

Supervisor Influence on Employee Psychological Safety in U.S. Federal Government

Organizations: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

Submitted by

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GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY

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Organizations: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

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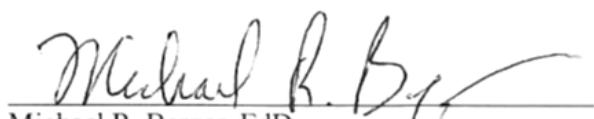
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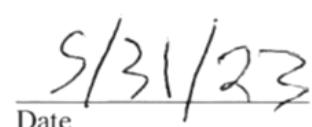
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Organizations: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

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Vernon S. Brown

January 27, 2023
Date

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. Transformational leadership theory and the psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory served as the theoretical foundation for this study to explore the phenomenon of psychological safety in the workplace. Two research questions (RQs) were used during this investigation: 1) How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace? and 2) How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace? The study targeted an estimated 12,053 employees in federal government organizations from the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group to achieve a total of 46 participants for the questionnaire that was delivered online through SurveyMonkey. Among the questionnaire participants, 14 participated in a follow-on Zoom interview. Thematic analysis of the data was conducted using Braun and Clarke's six-step process. As a result, six themes were identified to answer the RQs. The findings suggest that behavioral output, resulting from motivation and organization policy, affect how well employees contribute, express ideas, speak up, and engage in a psychologically safe workplace. For future research, it is recommended that this study be replicated to expand to different government populations and at all levels of government (e.g., local, state, federal) throughout the United States.

Keywords: Psychological safety, transformational leadership, psychosocial safety climate, Hawaii, federal employees, workplace safety, engagement, motivation, adaptability, organizational development, organizational leadership, work performance

Dedication

For Reiko, my loving wife of 23 years, who was my cheerleader from day one and who never let me give up even when I wanted to time and time again. To my parents, Alvin and Mary, who raised me with the hopes and dreams that I could be anything and do anything that I put my mind to as long as God remained a part of it; I thank you for the love, support, and inspiration shared with me before your passing which has pushed me to never stop achieving good things still to this day. My only wish is that you both could have been here to witness this with me, but I know you are in a better place looking down. Therefore, let it be known to all that I dedicate this accomplishment to those mentioned above for their grace and instillment of patience, understanding and the belief that with God all things are possible.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The term psychological safety, first introduced by Schein and Bennis (1965), describes a cognitive state of individual employees conducive to learning, organizational change, and employee engagement. Edmondson (1999) broadened the concept of psychological safety to refer to a characteristic of organizational culture conducive to employees' belief that they can contribute to group enterprises without negative consequences (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Given the role of organizational leadership in the workplace and the influence on the establishment of psychological safety (Chughtai, 2016; Guchait et al., 2019), the importance of this study which explored the bridge between leadership, influence, and psychological safety in government organizations was largely relevant.

Psychological safety plays a great role in the success of organizations and remains largely affected by organizational leadership practices. In fact, one of the most influential impacts on employees' psychological safety within an organization is the leadership (Basit, 2017; Frazier et al., 2017; Mat et al., 2019; Maximo et al., 2019). Furthermore, the individual within a leadership position and the methods by which they lead can make or break an organization and lead to the ultimate demise in organizational success (Kim et al., 2020). The future implications of this study in psychological safety discussed later in Chapter 5, which focus on leadership and organizational success, further support existing research and the binding link between leadership and employees within an organization

(Hackett et al., 2018). Therefore, this study in psychological safety and supervisor influence is especially relevant given the role that leaders play in establishing a psychologically safe environment that encourages employee engagement in the workplace.

A consensus in research has been reached establishing psychological safety as a strong enhancer of engagement and productivity in employees (Javed et al., 2019; Page et al., 2019; Yulita et al., 2020). Frazier et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of psychological safety in the facilitation of organizational learning, growth, and adaptability in rapidly changing socioeconomic environments. At the individual level, psychological safety is important because when employees feel psychologically safe, they exercise their agency to engage in experiences and interactions throughout life (Wanless, 2016a). Another benefit of psychological safety, according to Frazier and Tupper (2018), is increased initiative through prosocial motivation, an aspect of encouragement and helping others. Thus, the importance of psychological safety in the organization dictates that much more continues to be learned by understanding the phenomenon in various organizational contexts.

This qualitative descriptive study explored the phenomenon of supervisor's influence on employee psychological safety in the context of U.S. federal government organizations. Not only is further understanding of psychological safety relevant in the organizational context, but it also remains likewise relevant in the context of organizational leadership and expands understanding of supervisor influence on psychological safety, as previous research highlighted as a crucial impact that leadership holds on the psychological safety climate of an organization (Chughtai, 2016; Liu et al.,

2018). Although previous studies suggested supervisor influence, motivation, and psychosocial safety climate affect psychological safety in individuals, most research had focused on the understanding from for-profit organizations outside of the United States, leaving federal government organizations in the United States largely unexplored (Javed et al., 2019; Page et al., 2019; Yulita et al., 2020). Furthermore, while existing research had explored supervisor influence on psychological safety at the organizational level, much was desired from the employee perspective in diverse organizational constructs using descriptive methods (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Page et al., 2019). Additionally, the employee perspective, while explored in for-profit organizations, had been conducted mainly through mixed-methods, cross-sectional quantitative survey methodology, and limited longitudinal research (Newman et al., 2017). Therefore, a unique need for qualitative research to explore supervisor influence on psychological safety from the employee perspective in U.S. federal government organizations had emerged. This investigation explicitly aids U.S. federal government leaders in establishing practices that include policy implementation, training, and awareness in areas affecting worker psychological safety. Moreover, this awareness can assist organizational leaders with potential tools to aid in establishing a psychologically safe work environment that better supports worker engagement and productivity. Recommendations for future practice are further discussed in Chapter 5 of the study.

In the remainder of Chapter 1, a brief overview of existing research in psychological safety, which provided the foundation and background of the study is presented. Next, the context to support the evolution of the problem and introduction to the gap in the existing research, leader influence on psychological safety within U.S.

federal government organizations is provided. The topic-specific terms used throughout the study are then defined. Finally, Chapter 1 concludes with study limitations and provides a summary of Chapter 1 and the organization of the remaining sections of the study.

Background of the Study

Current knowledge of psychological safety incorporates many fields of study. As such, researchers' efforts have primarily been focused on sketching its antecedents and effects in broad strokes, leaving more narrowly focused investigations of significant areas of inquiry to future researchers. Two areas of inquiry in which researchers noted a need for additional research included more narrowly focused investigations into leader influences on psychological safety as a characteristic of organizational culture, and psychological safety in non-corporate contexts, such as federal government organizations (Page et al., 2019).

In the study conducted by Maximo et al. (2019), authentic leadership was concluded as a predictor of psychological safety founded on trust in leaders. Since only the authentic leadership model was explored, psychological safety and the relationship to other leadership styles or behavioral norms were not determined. Frazier and Tupper (2018) studied the effect of supervisor prosocial behavior and the impact on employees through observations of behavioral norms and motivational effect. While Frazier and Tupper concluded that supervisor perceptions of psychological safety create behavioral models that can directly impact employees, the measurement of supervisor influence and the connection to employee perception of psychological safety influence was not explored.

