assets may influence outsourcing decisions due to their impact on production outcome.

Level of uncertainty. All business decisions contain some level of inherent risk, and organizational leaders make decisions based on their tolerance for risk. Kuzmin and Semyonovykh (2015) posited that the level of uncertainty correlates with the level of transactional cost. Because the transaction or contract covers an extended period, the unpredictability, as well as the activities required to manage those issues, may lead to more significant transaction cost (Yap et al., 2016). As such, TCT posits that longer-term engagements with a higher degree of uncertainty may benefit from in-house management versus outsourcing to external partners.

Outsourcing studies have relied on TCT to explain drivers influencing outsourcing decisions because these drivers either exacerbate the level of uncertainty or

minimize it. Outsourcing is focused on governance decisions related to the "make or buy decision", whereas offshoring is focused on geography (Tates & Bals, 2017). Executive leadership often discusses these two concepts in parallel because leaders must not only effectuate make or buy decisions, but they must also consider the suitability of the location (Foerstl et al., 2016).

Differentiation between the terms *reshoring* and *insourcing* is essential to a discussion of business outsourcing. Reshoring refers to the concept of moving performed activities offshore to a domestic or nearshore location (Foerstl et al., 2016). Insourcing refers to the idea of reintegrating previously outsourced tasks back within the boundaries of the organization that internal staff manages. Scholars have adopted the concept of transactional uncertainty to explain why organizations may choose to reverse outsourcing decisions via reshoring or insourcing. More specifically, the fluctuation of cost, stemming from micro and macroeconomic changes, such as a shortage of materials, the political environment, or a sudden shift in market conditions, may profoundly influence the degree of uncertainty (Tate, Ellram, Schoenherr, & Petersen, 2014). For these reasons, studies have found that, after 5 years from the initial sourcing decisions, nearly 40% of managers lean toward insourcing or reshoring (Kinkel, 2014).

Transaction frequency. An essential aspect of assessing the suitability of outsourcing engagements is understanding the complexity of the respective transaction. Transaction frequency is determined by the *occurrence rhythm*, meaning the same activities may occur continually, intermittently, or on a limited basis (Yap et al., 2016). Ideally, organizational leaders would benefit from the outsourcing of routine and

recurring activities because the third-party vendor is likely to execute the function with greater efficiency (Bharadwaj, Saxena, & Halemane, 2010). Conversely, a transaction that rarely occurs is less conducive to outsourcing due to of the up-front cost associated with executing and managing the contract (Siew-Chen & Vinayan, 2016). The TCT framework affects build or buy decisions by facilitations assessments of the suitability for outsourcing a function purely on the nature and frequency of the activity.

Transaction cost. The business case in favor of outsourcing is becoming increasingly strong because organizational leaders are attracted to the potential cost benefit from leveraging the alternate governance model. Current market conditions dictate that corporate leaders make financially prudent decisions to achieve sustainable success. Moreover, as executives are confronted with pressure to reduce costs, they are more likely to increase HR outsourcing (Klass et al., 1999). TCT is a construct applied for the prediction of organizational choices related to the governance structure. The transaction cost dimension of the TCT indicates that, after applying the cost and benefit equation, if the benefit of owning the transaction in-house outweighs the cost, outsourcing may not be appropriate, and vice versa (Siew-Chen & Vinayan, 2016; Yap et al., 2016).

Efficiencies gained. Scholars have found that executives making outsourcing decisions tend to focus on balancing the transactional cost with the ability to achieve higher productivity and greater efficiencies. For example, Bharadwaj et al. (2010) posited that TCT, from a business process outsourcing perspective, helps explore the relationship between client and service providers across multiple dimensions including efficiency,

coordination, and governance. Additionally, Edwin and Ohaegbu (2015) asserted that business strategy focusing on deepening core competencies should involve examining each facet of the business to determine if it is a core competency or if a third-party supplier may take over those responsibilities for the right price. Third-party vendors often manage entire functions with capabilities to scale, executing the functions with greater efficiency and at a lower cost (Agburu, Nyianshima, & Akuraun, 2017). Consequently, organizational leaders continue to leverage outsourcing as a practical strategy to achieve cost reduction and efficiency gains.

A key motivation for this study was the need to identify effective strategies HR managers can implement to mitigate the adverse effects of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff. The conceptual framework of TCT aligns with the objective of the research because it provides relevant information from which to explore not only *why* firms outsource specific functions, but *how* these decisions affect performance outcomes. More specifically, TCT is helpful in determining which HR activities may be appropriate for outsourcing and it is informative for understanding human capital as an organizational cost (Norman et al., 2014). Considering that many organizations do not achieve the intended benefit from outsourcing (Butler & Callahan, 2014; Glaister, 2014, Norman et al., 2014), applying TCT is insightful when exploring how firms manage risk to achieve the intended outsourcing benefit without sacrificing the quality of performance.

Alternate Theories of Outsourcing

An alternate theory often used by scholars to explore the topic of outsourcing is the resource based view (RBV) theory. This construct is centered on strengthening

resources and capabilities that are unique to an organization and may increase the competitive position of the respective enterprise (Sonfield, 2014). Proponents of the RBV theory view the unique resources and capabilities of an organization as the "secret sauce" that creates a differentiating benefit leading to sustainable competitive advantage (Besma, 2014; Sonfield, 2014). In alignment with this construct, HR achieves competitive advantage for an organization by creating unique HR practices that are difficult to duplicate and that aim to build resources that create value for the enterprise (Patidar, Gupta, Azbik, Weech-Maldonado, & Finan, 2016). Scholars have used the RBV theory to explain outsourcing decisions with a focus on creating differentiating resources and advantage strategies; however, the developers of the construct neglected the cost component that is primary drive outsourcing decisions.

The central tenet of RBV theory is that organizational resources include human capital and physical assets as the primary sources of competitive advantage. As such, the RBV provides the theoretical lens for designing resource strategies that generate the most value for the enterprise (Agburu et al., 2017). The RBV perspective, which views core resources as critical to organizational success, relates to the notion of the enterprise maintaining control of core competencies while outsourcing those of less value (Kiviajärvi & Toikkanen, 2015). However, RBV theory is not an appropriate framework for determining capabilities that are core or critical to the organization (Siew-Chen & Vinayan, 2016). Although scholars have often applied the RBV construct for exploring the implications of outsourcing from a core competency dimension, in the current study

TCT was applied to explore HR outsourcing strategies in the financial services sector while emphasizing strategies anchored by transaction cost drivers.

Outsourcing Overview

Outsourcing decisions are problematic in the United States. Many organizations are lured into the practice because it allows them to meet business priorities such as cost reduction (Lacity, Khan, & Yan, 2016; Patil & Wongsurawat, 2015; Pratap, 2014), gaining previously weak or nonexistent capabilities (Lacity et al., 2016), or offloading noncore functions to focus toward internal, strategic core competencies (Isaksson & Lantz, 2015; Lacity et al., 2016; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Other determinants of outsourcing decisions include quality improvements, access to global markets, and the flexibility to reallocate resources (Lacity et al., 2016). Business leaders prefer insourcing options when the threat of losing control of a function is overly risky, the transactional cost of outsourcing outweighs the benefits, the complexity of a function may be difficult to manage, or a standardized service agreement to measure outsourcing performance does not exist. Despite the inherent risks that accompany outsourcing engagements, the trend is toward growth of the outsourcing industry and organizational leaders will continue to use the practice as a business management option when appropriate.

Outsourcing can result in disappointing outcomes. Before executives commit to this practice, leaders must be aware that not all outsourcing engagements reap the intended benefit (Agburu et al., 2017). Unintended adverse consequences can include a negative impact on employee retention (Norman et al., 2014), decreased service quality (Ho & Wei, 2016), higher long-term costs (Pratap, 2014), or a decrease in employee

morale and loyalty (Edwin & Ohaegbu, 2015). The benefits of outsourcing can also be more complicated to measure than organizational leaders anticipated. It is therefore imperative that all potentialities of outsourcing are understood prior to committing to the practice.

Offshoring basics. The terms of *outsourcing* and *offshoring* are often misused or inaccurately interpreted. Lo and Hung (2015) defined *offshoring* as a business decision to relocate a value chain or business function across a national border. *Outsourcing* is the process by which an organization relinquishes responsibility for executing and managing one or more activity to an external partner on a contract basis (Letica, 2014). Outsourcing and offshoring are complementary strategies that can be implemented individually or integrated into one business model. Management professionals cannot assume that outsourcing involves offshoring because, depending upon the manner in which the contract was structured, external vendors may provide services using onshore staff.

Outsourcing can involve various business functions such as knowledge process outsourcing, business process outsourcing, and information technology outsourcing, each focused on meeting a specific business objective. Knowledge process outsourcing involves moving an entire high-end process such as product development, research and development, or engineering (Runar & Durst, 2014). Information technology outsourcing transfers the ownership of providing and delivering information technology from an in-house to a third-party provider via a contractual agreement (Jain & Khurana, 2015). Business process outsourcing involves moving functions such as logistics, contact centers, or HR to a third-party to manage (Gerbl, McIvor, & Humphreys, 2016).

Human resources. The promise of cost reduction through outsourcing is driving leaders toward the practice with various business functions. The HR outsourcing market has reached $200 billion in profits globally (Cole, 2017). During turbulent economic times, business leaders must create efficiency via targeted strategies (Edvardsson & Teitsdóttir, 2015). HR function commonly outsourced include the human resource information system, training, and recruitment (József, Katalin, Katalin, & Ferenc, 2014). Edwin and Ohaegbu (2015) noted that some of the critical objectives for outsourcing HR functions include (a) a desire to lower costs by leveraging third-party expertise and scale, (b) an intention to shift HR focus to more strategic priorities, or (c) a desire to acquire experience and knowledge lacking in the respective organization.

The purpose of HR outsourcing differs among organizations because each executive is leveraging outsourcing strategies as a way to respond to unique organizational challenges. Letica (2014) explained that HR outsourcing involves a decision from corporate leaders to delegate specific noncore functions to an external partner that may have the expertise to perform that activity with higher efficiency than in-house staff. Edvardsson and Teitsdóttir (2015) pointed out that outsourcing transaction services introduces far less risk of harm than contracting third parties to manage more strategic services that may be more conducive to remaining in-house.

The continued interest of business leaders in outsourcing strategies have led many organizations to explore various in-house functions as candidates for outsourcing. Related studies have predominately focused on information technology outsourcing (Chang & Búrca, 2016; Patil & Wongsurawat, 2015). HR outsourcing has become of

recent interest to many organizational leaders (Sim et al., 2016). Market conditions and shifts can serve as the impetus for outsourcing. During the financial crisis in 2007 and 2008, organizations attempted various mitigating actions, such as the restructuring of business units and outsourcing to reduce costs (Edvardsson & Teitsdóttir, 2015). Trends indicate that HR outsourcing activities will remain high because organizational leaders will continue to leverage strategies to achieve strategic priorities and respond to changing market conditions.

Cost benefits. Many scholars have extensively researched the topic of HR outsourcing and the cost dimension. More specifically, researchers found that the key driver for HR outsourcing is to achieve cost reduction (Agburu et al., 2017; Sim et al., 2016). Some leaders are moving various HR functions to lower cost offshore locations to reduce expense (Edwin & Ohaegbu, 2015). The expected cost benefits are only realized when the external enterprise has the capability to deliver services at a lower cost by combining activities in one contract such as payroll and benefits administration (Nguyen & Chang, 2017). Chaudhuri and Bartlett (2014) found that, by outsourcing the training function, organizations can benefit from significant cost reduction. Jirawuttinunt (2015) noted that outsourcing recruitment functions also generates similar cost reduction benefits. However, Norman et al. (2014) warned that the calculation of the total cost of HR outsourcing is multifaceted and often understated. For instance, critical operating dimensions, such as productivity and quality, affect the overall cost of outsourcing yet, leaders may not account for these metrics. Consequently, many executives seek to

achieve cost benefit from outsourcing, there are additional key factors to consider in order to mitigate unintended consequences.