Evolution of Problem

Having a safe zone to express individuality without fear of reprisal or ridicule is the common desire referred to as psychological safety (Edmondson, 2018; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Although Schein and Bennis coined the term psychological safety in 1965, the topic remained largely unexplored until increasingly rapid changes in business environments stimulated researchers' interest in factors that contributed to organizations' adaptability (Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017). In 1999, Edmondson renewed researchers' interest in psychological safety, in part by shifting the definition to refer to a characteristic of organizational culture instead of the cognitive state of individual employees (Frazier et al., 2017). Frazier et al. confirmed the importance of psychological safety as a facilitator of organizational adaptability and employee engagement and productivity, with the result that researchers' interest in the topic has continued to intensify.

The Gap

Psychological safety, the feeling of expressing oneself without fear of ridicule or judgment, continues to be an emerging area of research with many unanswered questions postured for future research. While general search queries in psychological safety yield numerous results, several gaps in the literature continue to be revealed. Of these gaps one prominent recommendation pointed to further investigations of leader influence on psychological safety, as a component of organizational culture, to determine its impact on employee work engagement and productivity (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Page et al., 2019).

Maximo et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative cross-sectional study that explored leadership in the authentic form only, suggesting that other leadership models should be

explored. Maximo et al. revealed that leadership from the authentic aspect formed trust in leadership that therefore influenced the level of psychological safety. In a quantitative cross-sectional study by Frazier and Tupper (2018), it was concluded that supervisor perceptions of psychological safety create impact on employee behavior. However, Frazier and Tupper failed to explore the employee perception of leader influences on psychological safety, recommending this be further investigated.

Furthermore, with respect to organizational leadership behavior and influence, Anderson (2017) and Al-edenat (2018) explored the transformational leadership construct concluding that this leadership behavior helps motivate and compel others through a leader's charismatic efforts to guide others toward a goal. However, both studies lacked understanding in how employee perceptions of leadership behavior or transformational leadership affects overall employee psychological safety. Therefore, further exploration through this study of supervisor influence on psychological safety from the employee perspective was not only warranted but added new knowledge to the literature in this topic area.

Another area recommended for exploration was associated with the scarcity of research on perceptions of psychological safety in non-corporate organizational contexts (e.g., government organizations). Calls for studies that extend the current understanding of psychological safety, to include organizational contexts other than those comparable to that of the mining industry in South Africa (Maximo et al., 2019) or a medium-sized company in the Midwest United States (Page et al., 2019), illuminated the need to understand supervisor influence on psychological safety within other industries and disciplines (Frazier & Tupper, 2018). Maximo et al. (2019) suggested that further studies

of psychological safety be explored in other organizations to examine the unique challenges of various organizational settings. Thus, this study set out to explore the uniqueness in government organizations. Scarcity in the literature also suggested a need to better understand leader influence on psychological safety within federal government organizations, supporting the premise to develop a research investigation.

Therefore, based on the low yield in search results and dearth of information, a qualitative descriptive study to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace was conducted. As a result, a connection between employee engagement and productivity as an outcome resultant of U.S. federal employees' perception of psychological safety and the psychosocial safety climate further emerged through the study as previously suggested (Yulita et al., 2020). While the focus of the study was employees in federal government organizations within the State of Hawaii, the findings of the study into supervisor influence on psychological safety may be applicable to federal government organizations in other states within the United States, leading to new enlightenment not yet revealed in psychological safety in federal government organizations within the United States.

Additionally, new knowledge conducive to the influence on psychological safety in organizations and society at large was gained as a result of the research and may therefore be useful in additional organizational constructs. The results of the study provide recommendations to methods, policies, and procedures at the organizational level that can inform leaders and individuals in U.S. federal government organizations and beyond, on how to best foster psychological safety and overcome psychological distress

as suggested by Frazier et al. (2017) and Yulita et al. (2020). Further discussion of the findings and applicable use are later presented in the implications and recommendations sections of Chapter 5.

Definition of Terms

This section focuses on the definition of key terms used throughout the study to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. A summarized list of terms is presented to help the audience comprehend this research study in psychological safety and the organizational leadership influence on psychological safety. All the terms are listed in the alphabetical order and use academic research and literature to clarify the explanation of each term.

Employee Engagement. The opposite of burnout, employee engagement refers to a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind towards work tasks (Bailey et al., 2017). An engaged employee has a strong sense of vigor towards dedication to, and absorption in work activities (Bailey et al., 2017).

Organizational Adaptability. A derivative of organizational change, organizational adaptability is about setting expectations for the individual employee and the organization to adjust to the ever-changing environment and mobilizing followers to overcome challenges and improve the organization (Boylan & Turner, 2017).

Organizational leaders develop organizational adaptability through their behaviors, activities, organizational systems, and processes (Boylan & Turner, 2017).

Organizational Culture. A pattern of shared basic assumptions that an organization learns as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration

that has worked well; therefore, the organization teaches to new members the correct way it perceives, thinks, and feels in relation to those problems (Serrat, 2017).

Organizational Performance. The collective performance of individual employees of an organization (Berberoglu, 2018). Organizational performance is usually measured by evaluating the numerical data, which include the objective and timely information about how well the organization is doing; however, performance measurement is not always necessarily based on objective data (Berberoglu, 2018).

Prosocial Motivation. The desire to expend effort to benefit other people (Schott et al., 2019).

Psychological Empowerment. Increased intrinsic task motivation manifested in an asset of four cognitions reflecting an individual employee's orientation to his or her work role: meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact (Muduli & Pandya, 2018).

Psychological Safety. The extent to which employees feel comfort in taking interpersonal risks that are positive and free of embarrassment, shame, or ridicule (Wanless, 2016b). When employees feel psychologically safe, they can exercise their individual agency to engage in experiences and interactions that promote positive development and prosocial behavior throughout their life (Wanless, 2016a).

Psychosocial Safety Climate. Consists of policies, practices, and procedures developed and implemented within an organization to ensure the protection of workers' psychological health and safety (Dollard & Bakker, 2010).

Anticipated Limitations

Limitations are the constraints on generalizability and utility of findings resulting

from how a researcher chooses to design the study and the method used to establish internal and external validity (Ioannidis, 2007). Researchers identify potential weaknesses in research studies through the limitations section (Christensen & Johnson, 2014). Limitations reflect those characteristics of design or methodology that impact or influence the application or interpretation of the results of a study (Ioannidis, 2007). In this qualitative study, the anticipated limitations pertained to methodology and the data collection and research instrumentations, which involved self-reported data, the population, and the sample. Below were the anticipated limitations at inception with provided rationale for the study:

- The research in psychological safety relied on questionnaires and semi-structured interviews for data collection from the employees in U.S. federal government organizations. This involved self-reported data, which may have resulted in self-report bias given the voluntary nature of the study (Godwin et al., 2020). Participants may have also lacked the ability to recall details pending the emotional state or condition at the time of questioning. The lack of ability to provide details may have been of consequence and hindered the holistic and descriptive summary of the lived experience and therefore resulted in negative implications on the study. However, given the declared pandemic requirements of social distancing and the fact that questionnaires are a valid form of social action to convey a message (Galasiński & Kozłowska, 2012), this limitation was accepted as a valid means to collect data.
- The target population was limited to federal government employees in Hawaii. Hawaii has a diverse workforce where the Asian and Pacific-Islander mixed population is more dominant within the workforce (Chou, 2010; Okamura, 1980). Additionally, business rules, workplace attire, and etiquette are often thought to be different and more relaxed in comparison to the same positions in the federal government workforce in the United States mainland leading to an overall different organizational culture and sense of openness and satisfaction (Say, 2012; Vales, 2014). Therefore, the findings of the study may only be applicable to federal government employees in Hawaii and, therefore, may not be transferable to other regions of the United States or within non-governmental organizations. Given the limited research on psychological safety influence in government, especially at the United States Federal level, and the unique benefits from a microcosm of the world represented in Hawaii, this limitation was accepted.

- The study was potentially limited by self-selection bias. Through self-selection, participants were voluntary and therefore may have participated based on personal opinion or experience which could have led to exaggeration of the facts (Sharma, 2017). The participants who choose to participate may have been those with a particular stance, viewpoint, or other common factors driving their participation. However, self-selection bias is beyond research control and cannot be fully avoided. To avoid self-selection bias to the best extent, selection criteria was included to narrow the participation and information source based on the desired area of research (Tongco, 2007). Therefore, this limitation was accepted.
- The study used a snowball sampling technique to aid in obtaining an acceptable sample size. Snowball sampling relies on the recruitment of potential participants through existing participants acquaintances (Sarstedt et al., 2017; Sharma, 2017). Snowball sampling assists in data saturation or until responses become repeated and redundant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). While inferences will be made as a result of using a small sample size, the results from the study met the traits of the general population, making snowball sampling an added benefit to reach the necessary goals of saturation. There was an acknowledged consequence of snowball sampling in the reduction of control over the research which was mitigated by ensuring participants met the study inclusion criteria. Therefore, the process of snowball sampling applied the same inclusion criterion of the initial participants to aid in the additional recruitment of individuals. Because of the required inclusion criteria for participants and the added benefit of the snowball sampling technique to ensure data saturation and a thick description of the data, this limitation was accepted.
- The study utilized a purposive sample of federal government employees to address the gap found in the literature. The federal government employees were from the State of Hawaii within the United States and were easily screened to meet the study intent and, therefore, more likely to provide answers to the research questions (Ames et al., 2019). A limitation of purposive sampling is that the technique is potentially prone to bias in that the research may subjectively make general assumptions in the selection of participants (Etikan et al., 2016). However, the ability for the study to be replicated in other populations makes it transferable and beneficial in a qualitative study (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2021). Therefore, based on the transferability and replicability in research using purposive sampling to find qualified participants to answer the research questions, this limitation was accepted.

Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter 1 of the study presented the introduction to the study, which included sections of an introduction, background of the study, definition of terms, anticipated limitations of the study, as well as a summary. This study that further explored the field

of psychological safety served to advance the scientific knowledge and contribute to the existing literature, as the study attempted to fill a research gap pointed out by Frazier and Tupper (2018) and Maximo et al. (2019), who highlighted supervisor influence and recommended focusing on employee perception of psychological safety, especially in the context of federal government organizations. The results of the study have implications useful for organizational practices, including evidence-based recommendations to assist leaders in U.S. federal government organizations in exerting an influence that fosters psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017). Further discussion of the study implications and practical application are discussed later in Chapter 5. The following sections discuss the organization and remainder of the study and summarize the steps followed to achieve success throughout the research process. Table 1 depicts the project timeline of the study starting with proposal completion to dissertation defense and finally, Dean's read and approval.

Table 1

Project Timeline

Date	Action
By April, 2022	Submit for Level 2 AQR Review
By April, 2022	Level 2 AQR Approval
By May, 2022	Proposal defense – Level 3 Review
By May, 2022	Obtain IRB approval
By June, 2022	Data collection
By August, 2022	Analyze the data
By January, 2023	Write Chapters 4 and 5 and obtain committee approval
By February, 2023	Obtain Level 5 AQR approval
By March, 2023	Dissertation defense
By April, 2023	Level 7 Review – Form and Format
By May, 2023	Level 8 Review – Dean's Read (Final Approval D-80)

At study inception, several steps were followed to present the gap and recommendations to conduct the research investigation into psychological safety. Starting with the feasibility (see Appendix H) and 10 strategic points of the study (see Appendix A), a detailed process to provide justification for the research was conducted. The process involved a well-defined prospectus and the presentation of a justifiable proposal, which was peer reviewed and defended. What followed was application to the university institutional review board to ensure that appropriate protections and procedures were in place to recruit and protect the human subjects of the investigation. Following the institutional review, the research proceeded with recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and preparation of the results. The result is a methodical research investigation conducted by a novice investigator with steps and processes that were used to successfully accomplish the study.

In support of the novice research investigator and as an enhancement to the study's trustworthiness and transferability, several supporting initiatives were required and completed. To gain a better understanding in the areas of leadership and organizational design, two years of continuous classwork was completed starting in May of 2018. Following that, two on campus doctoral residencies were completed in 2019 and 2020, which focused on the identification of the gap and development of the research methodology. Following that, 11 focused dissertation (DIS) courses were taken consecutively over a period of three years. This structured process introduced the dissertation chair and committee along with the support and guidance needed to successfully defend the research proposal in May of 2022. Following the defense of the research proposal, the continued committee support allowed for institutional review

board submission of Chapters 1-3 also in May of 2022, which included a swift review and approval of the methodology, recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. Next, the investigator used the summer and fall of 2022, May through October, to complete data collection, data analysis, and initial drafting of Chapters 4 and 5. By November of 2022, the dissertation manuscript was fully assembled to incorporate Chapters 1-3 with Chapters 4 and 5. The last steps needed to achieve study success included the refinement of Chapters 1 through 5, final academic quality review (AQR) approval, study defense to the committee, form and formatting approval, and the university Dean's signature. From start to finish the study followed the 10 strategic points of the study (see Appendix A) to maintain alignment throughout as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Alignment Table

Alignment Item	Alignment Item Description
Problem Space Need:	As noted by Page et al. (2019), Maximo et al. (2019), and Frazier and Tupper (2018), most of the current research in psychological safety have been solely focused on for-profit organizations. Little exists in the current research on the influence of leadership on psychological safety overall (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Javed et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017). By conducting the proposed qualitative descriptive study, leaders in federal government organizations may better understand their impact on psychological safety in the workplace.
Problem Statement:	It is not known how federal government employees describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.
Purpose of the Study:	The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.
Phenomenon:	The phenomenon to be investigated is employees' descriptions of their supervisors' influence on employee perceptions of psychological safety.
Research Questions:	RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace? RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?
Methodology/Research Design:	A qualitative descriptive design.

The remainder of the study and research process is organized in four chapters and begins with a review of the existing literature used to build upon and conduct the investigation. In Chapter 2 a review of previous research on the centrality of the dissertation literature review conducted to support the study, including: identification of the problem space, theoretical foundations, review of the literature, problem statement, and concluding summary is presented. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and research design, to include the supporting rationale. Additionally, population and sample, research instrumentation, trustworthiness, assumptions, delimitations, and summary are provided. Chapter 4 details how the data was analyzed and provides both a written and graphic summary of the results. Chapter 5 is an interpretation and discussion of the study results, as it relates to the problem space, methodology, and existing body of research in the field of psychological safety and organizational leadership influence.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. In 1999, Edmondson renewed researchers' interest in psychological safety, in part by shifting the definition to refer to a characteristic of organizational culture instead of to a cognitive state of individual employees (Frazier et al., 2017). Evidence suggests that supervisors influence employees' development through factors of intrinsic motivation and psychological safety (Javed et al., 2019); in turn, an improvement in employees' psychological safety promotes a feeling of trust and dignity from supervisors (Page et al., 2019).