Focus on core competencies. A new paradigm is emerging whereby organizational leaders are no longer concerned with controlling or owning various business functions. Edwin and Ohaegbu (2015) observed that corporate leaders are compartmentalizing HR functions to assess and determine the type of activities more suited to outsourcing. The notion of retaining management to execute of core competencies in-house has been widely discussed (Edvardsson & Teitsdóttir, 2015; József et al., 2014; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Outsourcing enables leaders to offload noncore activities, allowing greater focus on strengthening core competencies that are difficult for competitors to replicate (Edvardsson & Teitsdóttir, 2015).

Khan and Mushtaq (2015) defined core HR competencies as activities aligning to the overall strategy of the respective organization, contributing positively to the organizational culture, and generating competitive advantage for the firm. Edvardsson and Teitsdóttir (2015) added that core HR activities that focusing on driving business strategy include designing HR policies, managing employee relations, and generalist responsibilities. József et al. (2014) opined that strategic core functions, such as HR planning, labor relations, and performance management practices, are core functions that are not conducive to outsourcing. Although broad interpretation is evident as to what constitutes core HR competencies, a general consensus exists among scholars that administrative and transaction HR activities are noncore functions (Agwu & Ohaegbu, 2015; Karthikeyan et al., 2013).

Executives often assess HR contributions based on the degree of competitive advantage each generates for the firm. Brockbank (1999) mapped the degree to which HR activities contribute to competitive advantage. Figure 1 reflects the significant difference in the level of competitive advantage provided by various HR activities considered operationally reactive versus strategically proactive. Based on the Brockbank competitive advantage model, operational reactive and operationally proactive activities are noncore HR functions. In contrast, HR functions representing core competencies align with the strategically reactive or strategically proactive dimensions of the competitive index.

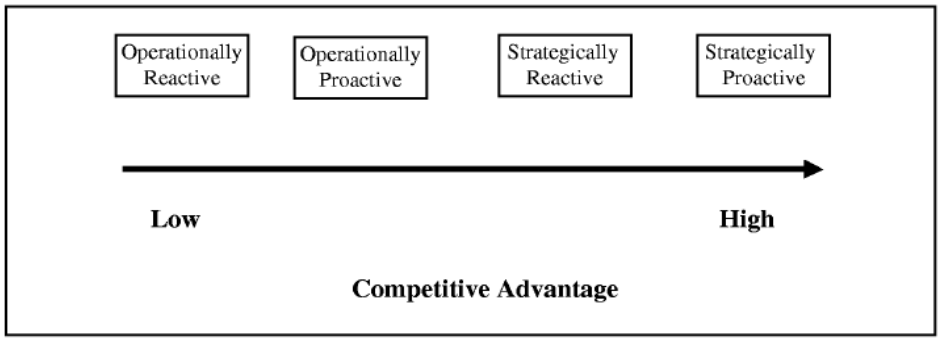


Figure 1. Human resources competitive advantage index. From "If HR Were Really Strategically Proactive: Present and Future Directions in HR's Contribution to Competitive Advantage," by W. Brockbank, 1999, *Human Resource Management, 38*(4), p. 340. Copyright 1999 by John Wiley & Sons. Reprinted with permission.

The value of the HR functions can be mapped across a broad spectrum from low to high value. The competitive advantage index developed by Brockbank (1999) affirms that HR activities considered to provide no value are at risk for outsourcing or offshoring primarily because they represent a low contribution to competitive advantage for the enterprise. However, scholars have documented the changing role of HR, which has moved from an administrative function supporting business operations to a more critical

position accountable for driving business results (Glaister, 2014). Yet, HR remains underappreciated and viewed as less strategic than other business functions.

Firm size and HR outsourcing decisions. Organizational constraints influence HR outsourcing decisions. For larger organizations, outsourcing strategies are realistic options due in part to the abundance of resources available for managing an outsourcing engagement (Kocijan & Sopta, 2016). Comparatively, smaller companies frequently lack the financial backing and domain expertise to manage such complex contracts. Sim et al. (2016) found that small, medium, and large organizations do not differ regarding the type of HR functions they tend to outsource such as payroll, recruitment, and training and development. However, by contrast, large firms are less likely to outsource HR policy and strategy. Internal organizational constraints such as resource availability and HR structure, appear to have a degree of influence on outsourcing decisions.

Executive outsourcing decisions are affected by unique organizational challenges such as the company structure and size. Edvardsson and Teitsdóttir (2015) found that smaller firms can outsource a significant portion of the HR function as a way of standardizing services from a third party. However, midsize companies maintain fully functioning HR departments, the internal staff handles the majority of HR activities with outsourcing firms managing solely basic HR activities. Prikshat, Kumar, Nankervis, and Khan (2018) explained that leaders in midsize organizations tend to focus on operational issues rather than strategic efforts. As a result, a lack of critical infrastructure conducive to outsourcing may influence the degree to which a firm outsources internal functions. In large multinational corporations, the HR model and structure are more robust; therefore,

these companies tend to create outsourcing strategies to gain access to innovation and sophisticated services not existing in-house (Edvardsson & Teitsdóttir, 2015). Conversely, Prikshat et al. (2018) found that larger firms are successful in outsourcing routine transaction work, enabling their HR divisions to focus on strategic initiatives. Overall, organizational leaders use outsourcing to fill a gap that is unique to each enterprise in terms of weaknesses and availability of resources.

Disadvantages. Organizational leaders are attracted to the advantages of outsourcing; however, awareness of the disadvantages is crucial to ensure due diligence. Business leaders often leverage outsourcing strategies because they believe the results will generate benefits on multiple fronts. HR functions are outsourced with the rationale that, by offloading transactional, noncore activities, the focus can be redirected toward more strategical functions (Agwu & Ohaegbu, 2015; József et al., 2014; Pratap, 2014). However, Boudreau and Lawler (2015) conducted a longitudinal study with findings revealing that, over the preceding 15 years, HR had been unable to pivot and redirect such efforts.

A general assumption seems to be that HR outsourcing is a tool enabling HR to operate differently in a strategic dimension. Consequently, business leaders neglected the lack of HR ability for executing strategic accountabilities. A primary reason for the HR failure to adopt more strategic positions is that staff do not possess the necessary skill, nor are they able to develop strategic competencies enabling quality service delivery (Geimer, Zolner, & Allen, 2017). In support of this argument, Glaister (2014) found that

HR outsourcing may achieve cost savings objectives; however, the retained HR practitioners were unable to develop the desired strategic capabilities.

Researchers have found that by outsourcing administrative HR tasks, organizational leaders can potentially achieve short-term favorable business results. More specifically, Butler and Callahan (2014) reported that, in the short-term, organizations can attain favorable financial outcomes when administrative HR tasks are outsourced. However, in the long run, outsourcing can present a negative impact on operating performance (Butler & Callahan, 2014). In summary, it appears that HR outsourcing does not necessarily support the notion of HR progession from the traditional administrative role to assume responsibilities strategic to the overall enterprise.

Effectiveness. Companies may use various metrics to measure the potential business value generated by HR outsourcing. Scholars have long debated the topic of HR outsourcing and its implications for organizational performance measured by cost benefits (Klaas et al., 1999; Patil & Wongsurawat, 2015; Pratap, 2014); more robust capabilities (Žitkienė & Blusytė, 2015); increased efficiencies (Edwin & Ohaegbu, 2015); and the shift in focus to core competencies (Edvardsson & Teitsdóttir, 2015; Khan & Mushtaq, 2015). Norman et al. (2014) concluded that, for some organizations, outsourcing specific HR activities might lead to higher employee turnover. However, some HR functions, such as organizational design, management development training, and the delivery of computer-based or technical and customized training, have all been associated with decreased turnover. Depending on the HR function outsourced, stakeholder perceptions of HR effectiveness may differ.

Recruitment. Volumes of studies have explored the effectiveness of HR outsourcing predominantly in the realm of recruitment (David, Banerjee, & Ponnam, 2017; Norman et al., 2014; Savino, 2016). More specifically, scholars have found that, with respect to recruitment outsourcing, customers such as hiring managers respond positively to the level of services received from external vendors (Johnson, Wilding, & Robson, 2014). However, hiring managers hold negative perceptions with regard to recruitment outsourcing due to a disconnect between vendor staff and company representatives when communicating the enterprise brand (Johnson et al., 2014; Sheehan, De Cieri, Cooper, & Shea, 2016). David et al. (2017) confirmed this and found that a gap exists between vendor understanding of the corporate vision and the strategy of the host organization, thus contributing to a distorted view of the employer brand.

Savino (2016) conveyed that the effectiveness of recruitment outsourcing is dependent on creating a strong partnership between the third-party vendor and the host organization. Unfortunately, it is common for the importance of the partnership relationship to emerge as an afterthought. Norman et al. (2014) found that outsourced recruitment activities led to decreased employee turnover and increased customer satisfaction. The contradictory viewpoints regarding the effectiveness of recruitment outsourcing may be attributable to the complex nature of the outsourcing partnership. Consequently, many factors may influence the degree of recruitment outsourcing success.

Evolution of the Human Resources Function

The role of HR professionals continues to be a contentious point of discussion among organizational executives. The ever-changing business landscape requires

executives to evolve and adapt their business models to remain competitive (Mcdonnell & Sikander, 2017). Traditional HR operations no longer meet the requirements of the contemporary fast-paced and volatile market. Khan and Mushtaq (2015) concluded that the role of HR professionals must evolve along with the business environment. A shift in two dominant transformational paradigms significantly influenced evolution of the HR role. The first wave involved the transformation of moving from personnel management to the field of HR management (Besma, 2014). The following era introduced a new focus emphasizing an alignment of HR policies and practices to business strategies (Bagga & Srivastava, 2014). This evolution led to the development of the strategic HR management field (Besma, 2014).

The HR function is reaching a critical point where demands for HR are continuing to rise. Khan and Mushtaq (2015) advanced that HR has undergone three stages of change, moving from the administrative function toward creating value in operational efficiency to now achieving strategic value. Perceptions and expectations of HR are increasing as internal stakeholders' demand greater output resulting in a direct link to competitive advantage (Naznin & Hussain, 2016).

Operational. Deep-rooted views and expectations of HR have become a problematic barrier to transgress. The dynamic environment creates an impossible scenario in which to balance stakeholder expectations surrounding both administrative responsibilities and strategic accountabilities (Aldrich et al., 2015; Sheehan et al., 2016). Aldrich et al. (2015) posited that the level of HR effectiveness diminishes with its inability to assume added strategical responsibilities while maintaining the traditional

administrative workload. Further complications involve the struggle to balance organizational leader expectations related to the delivery of strategic value while executing against conflicting employee expectations (Marchington, 2015).

Flynn (2014) argued that organizational leaders expect HR to provide strategic input; however, their interpretation of the term *strategic* differs with that of professionals in the field. For instance, business leaders hire HR practitioners for their domain expertise spanning various degrees of tasks; some tasks are administrative responsibilities while others are strategically focused. Despite the administrative dimension of the HR role, business leaders often interpret HR value as strategic because it fills a knowledge gap that they commonly lack. Consequently, HR practitioners must manage operational HR tasks in order to to achieve and deliver strategic contributions.