Exploring the field of psychological safety remains relevant in organizations and society at large to further discover the impact on individual confidence and engagement (Kolbe et al., 2020). Additionally, the focus of the study served to further advance research in psychological safety, organizational development, and leadership theory through the lens of organizational leadership, which through proper implementation can foster a thriving workplace (Boylan & Turner, 2017; Carmeli et al., 2014; Chaudhary, 2019). Therefore, delving into existing psychological safety research and expanding to the areas of leadership and policy development provided a foundation that greatly served the understanding into the disciplines of organizational leadership and organizational development at large. Further discussion on the background of the problem and existing literature, which guided the research, follows in the coming sections of this chapter.

Leadership is an important aspect of organizational behavior and should remain at the forefront of all constructs, settings, and disciplines. In the study conducted by Maximo et al. (2019), the authors concluded that authentic leadership was a predictor of psychological safety founded on trust in leaders. However, since Maximo et al. only explored the authentic leadership model, psychological safety and its relationship to other leadership styles or behavioral norms were left undetermined. Frazier and Tupper (2018) studied the effect of supervisor prosocial behavior and its impact on employees through observations of behavioral norms and motivational affect. While Frazier and Tupper concluded that supervisor perceptions of psychological safety created behavioral models that could directly impact employee engagement and productivity, they failed to explore supervisor influence and the connection to employee perception of psychological safety influence. Therefore, it was unclear how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in federal government organizations.

The literature review of Chapter 2 was conducted by reviewing research presented in peer-reviewed journals and books that discuss psychosocial safety climate theory and transformational leadership theory as well as the topics of leadership and psychological safety. Chapter 2 presents an introduction to the chapter and background to the study along with the identification of the problem space. Chapter 2 also introduces the psychosocial safety climate theory and transformational leadership theory as the theoretical foundation of the study. After that, a comprehensive review of the existing literature is provided. Chapter 2 concludes with the problem statement and summary of the study.

The purpose of a literature review is to provide the context and opportunity for

researchers to summarize and evaluate the previous literature that pertains to a given topic of inquiry (El Hussein et al., 2017). A literature review also allows researchers to sensitize knowledge and understanding of relevant topics, consider the potential tensions and advantages of the existing literature, and situate themselves in relation to current discourse (El Hussein et al., 2017). The review of the literature for this study is comprised of in-depth information from various scholars on the following main themes: organization safety, leadership and psychological safety, factors influencing psychological safety, the influence of psychological safety on employees, psychological safety and the organization, and the influence of psychological safety on non-profit organizations.

An extensive online search of academic journal databases was conducted for the literature review. Online resources included ProQuest, Google Scholar, JSTOR, EBSCO, and library resources. Literature included surveyed peer-reviewed dissertations, scholarly journal articles, books, and research documents. The research and literature review also utilized the university interlibrary loan services to obtain scholarly articles that were not available through online databases. Literature sources were obtained by locating articles relevant to the identified themes, topics, and subtopics and applied a variety of alternative search terms, such as psychological safety, employee engagement, organizational adaptability, organizational performance, organizational leadership, organizational culture, U.S. federal government employees, authentic leadership, performance, shared leadership, social identity approach, moderated mediation, psychological empowerment, and social information. The organization of the literature review is by subject matter and contents. The literature review includes varying perspectives to build a comprehensive,

holistic, and nonbiased view of the research topic.

Background

Having a safe zone to express individuality without fear of reprisal or ridicule is the common desire referred to as psychological safety (Edmondson, 2018; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Although Schein and Bennis coined the term psychological safety in 1965, the topic remained largely unexplored until increasingly rapid changes in business environments stimulated researchers' interest in factors that contributed to organizational adaptability (Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017). Based on previous research, one aspect recommended for investigation in the field of psychological safety was leader influence on psychological safety as a component of organizational culture (Page et al., 2019). By association, employees feel leadership can impact organizational culture (Page et al., 2019). Additionally, trust, integrity, and respect are among the most important characteristics of organizational culture, and trust and respect are a basis from which a healthy and positive culture can thrive (Page et al., 2019). According to Page et al. (2019), specifically related to psychological safety, professional responsibility, shared vision, and recognition are valued most highly by employees; therefore, expanding research in the organizational setting, especially in psychological safety in various teams, organizations, and settings, helped to better understand the factors that contribute to psychological safety within the organizational culture.

Based on previous research, another area suggested for exploration was associated with the scarcity of information on psychological safety in non-corporate organizational contexts (e.g., government organizations). Researchers called for studies extending current understanding of psychological safety, to include contexts other than those

comparable to that of the mining industry in South Africa (Maximo et al., 2019). Researchers also proposed investigating the phenomenon of psychological safety influence beyond a myopic focus in medium-sized companies, such as that undertaken in the Midwest United States (Page et al., 2019). Additionally, researchers continued to recommend that further studies attempt to understand psychological safety in the context of the supervisor influence on employee voice and innovation within other industries and disciplines as this directly relates to engagement and productivity (Frazier & Tupper, 2018). Maximo et al. (2019) suggested that future studies of psychological safety should be explored in other organizations to examine the unique challenges of various organizational settings, utilizing other methodology, such as that of qualitative design. Therefore, based on previous research and recommendations, this qualitative descriptive study explored how federal government employees of Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace in an attempt to fill the gap in the literature.

Identification of the Problem Space

Until a renaissance in adaptive business practices and organizational growth in the late 1990's, researchers had not well researched the topic of psychological safety (Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017). While current knowledge of psychological safety incorporates many fields of study, researchers' efforts have primarily been focused on sketching its antecedents and effects in broad strokes. Subhakaran and Dyaram (2018) indicated that coworkers' upward voice and manager pro-voice behavior have had significant impact on employee upward voice with a mediating impact of psychological safety. Subhakaran and Dyaram implied that perceived psychological safety would play a

significant role in explaining the impact coworkers and manager behavior would have on regulating employee upward voice. To further extend knowledge and validity of employee voice influenced by psychological safety and supervisor behavior, Subhakaran and Dyaram called for additional research in occupational settings. Frazier et al. (2017) aggregated theoretical and empirical works and conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis on the antecedents and outcomes of psychological safety. Frazier et al. concluded that critical questions remained in studying psychological safety despite its important role identified in the workplace. Edmondson (2018) offered practical guidance for teams and organizations serious about success in the modern economy and argued that attracting and retaining quality talent is essential, where psychological safety would play a key role.

Recent researchers have pointed toward the need for expanded psychological safety research in government and various organizational settings (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Subhakaran & Dyaram, 2018). Subhakaran and Dyaram (2018) recommended that future researchers continue to explore psychological safety by including diverse workplace settings. Drawing from social learning theory and self-determination theory, Frazier and Tupper (2018) proposed and tested a multilevel model that examined the effects of supervisor prosocial motivation and psychological safety on employee psychological safety, thriving, and helping behaviors. Their results demonstrated a positive relationship between supervisor psychological safety and employee psychological safety along with positive indirect effects of supervisor prosocial motivation on employee psychological safety.

Maximo et al. (2019), with a sample of 244 employees within the mining industry, indicated that authentic leadership was a predictor of psychological safety

founded on trust in leaders; however, they only explored the authentic leadership model and its relationship to psychological safety in general. To expand the understanding of psychological safety, Maximo et al. called for future studies to include contexts other than those comparable to that of the mining industry in South Africa. With that, psychological safety research in the organizational context of government remained largely unexplored prior to this study.

A review of the existing literature revealed there have been few attempts to study psychological safety in other organizations, such as that of government. Frazier and Tupper (2018), Maximo et al. (2019), and Page et al. (2019) noted that research on psychological safety has been focused on for-profit corporations. These researchers called for studies to focus on employee perceptions of psychological safety in other organizational contexts. Frazier and Tupper (2018), Javed et al. (2019), and Newman et al.(2017) also noted that to date, most research on psychological safety had been focused on the influence of organizational culture and therefore called for additional studies to investigate leaders' influences on employees' psychological safety. Frazier and Tupper (2018) suggested further research on psychological safety would help to establish factors of success within organizational culture. As previously stated, a continuous review of the literature revealed that not many attempts had been made prior to this study to explore psychological safety in the context of government settings. Therefore, this study worked to advance the knowledge on psychological safety in federal government organizations through an attempt to fill the gap in literature and explore how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in federal government organizations.

The consequence of the unknown in psychological safety in the government organizational context is decreased organizational performance and adaptability, as it is more likely that federal government organization leaders may fail to exert an influence conducive to psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017; Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Page et al., 2019). Knowing that, this study strived with purpose to provide insight to leaders managing employees and implementing workplace policy in federal government organizations. Therefore, the results of the study presented and discussed in Chapter 4 and 5 reveal recommendations to leaders in federal government organizations; in turn, the recommendations may benefit employee job satisfaction, engagement, and productivity within federal government organizations in the United States.

Theoretical Foundations

The phenomenon investigated was employees' descriptions of their supervisors' influence on employee perceptions of psychological safety. Transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and the psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) served as the theoretical foundation for the study to explore the phenomenon. In addition to delving into the areas of organizational leadership and organizational policy development, the two supporting theories guided the research questions and the development of data collection protocols to address the research problem of the study in the field of psychological safety.

The first research question was used to address the gap in knowledge related to how employees in federal government organizations perceive and describe psychological safety in their workplace (Lee & Idris, 2017; Subhakaran & Dyaram, 2018; Yulita et al., 2020). The second question was aligned with the gap in knowledge regarding leader

influence on psychological safety (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Javed et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017). Together, the two research questions supported by transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and PSC theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) focused the study on addressing the defined gap in the literature regarding how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in federal government organizations (Frazier et al., 2017; Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Page et al., 2019). The following section reviewed the literature surrounding the basis and construct of transformational leadership theory and PSC theory revealing the notion of supervisor influence, motivation, and perception of psychological safety in organizations.

Transformational Leadership Theory

The study utilized the transformational leadership theory as a basis of the theoretical foundation to provide a lens for the interaction and influence of leaders. The assumption posited by Burns (1978) is that a higher moral position is a motivating factor and can influence individuals to follow a leader who promotes such acts. In this regard, Burns defined transformational leadership as an approach wherein leaders and followers embark on a mutual process of exalting each other to higher degrees of motivation and morality. For leaders, they raise the standards by adhering to the higher values and ideals of their followers. According to Anderson (2017), this outcome helps leaders shape the values and utilize their charismatic methodologies to pull individuals towards a set of principles. Unlike transactional leadership, which Burns viewed as a selfish concept, transformational leadership appeals to social values, an outcome that encourages collaboration instead of individuality. Therefore, one can allude that transformational leadership gives people a sense of meaning and identity by acting as a motivational

leveler.

Evolution to Transformational Leadership. Theories leading up to the emergence of transformational leadership can be traced back as early as the 1840s. They include the great man theory (Carlyle, 1840) and the trait leadership theory (Galton, 1869). Other theories followed, including behavioral, contingency, transactional, and transformation theories, in the 1940s, 1960s, and 1970s, respectively. Great man theory purported that leadership traits are intrinsic; meaning, great leaders are born and not modeled to assume such positions. According to Lee (2018), Herbert Spencer formed a counter belief that leaders were a product of their surroundings and environment and that only a man had the necessary traits to lead. Alternatively, the trait leadership theory alluded to the notion that individuals are normally born with unique leadership traits; born leaders (Khan et al., 2016). This theory analyzes mental, physical, and social traits common among all leaders. Harrison (2018) highlights such qualities, including intelligence, creativity, sense of responsibility, and value creation.

Behavioral theories focus on behaviors portrayed by leaders. In this case, leaders are made, not born. These theories classify leadership into two groups, consisting of those concerned with the people, and those focused on tasks (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2018). Hence, by using psychometrics, anyone showing preferred conduct could be regarded as a leader. Examples of the associated theories entail role theory and leadership grid theory. Conversely, contingency theory argues that there is no predetermined approach to being a leader, suggesting that leadership changes with the situation presented (Fiedler, 1978). Suharyanto and Lestari (2020) asserted that all leadership styles should be based on situations to adequately support the levels of performance in various settings. Examples

of such theories include path-goal and cognitive resource theories. Thus, like trait leadership theory, contingency theory reveals that human traits determine situations in which leaders practice their leadership (Khan et al., 2016).

Transactional leadership theory is characterized by transactions culminating between leaders and their followers. According to Jensen et al. (2019), the theory values mutual and beneficial relationships. For the theory to be successful, leaders must either choose to reward or punish their followers. In this regard, such leaders will only be successful once they establish a mutually reinforcing environment, whereby individual and organizational objectives are in sync (Khan et al., 2016). Concerning transformational leadership theory, it allows for solid relationships that lead to higher trust and motivation. Rowland (2018) insists that leaders must be charismatic and inspirational for the transformational leadership theory to be successful. Thus, rules and regulations are flexible, and are guided by group values.

Pillars of Transformational Leadership. Inspirational motivation refers to the promotion of set values, consistent vision, and mission of an organization. Al-edenat (2018) posits that a leaders' vision must be compelling to the degree that they understand what they want from every interaction. As such, leaders should be predisposed to direct their followers by providing a sense of meaning and challenge (Khan et al., 2016). For instance, working optimistically and enthusiastically to enhance the spirit of commitment and teamwork (Al-edenat, 2018). In addition, transformational leaders communicate their expectations, which eventually results in extra focus on the follower.

Alternatively, intellectual stimulation allows leaders to encourage creative and innovative ideas among their followers. Transformational leaders enable such ideas by

refraining from publicly criticizing their followers for their mistakes which encourages problem solving in unique ways (Chebon et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2019). By establishing a diverse and open working environment, leaders seek varied paths to goals, a norm that pushes followers to challenge their beliefs and values, and those of the organization (Liborius, 2017). Therefore, the intellectual style of transformational leadership can play a crucial role in organizational change and strategic planning.