The HR role is evolving to a status of an equal business partner; yet, HR practitioners continues to struggle with the provision of strategic value. Traditional HR discipline focused on transactional efforts providing tactical support for the enterprise (Flynn, 2014). Khan and Mushtaq (2015) clarified that operational HR includes routine administrative functions delivered in a rudimentary fashion. Such operational tasks include payroll and benefits management, as well as tasks associated with management of HR information system (Siew-Chen & Vinayan, 2016). Transactional HR responsibilities involving routine reactive activities contribute to the perception that the HR function is more of an expense versus a value investment (Khan & Mushtaq, 2015).

Human resources have historically appeared to operate in a comfort zone, delivering against transactional HR services. The Southern California University and the

Center of Effective Organizations commissioned a longitudinal study from 1995 through 2013 (Boudreau & Lawler, 2015). The findings indicated minimal change in the manner in which HR leaders allocate their time to various activities. The central premise used to measure the evolution of the HR role is quite simple. As strategic focus increses, additional time is allocated to strategic rather than administrative activities.

Table 2 despicts trending data related to how HR personnel allocate their time over a trajectory of 15 years. The data shows years denoted by superscript numbers reflecting the significant statistically differences ($p<.05$) between years. Operational activities are categorized as maintaining records, auditing and controlling, and providing HR services and continue to dominate allocated time. In 2013, these activities accounted for an estimated 53% of the HR role compared to an estimated 58% in 1995. It is apparent that operational responsibilities have decreased over the years, and that the HR evolution made insufficient progress to elevate the profession (Boudreau & Lawler, 2015). More specifically, in the core strategic business partner responsibilities, small incremental changes are noted from 1995 through 2013, with an increase from 22% to 27%, respectively. Although these trends appear positive with HR progressing in the right direction toward a strategically valued enterprise member, the reality is that an inordinate amount of time continues to be invested in operational activities.

Table 2

Percentage of Time Devoted to Various Human Resources Roles

	Means						
HR Roles	1995[1]	1998[2]	2001[3]	2004[4]	2007[5]	2010[6]	2013[7]
Maintaining records Collect, track, and maintain data on employees	15.4	16.1	14.9	13.2	15.8	13.6	15.2
Auditing/controlling Ensure compliance with internal operations, regulations, and legal and union requirements	12.2	11.2	11.4	13.3	11.6	12.5	13.0
HR service provider Assist with the implementation and administration of HR practices	31.3[7]	35.0[5,7]	31.3[7]	32.0[7]	27.8[2]	30.4	25.7[1, 2,3,4]
Development of HR systems and practices Develop new HR systems and practices	18.6	19.2	19.3	18.1	19.2	16.7	19.0
Strategic business partner Member of the management team; involved with strategic HR planning, organizational design, and strategic change	22.0	20.3[6,7]	23.2	23.5	25.6	26.8[2]	27.1[2]

Note. From *Global Trends in Human Resource Management: A Twenty Year Analysis* (p. 33), by J. W. Boudreau and E. E. Lawler, 2015, Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press. Copyright 2015 by Standford University Press. Reprinted with permission.

Strategical. In the academic community, a lack of general consensus exists on the definition of strategic HRM. However, scholars have broadly acknowledged the term as involving the development and implementation of practices and policies aligning with business strategy and thereby increasing the competitive advantage of the respective enterprise (Besma, 2014; Boudreau & Lawler, 2014; Khan & Mushtaq, 2015). Ihionkhan and Aigbomian (2014) argued that HR plays a significant role in implementing strategies creating efficiencies and maximizing the impact of each employee. Strategy formulation is an HR function concerned with providing insight surrounding workforce capabilities and the ability to mobilize talent toward increased competitive advantage (Schutte, Barkhuizen, & van der Sluis, 2015). Jeong and Choi (2016) added that strategic HR functions emphasize organizational challenges and identify solutions. Carrière (2014) posited that, by integrating HR into the strategic planning process, the HR demands of internal stakeholders receive more effective responses, thus increasing competitive advantage.

Scholars agree that strategic HR functions generate added value for the respective enterprise. More specifically, research have shown that strategic HR practices contribute to positive organizational performance (Augusto, Couto, & Caiado, 2014; Besma, 2014; Hsu, Lai, & Lin, 2014). Some have argued that these strategic functions may improve the overall competitive position of the enterprise (Besma, 2014; Hsu et al., 2014). Others have found a connection between strategic HR practices, specifically in the realm of management and intellectual capital, and improved organizational culture (Ziyae, 2016).

Related studies have indicated that strategic HR practices generate positive employee outcomes including organizational commitment (Ihionkhan, & Aigbomian, 2014; Maheshwari & Vohra, 2015); employee engagement (Sattar, Ahmad, & Hassan, 2015); and job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Ertürk, 2014; Ijigu 2015). The strategic nature of the HR role provides tremendous business value to organizations. Over the years, HR has gradually assumed greater responsibilities and is progressing beyond the image of a paper pusher as it moves into a consultative role. The contemporary HR function is an integral facet of the overall business operation responsible for developing and implementing the strategic response required to survive in a competitive market (Chaudhry & Shahzad, 2015; Khan & Mustaq, 2015; Qehaja & Kutllovci, 2015; Sheehan et al., 2016).

Human resources effectiveness. Declining market growth during the 21st century intensified the competitive pressure leaders have experienced, and business leaders view HR as a competitive differentiator. Broad acceptance of the HR function as a source of competitive advantage is evident (Augusto et al., 2014; Besma, 2014; Brockbank, 1999; Hsu et al., 2014). Scholars have acknowledged that HR provides value by strategically aligning HR policies and practices to the respective overall business strategy; however, measuring strategic HR contributions is a daunting task due to the lack of agreement on the definition of *strategic* (Shivakumar, 2014). Measuring the value of HR is difficult because it is a nonrevenue generating function with no direct, observable factors with which to measure its precise value (Oh, Blau, Han, & Kim, 2017). Consequently, the results achieved from this area of business are often unquantifiable.

Perspectives. Stakeholders measure HR effectiveness based on the degree of success in executing HR accountabilities across various HR functions. Bainbridge (2015) posited that HR responsibilities is difficult to measure because accountability lies with both HR members and line managers. This shared responsibility has led to the inconsistent implementation of HR related activities. Due to staff capacity issues, both business leaders and HR practitioners fail to address particular operational issues (Woodrow & Guest, 2014). This scenario is further exacerbated by HR concern over achieving a higher status in the organization than actually producing strategic results (Francis, Parkes, & Reddington, 2014). Consequently, role tension has negatively impacted the perception of HR performance, both in operational capacity and strategic orientation.

Practices. Stakeholders measure and assess the effectiveness of HR practice across multiple dimensions. Fareed, Mohd Isa, and Wan Mohd (2017) explored HR effectiveness through the lens of a high-performance work system and the impact on organizational culture. These researchers concluded that HR effectiveness contributes to a healthy corporate culture by creating HR strategies and practices enabling and empowering employees to reach their full potential. Following a parallel research path, Wojtczuk-Turek (2017) assessed HR practices and their influence on employee productivity. Their study confirmed that HR practices focus on effective performance management, knowledge management, work and job design, and building a supportive organizational culture leading to the improvement of employee productivity.

Skills and competencies. Another dimension measuring HR effectiveness pertains to the degree to which individual practitioners possess critical ability and competencies that activate HR solutions in alignment with the organizational strategies of the enterprise. In the context of multinational companies, researchers have found that business knowledge, personal credibility, and foreign language skills are critical HR competencies contributing to the overall firm performance of the respective enterprise (Poór, Slavic, & Berber, 2015). Ahmad, Kausar, and Azhar (2015) investigated the competency and skill level of HR professionals in the Pakistan banking sector. These investigators found a high positive correlation between HR competencies and effectiveness. However, they concluded that HR professionals lack the competencies required to effectively execute HR strategies, thus practitioners did not attain the desired degree of outcome and thereby negatively impacted the organization.

Mcdonnell and Sikander (2017) concluded that, beyond the core competencies rendering HR a legitimate and strong strategic partner, HR personnel must acquire skills of outside domains such as marketing, financial management, and information technology. Cohen (2015) asserted that the degree of value HR provides to the organization is dependent on the level of competency and skill possessed by practitioners. It appears that the evolving role of HR is primary focused on a strategic partner orientation, which presents new opportunities for practitioners to acquire critical skill sets extending beyond the HR discipline.

Financial Industry Overview

The financial services sector is viewed as a pillar of communities that broadly affecting the well-being of the global economy. Although the financial crisis may originate in the United States due to poor lending practices, the aftermath shock will have widespread implications for global markets (Bakare, 2016). The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2017) defines the financial services sector as organizations offering depository services, investment products, insurance-related offerings, and credit or financing options. Financial services companies, specifically banking organizations, are vital to American society because they play a critical intermediary role in the movement of financial products between consumers and businesses (Bakare, 2016).

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (2017) reported that, 5,856 U.S. commercial banks and savings institutions are insured by the Corporation. These institutions play a significant role in shaping and contributing to the U.S. economy. During the financial crisis from 2007 through 2009, commercial banks were held accountable for lending practices placing the entire financial system at risk (Fisher & Rosenblum, 2013). Repercussions resulting from the excessive risk assumed by financial services organizations translated to an estimated cost of $10 trillion to $20 trillion in the loss of jobs and gross domestic product (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013). As banks experienced a tremendous amount of distress from the sudden economic downturn, bank executives took drastic actions to remain in business while others suffered through acquisition by larger firms or underwent bankruptcy (Fisher &

Rosenblum, 2013). As a result, many banks turned to efficiency-seeking efforts to combat the highly challenging business environment (Schaeck & Cihák, 2014).

In the banking sector, leaders measure organizational performance using various ratios. Common performance indicators often reported in banking financial statements of banks highlight organizational performance and include return on assets, return on equity, and efficiency ratios. Return on assets is a primary ratio that illustrates the relation of income earned to the cost of assets in a business operation (Adam, 2014). The return on assets (ROA) performance indicator illustrates the utilization of assets to generate business income, whereas return on equity (ROE) ratios measure the amount of shareholder investment needed to generate a profit.

In addition to ROA and ROE, industry analyst uses operational efficiency ratios to measure bank performance. To calculate operational efficiency ratio, total noninterest expense is divided by total revenue (Weigand, 2015). For example, if a bank must invest 54 cents to earn $1.00, the efficiency ratio is 54%. The lower the efficiency ratio, the greater the return and, for the United States, the average efficiency ratio is approximately 59% (FDIC, 2017). Companies in the financial services sector rely on the strength of their financial position to achieve sustainable success and, as such, these firms may introduce strategies leading to the attainment of desired performance targets.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 contained an analysis of the foundational components pertinent to the research. More specifically, I highlighted essential elements relevant to the study including the background of the problem; the problem statement; the purpose statement;

the nature of the study; the conceptual framework; operational definitions; assumptions, limitations, and delimitations; the significance of the study; and a review of relevant literature. Section 2, presents a thorough description of the project components expanding on the role of the researcher, the research method and design, and the reliability and validity elements of a qualitative study. The findings of the study are detailed in section 3, as well as their application to professional practices, the implications for positive social change, recommendations for action, and future study directions, personal reflections, and conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

The review of literature conducted for the current study confirmed the general business problem related to the effects of outsourcing on HR performance. Identifying strategies to combat the negative impact of HR outsourcing may lead to optimizing performance and thereby improve multiple organizational outcomes including employee engagement and the overall performance of the respective enterprise. The findings of this study provide HR managers with strategies for reducing adverse performance from outsourcing. In this section, the details of the research method and design are detailed along with the implications for HR outsourcing and performance. The critical elements pertaining to the research are also described, including the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, and participant selection criteria, along with an overview of the data collection elements including population and sampling, a description of ethical research, and the instrument and techniques used in this research to gather data. The data analysis and validity aspects of the study are also addressed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to explore the strategies used by HR managers to mitigate the negative effects outsourcing has on HR staff performance. The target population was senior HR managers of financial services organizations with experience in successfully implementing HR outsourcing strategies while charged with accountability for managing HR performance in the United States. A study sample was drawn from this target population. The potential for positive social change includes greater effectiveness with HR outsourcing decisions, employment

stability positively affecting the lives of HR staff, and increased profitability of businesses contributing to a stable U.S. economy.