Other pillars of transformational leadership theory are idealized influence and individualized considerations. Idealized influence supposes that a leader harbors the ability to influence their followers only when one embarks on what one preaches (Elmasry & Bakri, 2019). In short, the notion is that leaders must act as role models for individuals to emulate. The importance of doing so is that leaders earn more trust and respect from their followers through their deeds and influence, which then inspire shared vision and engagement (Krishna, 2011; Yin et al., 2019). This type of leader must also put their followers' needs above their own and sacrifice individual gains to encourage ethical behaviors and high standards (Elmasry & Bakri, 2019).

On the other hand, individualized consideration manifests when leaders act as mentors to their followers. The application of this approach means that followers are rewarded for their creativity and innovation and regarded as contributors to the organization (Khan et al., 2016). In addition, followers are exposed to various treatments depending on their talents and knowledge (Turnnidge & Côté, 2019). Followers are then empowered to formulate their decisions alongside the much-needed support to implement their outcomes (Khan et al., 2016; Yin et al., 2019). Therefore, individualized considerations guide followers, ensuring that their behaviors correspond to organizational

needs.

Transformational leadership should be considered a motivating method of empowerment within an organization. Carmeli et al. (2014) characterized transformational leadership as the ability to foster a climate where individuals are encouraged to grow and experience interpersonal risk in a psychologically safe environment. As such, the understanding of how transformational leadership traits play a role in influence over employees is crucial in understanding organizational contribution and interaction. In this study, exploration of perceived supervisor influence on psychological safety was at the core. An important component of supervisor influence, according to Dollard and Bakker (2010), is management commitment defined as leader support for stress prevention as evidenced by their involvement in and commitment to achieving that goal. Winarto (2018) suggested that transformational leaders look beyond self and through influence and motivation transform the norms within an organization. Thus, by looking through the added lens of transformational leadership, this study explored the connection of leaders who effectively influence employees and foster working environments that are psychologically safe.

The Psychosocial Safety Climate Theory

Psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory was included in the conceptual framework to guide the exploration of employees' perceived leader influences on psychological safety. The PSC theory was developed by Dollard and Bakker (2010) as a framework for explaining the relationships between job expectations, supervisor influence, resources, worker well-being, and workers' psychological health. The term psychosocial safety climate is defined as the set of policies, practices, and procedures

developed and implemented within an organization to ensure the protection of workers' psychological health and safety (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). The psychological safety climate of an organization is conceptualized under the PSC framework as an organization resource, which influences worker well-being, engagement, and productivity.

The PSC theory was relevant to explain the research phenomenon under study. The application of PSC in an organization is intended to contribute to the organizational climate, based on management policy, practice, and commitment, that is conducive to a stress-free and uninhibited work environment (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Following Edmondson (1999), psychological safety is defined as a characteristic of organizational culture conducive to employees' belief that they can contribute to group enterprises without negative consequences (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Dollard and Bakker (2010) characterize supervisor influence broadly, as a set of behaviors and attitudes that influence the psychosocial safety climate either directly or via organizational policies, procedures, and practices as a precursor to development of organizational culture. An important component of supervisor influence, according to Dollard and Bakker (2010), is management commitment, defined as leadership support for stress prevention as evidenced by their involvement in and commitment to achieving that goal. Dollard and Bakker described supervisor influence via management commitment as the single most important determinant of psychosocial safety climate. Thus, as a result, supervisor influence exhibited through the PSC theory can directly affect psychosocial safety climate, organizational culture, and ultimately the psychological safety of employees both directly and indirectly through leadership influence.

Zadow et al. (2017) examined how psychosocial safety climate influenced the

development of reported and unreported physical and psychological workplace injuries beyond the psychosocial safety climate, via the erosion of psychological health or emotional exhaustion. Zadow et al. (2017) revealed that emotional exhaustion was the strongest predictor of survey-reported total injuries and underreporting, which underscored the need to consider the psychosocial safety climate in theory and practice. Dollard et al. (2017) theorized that the psychosocial safety climate enactment mechanism worked via psychosocial processes such as bullying, mistreatment, climate, work design, and conflict resolution. By contrast, Lee and Idris (2017) investigated the effect of psychosocial safety climate and team climate on job performance, particularly through job engagement. Lee and Idris (2017) revealed that performance feedback and role clarity mediated the relationship between psychosocial safety climate and job engagement, and that there was no direct effect between the variables, team climate and job resources.

Lee and Idris (2017) also found that job engagement mediated the relationship between psychosocial safety climate and team climate related to job performance. Using two-wave national longitudinal interview data from 1,062 employees to explore relationships over four years, Dollard et al. (2017) suggested a multi-component approach through processes and procedures that prevent or reduce bullying. To add further, Dollard et al. asserted that established methods of engagement found in a high psychosocial safety climate context were more comprehensive than those triggered after the fact by bullying, which may therefore be more effective in reducing worker mistreatment. Dollard et al. (2017) argued that building psychological safety, a strong climate for psychological health, and enacting a psychosocial safety climate was fundamental to bullying prevention. Additionally, Lee and Idris (2017) suggested the importance of the psychosocial safety climate as the precursor to better working

conditions and to indirectly boosting employees' engagement, job performance and productivity.

Review of the Literature

Organization Safety

In this literature review theme, the concepts of organizational safety, organizational climate, and safety climate are discussed. Next, studies on organizational safety and the subset of organizational safety in the area of physical safety and psychological safety is explored. Also explored is the connection between organization safety, physical safety, and psychological safety. Finally, a summary of the organization safety literature review theme is provided.

Effective and efficient human output within the organization is resultant upon the condition of organization safety. According to Le Coze (2019), organizational safety is a representation of the safety within an organization derived from the beliefs and social design of the organization. Furthermore, Le Coze asserted that actualization of organization safety hinges upon the established organizational rules which define the working environment and safety climate within the organization. Hasan et al. (2019) posited that organization safety is the combined interaction of not only human and social aspects, but also consists of environmental and management factors. According to Hasan et al. any shift in the interaction of human behavior and social structure in the organization can result in a compromise of safety and lead to mishap and injury within the organization. Organizational safety is therefore a necessity for human performance and built upon employee belief that they can equally affect the safety process and safety outcome according to established goals and rules of the organization (Trinchero et al.,

2020). Next, organizational climate is discussed.

Organizational climate is the concept perceived by employees in their workplace environment. The organizational climate concept refers to behaviors, interactions, and energy present within the workplace (Schneider et al., 2017). Organizational climate affects productivity, motivation, and employee satisfaction and is proportionate to employee performance and efficiency (Hu, Erdogan, et al., 2018). Hu, Erdogan, et al. asserted in a quantitative, multiple-source, time-lagged research design of IT firms in China that in an organizational climate that is based on openness and psychological safety, effective communication helps to address employee creativity and strengthen the connection between perception and reality. Furthermore, organizational climate reveals to employees the level of openness and the existence of psychological safety in a nonthreatening or risk-taking context (Hu, Erdogan, et al., 2018). Newman et al. (2017) explained that in the process of introducing risk-taking in an organization, leaders utilize organizational climate to encourage employees to be creative and propose unique ideas which contribute to the organizational innovation. Creating an atmosphere where cooperation is valued further increases the motivation to work and engage as a team resulting in high team spirit and increased productivity (Kahn, 1990; Kahn & Heaphy, 2013). In essence, the concept of organizational climate helps leaders to introduce a foundation supportive of innovation, change, and norms whereby the energy of the organization is expressed and adaptable (Newman et al., 2017). Up next safety climate is discussed.