Role of the Researcher

In a formal doctoral study, the role of the researcher is to comprehend, adhere, and comply with the processes set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the respective university. For qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument responsible for executing the processes relating to the preparation and execution of the study interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researcher responsibilities include interviewing the participants, recording and transcribing the interview sessions, and analyzing and organizing the collected data into themes (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014). It is necessary for novice investigators to implement strategies, tools, and protocols that will ensure research integrity. Dependability increases when the researcher employs protocols to mitigate the effects of researcher bias and misunderstandings (Yin, 2014). In the current study, I served as the data collection instrument for the study and followed a consistent interview protocol in the execution of the research.

The *Belmont Report* provides a guideline for conducting studies with human subjects, and the focus is on the well-being of the participants (Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, & Khodyakov, 2015). I followed the protocol described in the *Belmont Report's Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978) to limit bias and mitigate ethical issues. The relationship between the

participant and researcher can be blurred, causing ethical concerns (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). To reduce ethical risks, participant involvement with the study must be voluntary. Moreover, in the current research, the population sample included participants with whom I have no personal or professional connection.

Researchers must also remove personal bias, or any preconceived expectations related to the study outcome (Yin, 2014). During the research process, personal bias can interfere with the ability of researcher to remain objectives. My background includes over 13 years of HR experience working for large retail and financial services organizations that outsourced varying degrees of their HR functions. To reduce the risk of such damage to the study outcome, I remained aware and alert of any personal bias throughout the research process.

Participants

Those considered eligible for participation in this study possessed experience and knowledge working in organizations in the financial services industry that outsource a degree of their HR functions. The target population was senior HR managers with experience in successfully implementing HR outsourcing strategies in the financial sector while accountable for managing HR performance in the United States. Selection criteria were (a) 10 years of HR experience with a financial organization that outsources selected HR functions; (b) fulfillment of an HR leadership role with overall accountability for driving HR performance, and (c) availability for video, face-to-face, or phone interviews. The participants are chiefs, senior vice presidents, or vice presidents of HR departments.

To attract eligible participants for this study, I implemented a purposeful sampling approach. Purposive sampling was appropriate for the research because it enabled me to use discretion and judgment in the selection of participants based on the study criteria (Elo et al., 2014). Purposeful sampling is suited for qualitative studies for which the researchers are interested in gaining insight from participants with the best knowledge to share regarding the phenomenon of interest. It is a method that researchers use to identify interviewees with the willingness and availability to participate while possessing strong communication skills to articulate their experiences in a descriptive manner (Palinkas et al., 2015). Due to the limited number of subject matter experts with the specific experience of leading organizations through HR outsourcing efforts, I also used snowball sampling to recruit an appropriate number of qualified study participants. This sampling strategy allows researchers to build a larger sample by asking current participants for recommendations of other qualified individuals from their networks (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Upon receiving approval from the IRB of Walden University (approval no. 05-25-18-0518405), I initiated the participant recruitment process. Using my connections from an online networking group to elicit interest in the research, a post was created to attract prospective candidates. An invitation was extended to all members of the LinkedIn network. The recruitment post outlined the criterion for study participation and voluntary nature of the study.

The success of a research study is dependent on the execution of protocols ensuring a professional relationship between the researcher and all participants. A

successful qualitative research study requires the investigator to establish a productive working relationship with participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To ensure the sample in the current research were entirely comfortable with the process of the study, I conducted multiple communications outlining the purpose of the research, the interview process, and the confidentiality of participation.

A consent form was sent to all potential participants on expressing eligibility and interest. Upon receipt of the signed consent form, I followed up with a phone call to arrange a date and time for a study interview. To encourage open and transparent responses during the interview process, I reminded the participants at the onset of each session of the confidential nature of their participation and the intent to preserve their anonymity. I followed a set of preestablished interview procedures and questions to ensure consistency among the sessions (Appendix A). Participant involvement was voluntary and the study abided by an at-will approach. The participants were advised they could withdraw from the study at any time without ramifications. The relationship between myself and the participants remained professional from the initial e-mail contact through all phases of the study.

Research Method and Design

Investigators may use various research methods to examine or explore a business problem. Three primary types are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method (Earley, 2014; Yin, 2014). Following assessment of available methodologies, I determined that a qualitative case study design was the most appropriate approach from which to explore the business problem of interest. This design allowed me to collect the in-depth expertise

and knowledge of the participants in order to identify HR strategies for mitigating the impact of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff.

Research Method

The primary goal of this study was to address the following research question: What strategies do HR managers implement to mitigate the adverse effects of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff? The qualitative methodology applied allowed exploration of this contemporary issue through the collection of data from individuals with experience in the area of study (Yin, 2014). Rich detail was drawn from the participants regarding their views, feelings, values, opinions, perceptions, and understanding of the phenomenon under study (Cronin, 2014). The qualitative method selected is a form of interpretative approach that supports the analysis of such data to design effective business strategies (Bailey, 2014). This detail I collected was necessary for identifying and determining effective strategies for reducing the impact of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff.

Other research methods were dismissed due to their limitations. Quantitative methods are focused on drawing conclusions through testing hypotheses between specific variables and comparing differences between study groups (Ioannidis et al., 2014). Although a quantitative method is valuable when analyzing small to large volumes of numeric data in order to confirm or disapprove a hypothesis (Barnham, 2015), limitations of the technique rendered it inappropriate for the current study. To research effective strategies aimed at decreasing negative consequences resulting from HR outsourcing, the primary data source was the participant descriptions of related events and opinions from

the study sample. The focus of the study was to gather descriptive rich content that cannot be drawn from an analysis of numeric data, thus the quantitative method was unsuitable for the research.

The mixed method approach was a viable option to explore the study; however, I dismissed the method because one of the core components of the mix method approach is irrelevant to the research. This component requires researchers to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data (Morse & Cheek, 2014). However, because the focus of the current study was to obtain rich content from the participants to define appropriate strategies for managing HR performance, the component of the quantitative method rendered a mix method approach inappropriate (Goldman et al., 2015).

Research Design

I used the multiple case study design for the study. A qualitative research method can be designed to support either a single or multiple case study (Yin, 2014). A single case study is focused on a single unit; however, achieving data saturation is at risk. Therefore, the single case design was not appropriate for the current research. Qualitative research requires an analysis of themes and gathering data until no new themes emerge, thereby reaching data saturation (Emmel, 2015). The advantage of a multiple case study is that researchers can present a comprehensive view of a phenomenon by gathering data from both primary and secondary sources (Yin, 2014).

Studies similar to the current one have involved case study designs to assess HR performance and determine strategies for managing risk. For example, Siew-Chen and

Vinayan (2016) employed a case study design to explore the implications of the recruitment process and outsourcing in the Malaysia job market. This design was a practical approach because it allowed the researchers to gather thematic information from descriptive insights provided by the participants surrounding the phenomenon. Moreover, Siew-Chen and Vinayan recommended future study to apply a multiple case study design to validate their initial findings and provide generalizable results. In a similar context, the current study involved exploration of perspectives and opinions of HR managers regarding their experiences leading outsourced functions. The aim was to extract the key strategies the implemented to manage HR performance with greater effectiveness. The multiple case study design was found to be the most suitable for this study.

I considered other qualitative research designs, including grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative, but they were unsuitable for this research. The grounded theory design involves extensive data gathering to develop or substantiate theory (Nilsson & Durkin, 2014), but the purpose of this study was not to develop or substantiate theory. A phenomenological design was a possible option to explore the research problem; however, this method focuses on understanding the essence of a phenomenon by establishing meanings from participant experiences (Rosado et al., 2014; Skiba & Disch, 2014). Although an element of this design appeared suitable for the current exploration, the goal was to identify strategies for managing HR performance versus understanding the meaning or essence of the phenomenon. Consequently, phenomenological design was eliminated from consideration for the research. A narrative research design is applied to increase understanding surrounding an individual life story

through a process of chronologically capturing participant narratives (Tobin & Tisdell, 2015). I eliminated the narrative design from consideration for the research because it is focused on the individual life story versus exploring multiple perspectives of the phenomenon of interest. Finally, ethnography is a qualitative inquiry for understanding a phenomenon in the context of specific social issues affecting a specific culture (Jerolmack & Khan, 2014). The intent of this study was not to explore the unique nature of a specific culture, rendering this design inappropriate for the research.

Population and Sampling

The strategies used to select a population sample in a research study are critical to the success of the investigation in terms of reliability and validity. Latiffi, Brahim, and Fathi (2016) emphasized the importance of developing selection criteria that is conducive to the selection of participants who possess direct knowledge and expertise on the research topic. The participant criteria used in the current study were (a) 10 years of HR experience in a financial organization that outsources selected HR functions; (b) fulfillment of an HR leadership role with overall accountability for driving HR performance; and (c) availability for video, face-to-face, or phone interviews.

The sampling method is essential to the research process because it helps the researcher procure qualified participants and ensures research integrity (Lotz, Jox, Borasio, & Fuhrer, 2015). A key objective of purposive sampling is to identify and select participants with the experience and knowledge to provide meaningful responses to interview questions toward answering the underlying research question (Lotz et al., 2015; Valizadeh, Dadkhah, Mohammadi, & Hassankhani, 2014). Unlike random sampling that

increases generalizability and thereby minimizes bias in the selection process (Palinkas et al., 2015), purposive sampling involves the application of criteria resulting in the selection of participants best suited for the respective study (Kandola, Banner, O'Keefe-McCarthy, & Jassal, 2014; Wilson, 2014). Purposive sampling was an appropriate method for the current research because it facilitated the identification and selection of participants with direct knowledge contributing to answering the research question (Frich, Rothing, & Berge, 2014).

The sample size for a research study is dependent on achieving data saturation. More important is the ability to extract the *richness* such as quality of data and *thickness* such as quantity of the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Robinson (2014) conveyed that an appropriate case study design will entail a sample size ranging from three to 16 participants. Fusch and Ness (2015) explained that researchers must balance ensuring a sample size that will attain data saturation with minimizing the risk of including too large a sample size, the latter rendering it challenging to extract and manage data. The range in sample size suggested by Robinson was the target in the current study.

Ethical Research

Ethical practice is a cornerstone for maintaining research integrity and participant well-being. Doctoral candidates submit their research to IRB to ensure the compliance of ethical standards dictated by U.S. federal regulations. Prior to the onset of the data collection process, I obtained approval of the Walden University IRB, Record Number 05-25-18-0518405, to conduct this study. Morse and Coulehan (2015) conveyed that the protection of participants' privacy is a primary focus of ethical research. To safeguard the

interests of study participants, the National Institutes of Health provides training for conducting ethical research involving human subjects. For awareness and to increase the ability to detect ethical issues involving human subjects, I completed this NIH training module on September 14, 2017, receiving foundational knowledge on the principles of ethical research (Appendix B).

I used the Walden University consent template for adult subjects in the study. In a digital economy, the nature of data sharing is highly complex and consent to use data a pivotal concern, contributing to a lack of participant confidence in the consent agreement (Alexander, 2014). The use of a consent form enhances participant confidence in the research process and ensures participants have full awareness surrounding all aspects of the study. The Walden University consent template was adapted to highlight the current details of the study.

Key components of the consent form include the background of the study, the research procedure, the research question, examples of interview questions, the nature of the study, risks and benefits, issues of privacy, and contact information. Participants selected for the study received a copy of the consent form via e-mail for their review. Additionally, multiple reminders were extended of the voluntary nature of participations, as well as the right of all participants to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. After collecting the consent forms the participants could withdraw from the study at any point prior to or during their interviews, simply by informing me of their decision via e-mail or through verbal communication.

I took precautionary measures to protect and safeguard the identity of the study participants and all materials with identifiable personal data have been stored appropriately in a locked compartment. Sanjari et al. (2014) asserted that researchers must protect participants from any harm resulting from study participation. These researchers advocate for the use of a secure data storage method, complete removal of identifiable data, and utilization of pseudonyms to protect participant identity. The Sanjari et al. recommendations were followed in the current study and pseudonyms replaced participant names to conceal their identities. A unique series of letters was assigned to each participant such as SUBA, SUBB, and SUBC. Kaczynski, Salmona, and Smith (2014) noted that best practice for safeguarding participant information, such as full names and e-mail addresses, is restrict such information to one document that can be stored in a locked compartment separate for all study documentations. In adherence to Walden requirements, all data collected in the current study will be securely stored for a minimum of 5 years and subsequently destroyed in a proper manner thereafter. Although the study does not directly generate value or compensation to the participants, the results may contribute to the development of strategies assisting the broader HR community to manage performance.

Data Collection Instruments

This exploratory research relies on the acquisition of text-based responses from participants to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomenon under study. Chowdhury (2015) explained that researchers apply a qualitative method and related techniques for the data collection process to capture intangible information and insights regarding the

human experience. I served as the data collection instrument in this current study because the primary source of data was undocumented information that required dialogue with the respondents to extract.

Reliability and validity of the research are core elements for assessing research quality. Yin (2014) as well as Yu, Abdullah, and Saat (2014) conveyed the importance of developing a predefined set of interview questions to mitigate researcher bias and increase study reliability. Consequently, a set of semistructured interview questions were established for this study that aligned with the research question (Appendix A).

Marshall and Rossman (2016) noted that researchers commonly use interviews as a data collection method in qualitative studies. They offer a unique opportunity for researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the research topics of interest by probing for insight beyond the surface (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). However, validity of the data collected is dependent on the ability of the researcher to accurately capture and transcribe participant perspectives.

Given the importance of data integrity and quality, the participants in this study were given the opportunity to verify their respective interview transcription and provide clarification or feedback. Both primary data through semistructured interviews and secondary data drawn from company documents were collected to enable triangulation of the results. The document review highlighted trends in HR performance both preimplementation and postimplementation of HR outsourcing programs. Yin (2014) agreed that a crucial component of case study design involves the triangulation of multiple sources of data to enhance construct.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection was effectuated in this study with semistructured interviews and document review. The target population received an e-mailed invitation to participate in the study, followed up with a phone call to provide an overview of the study and the next steps. Potential participants subsequently received an e-mail with the consent form instructing them on the process for return of the executed form prior to the study interview. As noted earlier, maintaining consistency was a primary concern with executing the interviews, thus a set of predetermined, semistructured, open-ended interview questions were used in all interview sessions.

The semistructured interview method was appropriate for this study because it provided a balance between allowing for flexibility while maintaining a high level of rigor. Semistructured interviews begin with a set of predeveloped questions; however, the technique remains flexible. Follow-up questions can be introduced to create a more robust and dynamic conversation (Morse, 2015). Baskarada (2014) asserted that semistructured interviews allow researchers to adjust the sessions with probing questions for added clarification or to ensure accurate comprehension of participant perspectives.

While semistructured interviews create an opportunity for investigators to gain rich content surrounding the research topic of interest (Chin, Evans, & Choo, 2015), disadvantages exist. Interviews may generate a significant amount of verbal data; therefore, it can be time consuming and complicated to analyze, as well as challenging to interpret (Chetty, Partanen, Rasmussen, & Servais, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

However, I introduced strategies to address these issues such as leveraging an audio recording device to ensure accurate documentation occurs during the interview sessions.

An essential component of data collection is researcher ability to accurately record and interpret the data. To facilitate this goal, member checking can be incorporated to allow participants an opportunity to verify the interview transcription increasing the validity of the study (Yin, 2014). Member checking adds a layer of critical control ensuring accurate capture of the interview content while allowing participants to clarify or add additional perspectives (Morse, 2015; Yin, 2014). Upon the conclusion of each interview, I completed the transcription of the sessions and forwarded the transcription to each respective participant for verification. The participants were given 1 week to verify the accuracy of the transcription and provide feedback prior to data analysis. The NVivo statistical computer software was used to aid efficient data analysis.

Validity and reliability are nonnegotiable elements of a research study. Triangulation is a strategy for validating research findings via multiple methods of data collection, thereby strengthening construct validity (Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, & Gonzalez, 2018; Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Brooks and Normore (2015) advanced that a technique referred to as document analysis is an excellent method of reviewing and assessing materials related to a topic under study. More specifically, documents pertaining to related policy, and reporting, as well as general company materials, may be useful in the exploration of business problems (Gultekin, Anumba, & Leicht, 2014). However, Lomborg and Bechmann (2014) warned

that researchers might be unable to obtain internal documents due to company policies regarding the external use of proprietary data.

In the current study, I reviewed company documents including materials illustrating HR performance, as well strategies HR managers have used to implement outsourcing programs. I requested relevant internal documents from the study participants, assuring them of the confidentiality controls in place for maintaining individual and corporate privacy. The study findings are summarized and presented in aggregate, adhering to this privacy process. All documents used in the data collection process have been stored in a locked cabinet for a minimum of 5 years, per the requirements of Walden University.

Data Organization Technique

The management of all data, including content organization, logging interview notes, and interview transcription, was performed solely me. I followed the strict procedures outlined in the interview protocol (Appendix A) to maintain a high standard of consistency for all interview sessions; thus, each participant responded to the same predefined, open-ended questions. In addition to handwritten notes, interview sessions were recorded using an audio recording device to ensure the transcription was reflecting participant responses verbatim.

Participant and company names were coded with pseudonyms such as SUBA, SUBB and Company A, or Company B. Applying pseudonyms to protect participant identity limits the risk associated with a data breach. At the conclusion of the interview sessions, I used NVivo 12® to perform the data analysis of all interview transcription.

Data Analysis

A qualitative study incorporates methods and techniques to analyze text-based responses with the goal of gaining a clearer understanding of the problem of interest. When interviews serve as the primary source of data, it is imperative the researcher use such tools and techniques to facilitate data management and analysis. Farooq and de Villiers (2017) recommended using an audio recording device to increase the degree of accuracy and facilitate an efficient transcription process. Data collection in this current study followed the recommendations of these researchers.

As noted earlier, following the collection and verification of the raw data generated from the participant interview responses, I used the NVivo software to complete the analysis. Castleberry (2014) suggested the use of NVivo as a tool to assist with the processing of qualitative data. Through the categorization and labeling of collected data, researchers can identify themes and ascertain the thematic structure of the analysis. NVivo allows efficient data input, data coding, text analysis, theme generation, and the creation of charts and diagrams for illustrative purposes (Castleberry, 2014). I input the raw data into NVivo by response category and subcategory. The software processed the text into groups and reported the frequency of text occurrence, which led to the development of themes.

Secondary data, such as company records and documents were analyzed in this study for their alignment with emerging themes. The case study design allows for multiple sources and the process of data triangulation to enhance study reliability and credibility of the study (Dev & Kisku, 2016). The objective is to categorize participant

responses into meaningful themes addressing the research question (Engkasan, Ng, & Low, 2015). I reviewed secondary sources and compared the data to the coded themes from the interviews to determine alignment. All data collection, including the interview notes and contact information, will be securely stored in a locked cabinet for a minimum of 5 years to comply with the requirements of Walden University. All physical and electronic material will be properly destroyed following this 5-year record retention period.

Reliability and Validity

Doctoral candidates must adhere to a rigorous process to ensure reliability and validity of study findings. As advanced by Yin (2014), researchers must assure that all reliability and validity components are addressed to legitimize research results. This current study incorporated several strategies to enhance reliability and validity.

Reliability

The concept of research reliability aligns with the notion of dependability. More specifically, factors contributing to dependability center on the ability of others to replicate the study outcome (Peyrovi, Raiesdana, & Mehrdad, 2014). In a case study, reliability is verified when other researchers follow the identical *processes,* such as the research procedure and protocols, to replicate the results (Yin, 2014). Critical strategies that support the reliability of the study require researchers to take meticulous and detailed notes while analyzing documentation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). One component to maintaining reliability and validity of a study is ensuring permission for reprinting

materials authored by other scholars (Appendix C). All material utilized in this study has received appropriate approval for its use.

In the study, I used multiple tools and procedures were incorporated into the study to capture comprehensive and precise information. The member checking process contributed to reliability of the findings by allowing participants to validate their respective interview transcripts and provide feedback to ensure the data were accurately reflective of their viewpoints (Harvey, 2015). The interview protocol, member checking process, and leveraging of technology to record the study interviews all enhanced reliability of the research. By employing these strategies, quality standards are upheld to attain an optimal level of study reliability.

Validity

The primary source of data in this study is the participant interviews; therefore, content integrity was imperative for maintaining quality and validity of the study findings. Reliability of a study is concerned with data accuracy and a precision approach to interpreting data in a manner that will allow research replication (Peyrovi et al., 2014), whereas validity is concerned with authenticity and credibility of the results (Morse & McEvoy, 2014; Yin, 2014). Scholars have found reliability and validity is achieved in qualitative research when the results demonstrate dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Cope, 2014; Yin, 2014).

Dependability. The dependability of a qualitative study refers to its trustworthiness, which under similar conditions, replication of the study generates the same results (Yin, 2014). Cope (2014) posited that dependability is achieved when other

researchers agree with the decisions made throughout the research process and can replicate the findings. Protocols were introduced in the current study to increase accuracy and mitigate researcher bias. More specifically, I maintained detailed notes and audit trails justifying the research decisions made throughout the study process. Rigorous research strategies, such as the use of an interview protocol, member checking process, and notes capturing the data collection and analysis process, all increase dependability of the study.

Credibility. In qualitative studies, credibility is attained when the researcher accurately captures participant experiences and the results are verified by the participants (Cope, 2014). In the consent form and after the form was returned by the participants in this study, all members of the study sample were informed that the interview sessions would be recorded to ensure data were captured verbatim and to facilitate transcription. Each participant received an e-mail of the interview transcription for their respective interviews to facilitate the member checking process. As noted earlier, member checking is a process engaging participants in validation of the content during the interview process (Morse, 2015; Yin, 2014). The rigor demonstrated through the process of member checking ensures accurate reflection of the views, opinions, and knowledge of the interviewees surrounding the topic under study.