As posited by Huang et al. (2020), safety and the safety climate of an organization results from supervisor influence and dedicated organizational support towards the

prioritization of worker safety. Additionally, Huang et al. argued that within the safety climate of an organization there exist aspects of safety spanning from physical to psychological in nature, each of which relies on citizenship behavior and existential human influence. As such, Liu et al. (2020) asserted that within safety and the safety climate of the organization exist the subset of psychological safety which is influenced as well as influential in organizations and employee performance. The following section discusses the relationship of organizational safety, organizational climate, and safety climate and how the terms are used throughout the remainder of this literature review theme.

In discussing organizational safety and safety climate, Le Coze (2019) and Griffin and Curcuruto (2016) asserted that they both share perceptions of safety and productivity through the expression of organization social structure and belief in safety. Likewise, since organizational climate is considered the concept by which employees perceive their workplace energy and environment, it may also fall within the construct of perceived safety (Schneider et al., 2017). Therefore, organizational safety, organizational climate, and safety climate are used interchangeable. In the next segment a discussion on physical safety as reviewed in the literature is provided.

Physical Safety. Physical safety provides a safe workplace that removes delays in productivity and promotes wellness and safety of employees who discharge various duties and responsibilities (Jonathan, 2016). According to Stoewen (2016), physical safety boosts wellness, which is an individual's ability to become aware and choose things that lead to successful existence in society or an organization. Stoewen asserts workers are often susceptible to many physical hazards that include exposure to radiation

in tandem with machine-related injuries, among others. Physical hazards are mitigated through protective policy and equipment, which Liu et al. (2020) posited as a basic requirement of employee safety. Furthermore Liu et al. suggested that through psychological safety, organizations build trust in the organization-employee safety relationship by providing safety equipment and policy to ensure the basic requirement of employee safety. Thus, to ensure physical safety, injury and harm from the work environment must not exist (Maddison et al., 2009) and trust through psychological safety must be implored (Liu et al., 2020).

Zimring et al. (2005) used a social, ecologic model to highlight personal, socio-organizational, and physical environment factors among the tenets of physical activity. The authors implied that society or an organization can realize physical safety when addressing the social, organizational, personal, and physical challenges that can cause physical injury or damage to people. Wachter and Yorio (2014) identified the need to engage workers and implement environmental safety measures to facilitate physical safety. In this case, the need for the organization to provide a safe workplace is imperative since it can eliminate production delays and warrant the safety of those who discharge various responsibilities (Jonathan, 2016). Liu et al. (2020) asserted that when organizations build a supportive and safe workplace, employees will believe their well-being is at the forefront generating trust and engagement in the organization. Therefore, society or organizations should engage in activities that avoid physical injury and promote wellness. Up next, the literature in psychological safety as it relates to organizational safety and a safe environment is provided.

Psychological Safety. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to

explore how federal government employees of Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. Psychological safety ensures freedom to interact with others in a space where ideas and reflection are encouraged (Stephen et al., 2020). This section presents the definition of psychological safety and the related term psychological safety climate based on a review of the literature.

Definition of Psychological Safety. A psychologically safe environment is characterized as a safe zone where individuals exhibit comfort in taking risks without criticism, fear, or judgement for their actions (Stephen et al., 2020). A learning environment deemed psychologically safe is one where individuals feel comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas in a community of learning where making mistakes is free of embarrassment and repercussion (Kostovich et al., 2020). Psychological safety is the establishment of acceptable social norms within an organization to develop trust and interpersonal relationships that foster a freedom of expression where fear and rejection are minimized and innovation and ideas are maximized (Boylan & Turner, 2017). In simulations, when individuals feel psychologically safe, they are more adept in the practice of speaking up and reflecting on mistakes, which in turn contributes to organizational learning (Stephen et al., 2020). In the next section a definition of psychological safety climate as it relates to the field of psychological safety is provided.

Definition of Psychological Safety Climate. Psychological safety climate is defined as the concept of organizational plans, policies, and procedures implemented for the well-being of employee psychological health (Hsiang-Te Tsuei et al., 2019). Hsiang-Te Tsuei et al. explained that the psychological safety climate impacts work conditions

and thus exerts a positive or negative influence on the psychological health of employees. The negative influence from the psychological safety climate is caused by bad workplace practices implemented in the organization, which is often unaccounted for, such as harassment or bullying (Javed et al., 2019). According to Javed et al., negative influence can be devastating to the individual's overall motivation that results in low productivity and physiological health problems. Javed et al. asserted that when organizations promote work rewards and provide concern for the employee's well-being, the employee's overall motivation and morale increase. Javed et al.'s correlation of increase in morale and motivation of employees to the positive influence of psychological safety climate explains the importance psychological safety climate has over the well-being and engagement of employees.

Subsequently the organizational concern for the well-being of employees directly contributes to increased productivity within the organization. Psychological safety climate invokes appropriate policy and procedure and a humility aspect of leadership by which interpersonal value is created through vision and clearly defined objectives (Hsiang-Te Tsuei et al., 2019). Based on the review of literature, preemptive policy that establishes organizational plans and procedures can be valuable in promoting a positive psychological safety climate that contributes to the well-being of employees (Javed et al., 2019; Li, Chen, et al., 2019). Up next, a discussion of the connection between organization safety, physical safety, and psychological safety is provided.

Connecting Organization Safety, Physical Safety, and Psychological Safety.

Together, physical safety and psychological safety create a foundation for which safety within the organization is formed. As posited by Le Coze (2019) and Hasan et al. (2019),

organization safety consists of a social structure by which the organization establishes rules and goals to create a safe working environment for employees that remains free of harm. To create a safe environment requires that organizations establish what Stoewen (2016) described as a climate of physical safety and wellness, free of hazards and rooted in policy and protective equipment, thus building trust between employer and employee. In this section the research will discuss the connection in the literature between organization safety, physical safety, and psychological safety. The logic and flow of the discussion delves into the trust, the individual, employer-employee relationship, and the foundation of physical and psychological safety aspects that influence organization safety outcomes. Up next is psychological safety and trust building in physical safety.

Wachter and Yorio (2014) suggested that to build trust requires employers engage with workers to address the challenges in physical safety and to work together. Additionally, Liu et al. (2020) highlighted the importance that psychological safety plays in the ability to work together by building trust through openness and engagement. Working together in a psychologically safe environment, Liu et al. suggested that employees feel a sense of support in the workplace and thus believe that their well-being is prioritized through physical safety.

Organizational structure, systems, and safety processes influence individual and team interaction. Individual and team safety is essential for building an organizational culture and improving organizational safety which results from motivated team cooperation (Hasan et al., 2019; Kahn, 1990). Organizational safety is the overarching construct by which the organization communicates the safety consciousness of all individuals in the organization (Le Coze, 2019).