Transferability. In social research, a common test of validity test is to measure the extent to which the study findings can be generalized across other populations and settings (Yin, 2014). Transferability can be improved by employing research techniques that increase transparency in the research process, adhere to research protocols, and

ensure data saturation (Yin, 2014). In the current study, semistructured interviews were conducted with an interview protocol (Appendix A) that ensure consistency across all sessions. Emmel (2015) noted that data saturation is established when no new themes can be derived from the interview data. Accordingly, in this study, I continued to gather interview data until no new themes emerged.

Confirmability. The concept of confirmability is similar to dependability; however, the difference is that confirmability emphasizes on the degree to which readers are able to corroborate the analysis of the researcher (Cope, 2014). Yin (2014) asserted that confirmability is established by ensuring that research findings are reflective of participant responses while mitigating researcher bias. In the current study, the member checking process allowed participants adequate time to review their interview transcriptions to guarantee confirmability was achieved. To decrease the risk of overreliance on a single data source, data triangulation enhanced study validity of the study. Methodological triangulation reduces such bias by allowing the establishment of alignment, broadening understanding of the phenomenon under study through the validation of multiple sources (Cope, 2014). In addition to interviews, document analysis was performed in the current study for purposes of methodological triangulation and validity enhancement.

Transition and Summary

All of the described preparation activities, Sections 1 and 2, conducted for this study were designed to build the credibility of, and justification for this research. More specifically, Section 2 provides an overview of the fundamental components of the

project has been provided including processes, protocols, and methods for obtaining data and executing the data analysis of the study. In Section 3, the findings of the study will be presented along with potential business applications for professionals, the implications of the findings for positive social change, recommendations for future study, and a conclusion remark.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to explore the strategies used by HR managers to mitigate the negative effects outsourcing has on HR staff performance. The study sample included six senior HR leaders with experience leading through HR outsourcing initiatives in a financial institution. Of the six participants, four held executive positions in their respective companies in the role of chief HR officer. The remaining two participants also held senior level roles as a director of benefits administration and vice president of HR business partner. After conducting the analysis of the interview responses and secondary data, the results revealed three central themes: (a) training is critical to maintaining a high degree of HR performance, (b) performance management using informal or formal methods ensures HR staff are accountable for performance outcomes, and (c) timely communication mitigates an adverse impact of HR outsourcing on the performance of HR staff.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question of this study was "What strategies do HR managers use to mitigate the negative effects of outsourcing on HR staff performance?" To explore this research query, a qualitative research method was applied, with a multiple case study design. HR leaders operating in the financial services sector in the United States were invited to participate in the research. The goal of the study was to identify strategies with the potential to mitigate the risk of HR outsourcing adversely affecting the performance of HR staff. Therefore, interaction with the participants was required to

extract knowledge and insights surrounding the research focus. Six one-on-one, semistructured phone interviews were conducted with participants meeting the sample selection criteria of the study. The criteria were designed to ensure participants had background leading HR outsourcing efforts and implementing strategies to mitigate the inherent risk of adverse staff performance. All participants answered the same predefined, semistructured interview questions (Appendix A). Additionally, methodological triangulation was performed to identify new or confirm existing themes and ensure completeness of the data.

The following three key themes emerged from the data analysis performed in this study: (a) effective training, (b) communication, and (c) performance management. All participants agreed on these themes. Training strategies are essential to ensure that HR staff are prepared for the changing roles following vendor assumption of the outsourced administrative activities. Effective communication is vital element to the success of HR outsourcing, and the implementation of performance systems to concurrently manage HR staff and vendor performance is pivotal.

Application of Transaction Cost Theory

TCT was the fundamental framework used for exploring the research question. This theoretical construct is often used to aid leaders in making strategic decisions toward achieving economic or efficiency benefits (Coase, 1937). For instance, HR outsourcing decisions are influenced by two primary core tenets: cost and efficiency.

Transaction cost. The outsourcing decisions of organizational leader are guided by various objectives; however, the primary driver remains centered on cost benefits.

Nguyen and Chang (2017) concluded that transaction cost gains are achievable by outsourcing noncore HR activities. Similar to Nguyen and Chang's finding, six participants in this study confirmed that HR outsourcing decisions are influenced by cost factors, and the achievement of those cost benefits are attained by outsourcing administrative activities including payroll, benefits administration, and high-volume recruitment tasks. However, the participants in the study also identified two distinct perspectives on transaction cost.

Some organizational leaders use outsourcing as a strategic tool to comply with an executive leadership mandate for expense control efforts. Although cost benefit is a driver of outsourcing, 50% of the participants in the current study reported that decisions to outsource HR functions were based on expense reduction efforts. They further reported that some HR leaders opted to outsource due to financial constraints forcing them to implement strategies enabling the organization to reduce operating expense. From a cost-benefit perspective, SUBA explained,

> I know the return on investment [ROI] that I'm going to receive by changing my cost structure within this payroll provider is probably a ROI that is close to 500% and the cost of it will be about a $100,000 in implementation.

This response exemplifies the cost analysis HR leaders perform to determine the potential cost benefit from outsourcing. Spending $100,000 to achieve a return of investment of 500% was deemed a cost advantage for SUBA's organization; therefore, the outsourcing decision grounded in cost reduction. Consistent with Agburu et al.'s (2017) research, all of the participants reported that third-party vendors have the capability and expertise to

execute some HR activities at lower cost than is expended to maintaining the functions in-house.

Degree of asset specificity. Findings from this study indicate that HR functions providing unique value to an organization should be retained and managed by in-house staff. Harmonizing activities related to HR core competencies with the overall organizational strategy may positively contribute to the company culture and enhance competitive advantage for the firm (Khan & Mushtaq, 2015). For example, SUBB stated, "I want the one-on-one contact because it solidifies our culture that, we are here for you and we want to help you." SUBD emphasized, "I want people sitting on my business team meetings to have an HR representative there that can consult with me, coach, and developed my teams. That will be an area that continues to grow." Edvardsson and Teitsdóttir (2015) explained that HR activities dedicated to driving business strategy, such as designing HR policies and managing employee relations, and generalist responsibilities, are core HR responsibilities that should be managed by in-house staff. In alignment with these scholars' point of view, all participants in the current study reported that strategic HR functions focused on managing the business relationship and are internal customer-facing positions such as HR business partners should be retained in-house and controlled by internal HR staff.

Efficiency. A fundamental tenet of TCT is the attainment of efficiency. According to Bharadwaj et al. (2010), the framework involves exploring the connection between client and service providers against multiple dimensions of efficiency, coordination, and governance. When favorable conditions are met, such as the ability to

gain efficiency, ease of coordinating efforts, and ease of governing these vendor activities, HR outsourcing is an attractive strategic option. All participants in the current study reported that although cost drivers influenced outsourcing decisions, some HR functions were outsourced partly out of necessity because it is more efficient to offload the activities onto a third-party provider. Reflecting on vendor capabilities, SUBB asserted, "It would be impossible for us to do taxes and I do not even have the knowledge to do that and get it right, so it makes it more efficient to hire outside." SUBA suggested that not only does outsourcing generate efficiencies, but the organization benefits from gaining expertise in a niche area that does not exist in-house.

Key Themes

The collected data from the study revealed three primary themes integral in managing HR performance with the concurrent practice of outsourcing. The training theme reflected two subthemes: (a) HR training and (b) employee training. With regard: to the communication theme, data analysis revealed three subthemes: (a) communicate to gain leadership buy-in, (b) sequence the communication approach using a top-down messaging strategy, and (c) use a nonsequencing approach updating all employees simultaneously. For the performance management theme, two distinct dimensions emerged: (a) HR performance management and (b) vendor-related performance management practices.

Theme 1: Effective training. Organizations that outsource HR functions experience a degree of disruption that impacts the HR role. Researchers have found that establishment of a strong retained organization is vital for managing the successful

delivery of the outsourced services (Goldberg, Kieninger, Satzger, & Fromm, 2017). Outsourcing may be a strategic choice for sustaining competitive advantage; however, there is a period of chaotic disruption that employees experience from the confusion of new roles and responsibilities (Maciejczyk, 2016). The pitfalls that many organizational leaders experience with outsourcing engagements involve a lack of training, knowledge of best practices, and individual HR motives (Susomrith & Brown, 2017). Similar to the findings reported by Susomrith and Brown (2017), participants from the current study reported that the lack of training significantly impacted overall HR performance. SUBA emphasized, "the failure of a lot of outsourcing situations is when that training is inadequate." Training is a principal tool used by HR leaders to ensure HR practices and processes continue to run smoothly in the presence of outsourcing.

HR training. Analysis of the interview data revealed that training is focused on two areas: HR role-specific training and general employee training. It is important for training to facilitate knowledge transfer to prevent issues related to a loss of knowledge during the outsourcing transition phase (Maciejczyk, 2016). As new processes are developed in partnership with the outsourcing vendor, the interaction between retained HR staff and the service provider continue to exist. All participants of this current study described the retained HR role as a more internal, customer-facing role responsible for resolving HR escalations, communicating changes to HR practices, and training employees on new processes in the HR domain. Similar to the findings reported by Patel, Budhwar, Witzemann, and Katou (2017), data analysis from this study indicated that

communication using multiple channels has a positive effect on the HR outsourcing engagement. SUBF illustrated the importance of this by saying:

> A component of educating our HR team is how to do business in an outsourced world. So we used to do it this way, now there is a whole new design to work, so it's about process redesign to make sure everybody understands how the process works and who's accountable for what.

Training for HR staff follows a different path, depending on the organization size and the structure of the HR team. The findings in this study suggest that small financial services organizations with fewer than 500 employees rely on the HR team to provide training relating to HR matters. SUBA and SUBB are employed in a small financial services organization and both reported that HR team members receive training from the third-party vendor through formal training or on-the-job training, meaning learning by doing. Four participants (SUBC, SUBD, SUBE, and SUBF) working in a larger organization, defined as a company with 500 or more employees, using a mixture of vendor-led training and a train-the-trainer approach. All study participants stated that the general tactic of their organization was to provide training for HR staff first, which is focused on managing through the new HR process and how to engage with vendors before introducing training to the balance of the employee population.

Employee training. Data from this study revealed that leaders have several preferred training avenues for engaging with employees (non-HR staff) once outsourcing is introduced**.** Employees are key stakeholders in HR outsourcing strategies because the services and products outsourced impact employees in various ways. As new HR services

or processes are introduced, employee training and education is critical. An effective method of staff training includes courses or seminars to enable a smooth transition in the transfer of knowledge from outsourcing providers to in-house staff (Kahouei, Farrokhi, Abadi, & Karimi, 2016). Four participants (SUBA, SUBB, SUBD, and SUBE) reported that training is delivered to all employees by the outsourcing vendor; however, there are instances where they all believed it is more appropriate for training to be delivered by internal HR staff. SUBE described the training process for large-scale HR process changes in the following manner:

> For something as large as our platform change that's going to be a huge change—it'll affect every employee—and yes, the vendors are engaged in those trainings. In some cases, we will also have our HR business partners. Each of the teams have a follow-up session at their leadership table or offer people manager calls for those teams. So, it really depends on the size and complexity and how we decide to do that.

Based on participant responses, the approach for training employees differs based on the organization size and specific HR structure. All of the study participants reported that employee training was conducted with some form of conference servicing system such as WebEx. The findings revealed additional training paths than reported by Kahouei et al. (2016). This current study involved a mix of large and small financial services organizations; thus, the results may differ from those of Kahouei et al. due to various organization-specific factors influencing training decisions such as company size, culture, and type of outsourcing arrangements. SUBB and SUBF commented that they work in

relatively small financial service organizations; therefore, they prefer the in-person training approach. To provide added HR support during a period of chaos, SUBB noted that one-on-one training delivered on an as-needed basis are preferred.

The participant responses also indicate that employee training is determined on geographical footprint of the organization. In cases where employees reside in multiple locations, including in other states, WebEx video conferencing or phone conference calls were the preferred methods for delivering employee training as advanced by SUBB, SUBC, SUBD, SUBE, and SUBF. For smaller scale HR changes that are less complex, SUBB and SUBD recommended e-mailing job aids and instructions directly to employees as an effective and efficient method of providing relevant and timely information.

Theme 2: Communication. Another theme emerging from the data pertains to the effects of communication on management challenges. In an IT outsourcing study, researchers found that a lack of communication significantly contributed to management problems when outsourcing was initiated (Goldberg et al., 2017). McIvor (2016) also claimed that engaging with key stakeholders from the onset of an outsourcing enables organizational leaders to address stakeholder resistance before it becomes a hindrance to success. Moreover, Beuelen, Tiwari, and van Heck (2011) posited that providing a clear message and setting expectations for both outsource vendors and retained staff is important during the transition phase.

Leadership buy-in. To combat the potential confusion arising from a lack of communication, all participants reported the importance of involving key stakeholders

early in the outsourcing process. In support of McIvor's (2016), all participants in the current study described communication as a crucial tool for securing support and buy-in from the executive leadership team. SUBE explained,

> One of my role with the executive team was to make sure they knew what was coming ahead of time, get their input, crafting what the organization needed and the goals that we were going through and then just maintaining an ongoing conversation with those business executives to ensure that their teams and their divisions are supported and developed.

However, the approach to communicating the value of outsourcing and the progress of an outsourcing initiative varied by the organization.

Sequencing communication approach. The majority of the participants (SUBA, SUBC, SUBD, SUBE, and SUBF) agreed that the preferred communication style follows more of a sequencing and top-down cascading method when reporting outsourcing progress and process updates. However, the percentage of agreement does not equate to 100% because some participants believe that the communication approach depend on the scale of the change. For example, SUBA explained that, for more complex outsourcing engagements with a significant implications for HR processes:

> Start at the highest levels. So, all this has to be bought in at the very top of the company because it's a management tool at the end of the day and then you take it down to the various layers of the company, but I think the biggest thing is you got to get the top of the company to really understand why we're doing this, because if they see the value in the tool and we'll use the tool, then you know the senior

manager level down to the department manager and then down to the employee level will cascade a lot better and that's a really critical point.

***Nonsequencing approach*.** General consensus was evident among the study sample in this research that top-down communication may be the preferred approach when introducing new HR processes or initiatives. In alignment with Garcia-Carbonell, Martin-Alcazar, and Sanchez-Gardey (2015), effective communication strategy is designed to fit a purpose. Regardless of the approach taken, information must reach all levels of the organization. In some cases, a top-down communication approach may be appropriate to gain leadership support and buy-in; however, there may be scenarios where it is possible to remove the hierarchy barrier and merely communicate the updates to all employees concurrently. Consequently, SUBB and SUBD suggested that the communication approach depends on the scale and complexity of the outsourcing initiative.

Theme 3: Performance management. Outsourcing strategies and its promise for generating exceptional results have enticed many organizational leaders to rapidly adopt the practice. Glaister (2014) found that HR outsourcing may achieve cost-saving objectives; however, retained HR practitioners have been unable to develop the desired strategic capabilities. Patel et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study exploring the impact of HR outsourcing on the role of retained HR employees within the German market and found results consistent with the Glaister (2014) research. More specifically, only a small number of participants believed their role evolved to a more strategic position to any great extent, while the majority (more than one half) revealed adopting

strategic responsibilities over solely a limited scope. The remaining one third found that HR outsourcing did not enable them to assume strategic responsibilities (Patel et al., 2017). Managing HR outsourcing engagements with a goal of achieving optimal HR performance is a daunting task. Scholars have concluded that outsourcing some functions to a third-party service provider blurs the separation of accountability and responsibilities between clients and vendors (Maciejczyk, 2016). From a stakeholder perspective, the performance level third-party vendors is assessed holistically accountability resides with the retained in-house staff with responsibility for managing the overall HR function including outsourced activities (Patel et al., 2017). The data analysis revealed that a robust performance management approach is essential for managing HR performance (Table 3).

Table 3
Performance Management Strategy

Emergent Theme	Participants in Agreement	Percentage of respondent agreement
HR Performance	SUBA, SUBB, SUBC, SUBD, SUBE, SUBF	100%
Informal HR Performance Model	SUBA, SUBB	33%
Formal HR Performance Model	SUBC, SUBD, SUBE, SUBF	67%
Vendor Performance	SUBA, SUBB, SUBC, SUBD, SUBE, SUBF	100%
Informal Vendor Performance Metrics	SUBA, SUBB	33%
Formal Vendor Performance Metrics	SUBC, SUBD, SUBE, SUBF	67%

Human resources. The transfer of function ownership to a third-party vendor has contributed to shifts in the manner in which HR performance is measured. Although these vendors are managing selected HR functions, the performance of retained in-house staff is measured on holistic results including those contributed by the vendors. All respondents in the current study reported that the interconnectedness of preserved HR staff functions and vendor responsibilities led leadership to design a performance management model incorporating results from both external service providers and in-house HR staff. This approach, however, varies by the size of the HR team. The HR team within the organization employing SUBB consist of a chief HR officer and a HR

generalist thus performance management process is designed with a more informal approach. SUBB explained,

> In terms of assessing HR Performance, no metrics are woven into the performance management process formally, just because I know what she does because I deal with it every day. We are not as formal as a bigger organization. If something goes wrong, I'm going to know it immediately. There is some level of performance management, but due to the small size, it's more informal.

Participants in this study described contrasting viewpoints pointing out that in some cases a formal performance management approach is preferred including satisfaction surveys, internal and external customer surveys, and divisional surveys. Furthermore, HR objectives were adapted to reflect changing HR expectations, including vendor-related performance results, because some HR functions were outsourced (SUBA and SUBB) while retaining in-house oversight for the delivery of those functions. SUBA explained,

> If there was some failure performance where the vendor was the failure or they didn't leverage the vendor in the way that they should, that can find its way into their goals. All their performance goals are tied to their outcomes and their outcomes are tied to the vendor relationship.

This example supports the notion that HR performance is measured more holistically based on the overall effectiveness of HR delivery including those tasks executed by a third-party vendor.

Vendor performance management. Scholars have found that the management of outsourcing initiatives must incorporate some form of predetermined metrics to ensure vendors are held accountable for specific outcomes. Susomrith and Brown (2017) argued that successful management of outsourced HR practices requires the development of predetermined metrics and monitoring those metrics to evaluate success. Contradicting the Susomrith and Brown conclusion, some participants in the current study revealed that no formal metrics were defined to measure vendor service levels; however, vendor performance continued to be managed effectively (SUBA, SUBB). SUBA described the informal approach in the following manner,

> You do have, usually, a very tight relationship with your agents and with your rep and believe me, when something's broken, there's always a person to go to and they do take your feedback. It's just that it seems to be more reactive than a proactive outreach approach.

The relationships HR practitioners establish with vendor partners allow effective resolution of quality and performance issues, despite lacking formal metrics. SUBB opined that, because those filling retained HR roles partner closely with the vendor to execute HR practices, informal feedback and regular vendor meeting were adequate for measuring vendor performance and holding vendors accountable for expected delivery outcomes. However, in some cases, participants reported that it was necessary to formalize metrics to periodically gauge the level of performance achieved by vendors (SUBC, SUBD, SUBE, and SUBF). More specifically, SUBD commented,

> Each of the outsourced items often had metrics, whether it was customer service or transaction or processes that needed to be maintained at a certain level and that's what the internal group was challenged to do it. Afterward, they ensured we were meeting the business groups' expectations.

More importantly, all of the participants in this study reported that outsourcing engagements produced the desired outcomes without HR performance deteriorating when outsourcing infiltrated the HR ecosystem. Hence, effective vendor-performance management can be achieved with the multiple formal or informal model of performance evaluation methods.

Applications to Professional Practice

The debate surrounding the effectiveness of outsourcing as a strategic management tool continues to elicit polarizing responses from supporters and critics. Despite the tangible, positive results that can be achieved through HR outsourcing, the implications for overall HR performance represent a significant challenge for businesses. Identifying strategies to mitigate the negative impact of HR outsourcing on performance is an ongoing challenge business researchers have yet to address. Studies have positively linked HR performance to various organizational dimensions including financial outcomes (Saha et al., 2016; Theriou & Chatzoglou, 2014); employees productivity (Wojtczuk-Turek, 2017); organizational commitment (Ihionkhan, & Aigbomian, 2014; Maheshwari & Vohra, 2015); and employee engagement (Sattar, Ahmad, & Hassan, 2015). There is tremendous value to effectively managing HR performance within the U.S. financial services sector because declining performance could equate to a negative

impact on an entire industry that significantly contributes to stability of the U.S. economy.

This qualitative, multiple-case study included interviews with HR executives within six U.S. financial services organizations. The purpose was to explore the strategies used by HR managers to mitigate the negative effects of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff. Scholars have found that outsourcing may not necessarily enable HR staff to adopt more strategically oriented responsibilities (Patel et al., 2017). Targeted strategies must be introduced to increase the success of achieving a high level of HR performance. Consistent with existing literature, training, communication, and effective performance management are essential strategies that could potentially aid HR leaders in the effective management of overall HR performance. The findings of this study reveal that training has focused on educating HR employees on new practices and procedures with less emphasis placed on the development of new skills required for effective management of outsourcing initiatives. However, Agburu et al. (2017) advocated for additional targeted training for retained in-house staff so they could develop skills needed for managing such activities. Consistent with the Agburu et al. conclusion, effective communication across business division was founded in this current study to reduce the adverse impact of outsourcing on the performance of retained HR staff. Executing these strategies was founded to range across a broad spectrum from formal practices to informal solutions. All participants in this study agreed that communication was critical to securing buy-in from stakeholders on HR outsourcing decisions; however, communication HR updates followed multiple paths. For instance, many respondents shared that the top-down,

sequential communication approach was the preferred method for cascading HR progress. Proper performance management activities incorporating clear objectives and success criteria were found to be helpful for measuring various performance dimensions including staff and vendor performance (Agburu et al. 2017). The purpose of this study was achieved and the following strategies were identified that may positively contribute to improve business management practices:

1.) Targeted training for HR staff and employees is essential to ensuring overall performance is delivered at an optimal level.
2.) Effective communication strategies must be developed to fit their purpose.
3.) Appropriate performance management practices are pivotal to assess HR performance in a holistic manner including metrics to evaluate vendor performance.

Quartey (2013) raised concern over the pasts research focus on outsourcing and its the impact on business outcomes rather than the implications for staff performance. The general consensus among scholars is that the HR function has a significant effect on various organizational levels that could ultimately affect the competitive advantage of the enterprise. By implementing the described strategies, HR leaders may effectively increase their ability to manage HR performance when faced with outsourcing challenges. The results of this study may assist HR practitioners confronted by outsourcing decisions providing an opportunity to apply effective strategies toward anticipating and managing HR performance-related risks in a proactive fashion. Business leaders may also use the

study findings to address management issues resulting from the decision to outsource selected HR activities.

Implications for Social Change

A primary goal of this study was to create positive social change for businesses, individuals, and communities. From a business perspective, organizational leaders knowledgeable in effective outsourcing strategies for managing selected HR activities may improve the degree of sustainable success experienced by their respective enterprises (Li, Okoroafo, & Gammoh, 2014). The HR roles retained in-house are typically elevated by such action, offering higher job opportunities for an increase in income beneficial for employees. With new promotional opportunities and the potential for increasing income, the employees may achieve a better quality of life.

From a social perspective, increased demand for outsourcing may affect the expansion of global markets, specifically those in less developed countries. According to Williamson (1981) TCT ownership of organizational capability is no longer bound by geographic boundaries because third-party vendors can often produce results for more efficient and cost effective. Chipalkatti, Buchanan, Koch, and Doh (2014) surveyed 151 companies and reported that 60% had plans for the expansion of to gain an economic and competitive advantage. The result of successful HR outsourcing engagement may lead to possibly increase in offshoring of HR activities to lower cost and less developed countries. Relocating of these HR activities to less developed countries may increase more job opportunities in those markets thereby improving the standards of those living in poorer, less developed countries.

Recommendations for Action

The objective of this study was to explore and identify effective strategies that leaders can leverage to mitigate the impact of outsourcing on performance of HR staff within the U.S. financial services sector. The findings reveal that the outsourcing of administrative activities increases HR capacity to focus more on strategic tasks. The evidence reveals that HR outsourcing has become a strategic imperative leading to positive outcomes. However, the results of this study confirm the Galister (2014) finding that HR performance may be negatively affected from the inability of existing HR staff to pivot toward strategic roles. The current research provided strategies to support in-house HR staff as they work to transition into their new roles shedding administrative responsibilities while assuming higher level strategic roles.

Three key strategies were highlighted in this study; specifically, training to support HR staff as they adapt to their changing roles, effective communication, and performance management. Depending on the complexity of the HR outsourcing engagement, it is recommended that business leaders should identify and select those HR strategies addressing the needs of businesses that seeking to mitigate the impact of HR outsourcing on staff performance. This study revealed three primary themes for mitigating the negative effects of HR outsourcing on staff performance, the approach for executing these strategies may differ base on organization size and unique challenges. Tailoring the strategy identified in this study to the specific needs and goals of the respective organization will ensure that the solution addresses the problems specific to the enterprise. It is my hoped that to increasing the utilization of the study findings will

extend beyond academia to benefit the broader community. Participants in this study will receive a summary document detailing the outcome of the research that they may share with their network and colleague. I will also seek appropriate venues within which to communicate the findings of this study in professional settings including my place of employment, HR conferences, and other professional forums.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of the study was to explore the strategies used by HR managers to mitigate the negative effects of HR outsourcing on the performance of HR staff within the context of the U.S. financial services sector. The study contributed to the growing body of knowledge surrounding the topic of HR outsourcing and, more explicitly, highlighted strategies with the potential to better manage the performance of HR staff. Recommendations for future study include (a) exploring HR outsourcing and its impact on the performance from the internal customer point of view; (b) expanding the scope of this current study to include industries beyond financial services; and (c) leveraging other research methods or data collection techniques to further explore this topic of study.

This study focused on gathering data from HR leaders regarding strategies to manage performance of HR staff; however, the performance level of HR with outsourcing introduced has not been measured from an internal customer perspective. HR plays an integral role in providing HR expertise to internal customers; therefore, it is imperative to assess performance from the perspective of internal customer. Moreover, this research study was limited to the financial services sector and, as a result, the findings may be specific to this industry adversely affecting generalizability. Finally, the

study leverage the qualitative method of research in order to appropriately to explore the research question; however, quantitative and mix method decisions may provide statistical results that deepen understanding of the impact of HR outsourcing on the performance of staff. Consequently, related research may benefit from applying these designs to examine correlations among multiple variables relating to the topic of HR outsourcing and the performance of internal staff.

The limitations of this research included the sample size involving only six participants which may also generalizability of the findings. Thus, future study with larger study samples from industries outside the financial services sector may contribute significant findings to the body of existing research. Another limitation of the current study the qualitative method in terms of participants allocating sufficient time to provide thorough responses during the interviews. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies incorporate qualitative methods allowing participants the flexibility to dedicate the time needed to be thoughtful and thorough in their responses during data collection.

Reflections

The doctoral journey has been one of the most challenging, enlightening, and rewarding life experiences I have ever encountered. As a systematic approach to exploring a specific research question, I acquired new skills enabling me to successfully execute a doctoral level study of utmost quality. The research topic is an area of familiarity for me; therefore, it was important to introduce needed strategies while remaining objective throughout the research process.

Prior to conducting the literature review process for the study, I held preconceived ideas and beliefs surrounding the topic of HR outsourcing and its impact on the performance of HR staff. However, the literature review process was both extensive and significantly informative challenging my existing beliefs and understanding of the research topic. The literature review was instrumental in the research process because it helps me deepen my understanding and gain foundational knowledge surrounding the study topic of interest.

Learning the various qualitative data collection techniques was invaluable to this research experience. Personal bias and any preconceived understanding of the research topic can influence participant responses during the data collection process with leading questions or introducing ideas affecting the participant perspectives. Yin (2014) advanced that it is advantageous to implement strategies enabling the researchers to remain consistent and remove personal bias throughout the research process. Marshall and Rossman (2016) advocated for researchers establishing a trusting and professional working relationship with participants. In this current study, an interview protocol allowed me to execute the sessions with a predefined set of semistructured interview questions, thereby maintaining objectivity by mitigating personal bias. This consistent approach to engaging participants also coupled with the high degree of confidentiality , created a comfortable interview environment for the participants rendering them more willing to express insightful information.

Upon completion of this study, my beliefs regarding the research topic had changed. Despite many year experience within the HR field, my understanding of the

implications of HR outsourcing on the performance of HR staff was limited because I did not have direct experience leading outsourcing efforts. The outcome of this study has increased my appreciation for the complexity of managing HR performance during the period of disruption when strategies such as HR outsourcing are introduced. Overall, the doctoral experience has taught me many valuable life lessons including (a) obstacles come and go, but perseverance is the key to overcoming barriers; (b) research topics are multidimensional with many differing opinions and perspectives so keeping an open mind is vital to the research process; and (c) quality research requires patience, determination, and focus.

Conclusion

The success of an outsourcing initiative is dependent on numerous factors. In-house HR staff maintain critical roles as portions of the HR function are outsourced to external vendor. Kleinveld and Janssen (2015) asserted that business leaders often fail to maintain an effective retained internal organization postimplementation of outsourcing efforts. The emphasis is placed on ensuring external vendors are established in a manner supporting their success; however, in-house activities and staff are often neglected during the critical transformation period. The findings of this study reveal that business practitioners can apply a more proactive approach to ensure in-house HR performance does not suffer as a result of outsourcing. Effective strategies must be implemented to ensure that retained staff can perform at an optimal level. Training, communication, and performance management are core components for maintaining a high level of HR performance during and after the period of huge disruptions introduced by outsourcing.

Paz-Aparicio, Ricart, and Bonache (2017) cautioned that the decision to outsource selected HR activities should not be based solely on a criterion such as costs nor the viewpoint that companies are only to retain core competencies. The nature of the strategies utilized by business practitioners to mitigate the adverse effects on the performance of internal staff will depend on the unique needs and challenges of the respective enterprise.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

A. To kick of the interview session, I will begin with an introduction about myself, followed by a brief overview of the research topic, and conclude the introduction with a summary of the interview process

B. I will thank the participants for volunteering their time to partake in the study

C. To begin the interview, I will turn on the recording device and verbally note the date, time, and location of interview.

D. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participant, the name and any identifiable information will not be recorded and the respondents name will be coded and referred to their coded name during the recorded session. Their full name will be capture on a separate document and stored in a locked cabinet as soon as possible after the interview concludes.

E. The interview is scheduled for 60 minutes which will cover 8 interview questions and follow-up questions as appropriate

F. After respondents have the opportunity to answer all of the interview questions, I will remind them that a transcript of the interview will be sent via e-mail for them to verify that the content is capture accurately

G. At the end of the interview, I will thank the research participant for taking the time to participate in the study.

Central Research Question:

What strategies do HR managers use to mitigate the negative effects of outsourcing on HR staff performance?

Interview Questions:

1. What strategies did you implemented to manage HR staff performance following the organizational outsourcing of HR functions?
2. What outcomes were achieved by outsourcing HR functions?
3. What performance metrics did you use to measure HR staff performance effectiveness prior to the organizational outsourcing of HR functions?
4. In what ways have the strategies implemented affected the performance of HR staff since your company outsourced various HR functions?
5. What management approaches did you find worked best to ensure the performance of HR staff did not decline during the preimplementation and postimplementation of outsourcing HR functions?
6. What management approaches did you find were least effective in managing the performance of HR staff during the preimplementation and postimplementation of outsourcing HR functions?
7. How did your organization prepare to overcome barriers to the successful implementation of strategies designed to manage the performance of HR staff?
8. What else would you like to share about the effects of outsourcing on the performance of HR staff?

Appendix B: National Institutes of Health Certificate of Completion



Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Dee Hoang** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 09/12/2017.

Certification Number: 2489836.

Appendix C: Permission Requests

From: Lawler, Ed [redacted]
Sent: Monday, June 26, 2017 11:22:38 AM
To: Dee T. Hoang
Subject: RE: Request: Permission to use Figure 2.4 from book, Global Trends in HR Mgmt

OK

From: Dee T. Hoang [redacted]
Sent: Monday, June 26, 2017 9:13 AM
To: Lawler, Ed [redacted]
Subject: Request: Permission to use Figure 2.4 from book, Global Trends in HR Mgmt

Hello Dr Lawler and Dr Boudreau,

By way of introduction, my name is Dee Hoang. I'm a doctoral student at Walden University. My dissertation topic focuses on exploring the impact of HR outsourcing on HR performance. I'm seeking permission to use one of the table from your book, Global Trends in Human Resources Management: A Twenty-Year Analysis. The table is on page 33 and is titled T*able 2.4. Percentage of time spent five to seven years ago on various HR roles, United States.* I would like to use this figure to highlight the trend pertaining to how HR responsibilities has shifted over the last few years.

Thank you,

Dee Hoang
Doctoral Candidate
From: Dee T. Hoang
Sent: Thursday, July 20, 2017 10:20:59 PM
To: Wayne Brockbank
Subject: Re: Permission to use: Figure 1 from Article

Thank you Dr Wayne, I will definitely cite properly referencing the source.

-------- Original message --------
From: Wayne Brockbank [redacted]
Date: 7/20/17 10:07 PM (GMT-06:00)
To: "Dee T. Hoang" [redacted]
Subject: RE: Permission to use: Figure 1 from Article

You have my permission to use the figure as long as it is clearly referenced back to my source.

From: Dee T. Hoang [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, July 20, 2017 10:26 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Fwd: Permission to use: Figure 1 from Article

Hello Dr Brockbank,

I'm hoping you consider approving my request below. I sent the email to your RBL group account and wasn't sure if you received it. Thank you for your consideration.

-------- Original message --------
From: "Dee T. Hoang" [redacted]
Date: 7/17/17 12:32 PM (GMT-06:00)
To: [redacted]
Subject: Permission to use: Figure 1 from Article

Hello Dr Brockbank,

By way of introduction, my name is Dee Hoang. I'm a doctoral student at Walden University. My dissertation topic focuses on exploring the impact of HR outsourcing on HR performance. I'm seeking permission to use one of the figure from your article, "*If HR were really strategically proactive: Present and future directions in HR's contribution to competitive advantage*". The figure is listed on page is on page 340 and is titled Figure 1. *HR Competitive advantage index.* I would like to use this figure to highlight the value chain of HR practices.

Thank you,

Dee Hoang
Doctoral Candidate