As suggested by Griffin and Curcuruto (2016), the underlying influence on organizational safety results through positive motivation. According to Cavazza and Serpe (2009), positive motivation results from leadership priorities and shared value in safety. Improving shared value in safety and openness in shared value in safety is an ability that leaders can create for employees in the organization through free space to express ideas and concerns. Openness and employee inclusion is created through leadership development of a psychological safe zone where employees can speak freely (Roussin et al., 2018). Thus, organizational safety improvement starts with the creation of a psychologically safe space conducive to individuals openly speaking up on issues in safety.

Organizational safety improvement should start with the development of individual psychological safety (Harvey et al., 2019). Psychological safety is a shared belief that an organization is safe for employees to share ideas and fully express feelings without fear of rejection, punishment or retribution that affects well-being (Edmondson, 1999; Newman et al., 2017). When individual psychological safety is established and guaranteed, an individual is in a greater position of interacting without fear of rejection or punishment in expanded interpersonal contexts such as teams and organizational learning opportunities (Stephen et al., 2020). Instead, an individual will encounter an added value from learning from their mistake (Thorgren & Caiman, 2019). Therefore, while creating or improving organizational safety overall should be the goal, individual psychological safety is the priority for team performance to reach this goal (Rangachari & Woods, 2020). When individual psychological safety is guaranteed in team performance, there is a greater possibility of creating a positive organizational safety climate within the

organization.

Lack of safety in organizations has consequence psychologically when employees feel that it is unsafe to engage emotionally if ideas are anticipated to be rejected or if embarrassment is imminent. Herway (2017) asserted that the individual benefit of not speaking up tends to outweigh the advantage of saying something in an organization that lacks psychological safety. Herway's presentation of the Gallup data revealed that only three in 10 workers in the United States believed their opinion matters, suggesting that employees are in fear that their ideas and actions might be penalized and often choose to keep issues to themselves. Herway's findings are particularly important when employees are influenced and act as influencers in organizational safety because of motivating effects (Griffin & Curcuruto, 2016). Since organizations have policies, rules, and regulations, each situation may have its own consequence in such cases that an individual chooses to break policy, rule, or regulation. Therefore, in such a scenario, an employee may be afraid of speaking out regarding organizational safety because of the punishment based on the mistakes or behavior enacted. Thorgren and Caiman (2019) claimed that organizations succeed by learning from their mistakes however dangerous such mistakes may be. Therefore, if employees fail to speak up due to fear of engagement, the safety environment of the organization is ultimately at risk and ideas and concerns are never expressed.

The establishment of trust, and the belief that an organization is safe for employees to share ideas without rejection, creates the foundation that is psychological safety as described by Edmondson (1999) and Newman et al. (2017). The foundation of psychological safety initiates the interpersonal context that informs safety in teams and

through organization learning as posited by Stephen et al. (2020), which transcends from open input in physical safety measures and equipment to overall influence on organization safety. Ultimately the result of psychological safety and the contribution to physical safety and overall organizational safety is one of fully expressing feelings in an environment that contributes to employee well-being without fear of retribution (Edmondson, 1999; Newman et al., 2017). In the following section, a summary of the review of literature in organization safety is provided.

Organization Safety Summary. The review of existing literature describes organizational safety in the context of the social structure and beliefs of the organization, which is determined by the company, supervisor, and staff safety priority (Huang et al., 2020). Specifically, organization safety entails various attributes ranging from psychological to physical, which relies on citizenship behavior and existential human influence. Improving organizational safety should start with the development of individual psychological safety (Harvey et al., 2019). As demonstrated, the initial approach in ensuring corporate safety is by creating a psychologically sound environment for workers to speak up about issues (Rangachari & Woods, 2020). A lack of physical safety results in physical injury, especially when employees fail to discharge their duty of speaking up on issues. However, an increase in psychological safety ensures a safe zone to speak up where employees experience comfort in taking risks without judgment, criticism, or fear.

The review of literature supports a proactive organizational measure that promotes a positive psychological safety climate (Hsiang-Te Tsuei et al., 2019). The literature also described organizational climate based on the workers' perception of the

workplace environment in terms of interaction, behaviors, and energy present within the workplace (Newman et al., 2017). Organizational climate and safety can support the introduction of supportive norms, change and innovation whereby the organizational energy is expressed. In the next literature review theme, leadership in the context of psychological safety is discussed.

Leadership and Psychological Safety

This literature review section explored leadership in the context of psychological safety. Starting with a review of literature in leadership and leadership behavior, the literature reveals areas of leadership practices and behaviors best useful to the organization psychological safety. Following an explanation of general leadership behaviors and practices, the literature review delves into the link between the psychological safety of an organization and the organizational leadership theories and practices. Finally, a review of transformational leadership theory is included to connect the contribution that transformational leadership brings to the influence on psychological safety within the organization.

A leader's behavior has significant impacts on learning orientation and team climate. In a quantitative meta-analytic review, Frazier et al. (2017) indicated that team members mainly become attuned to their leader's behaviors, drawing specific information from the leader's actions about what remains accepted and expected. A leader can determine the team members' extent of feeling safe (Frazier et al., 2017; Yi et al., 2017). According to the quantitative cross-sectional research of Yi et al. (2017), when a leader embraces transparency, they facilitate proactive sharing of relevant information with their followers, depicting personal feelings and emotions. Through

established behavior that promotes transparency, approachability, and feedback, a leader can positively influence psychological safety, leading to improved innovations and continuous learning.

Frazier et al. (2017) aggregated theoretical and empirical works pulling in 136 independent samples that consisted of 22,000 individuals and approximately 5,000 groups, to perform a meta-analysis on psychological safety and the antecedents and outcomes. In their study, psychological safety was anchored on three primary variables, one of which is the precursor of leadership constructs such as transformational leadership and the positive relationship through work design characteristics that foster safety. From this perspective, it is paramount to evaluate the essential safety management practices and policies implemented in an organization that leadership directly influences to affect psychological safety. Furthermore, Frazier et al. posited that managers should create high-level policies and practices that govern trustworthy, candid, and open conversations designed to foster psychological safety. They opined that the safety management policies should be anchored on candid transparent talks that reflect trust, emotional attachment, perceptions, positive criticism, and optimism. These antecedents, outcomes, and moderators positively influence an organization's psychological safety status (Newman et al., 2017). In the next segment, the connection between leadership practices and psychological safety within the organization is explored.

Leadership Practices. The literature suggest there exists a link between the psychological safety of an organization and the organizational leadership practices. Chughtai (2016) asserted that the type of leadership within an organization has a direct effect on the psychological safety climate an organization creates through employee

inspiration and voice. Leaders hold a responsibility in their position not only for direction, but also for creating a climate of overall workplace safety, which includes a psychologically safe environment resultant from their actions, behaviors, and practices. The link between leadership and psychological safety has shown that supervisors possess power through leadership practices and maintain influence over policies and procedures that have an emphasis on inclusive leader behavior (Appelbaum et al., 2016; Guchait et al., 2019; Hu, Zhu, et al., 2018).

Leaders are uniquely positioned to exert influence on the insight their juniors have concerning psychological safety (Liu et al., 2018). Employees are, therefore, inspired and empowered in robust and productive relationships with their leaders who enable opportunity to perform (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017). A robust leader and employee relationship ensures employee access to important information, resources, and support for psychological safety, thereby creating personal success through stimulation and promotion of interaction (Kim et al., 2020). In turn, success through leadership practices and employee relationships contributes to organizational success.

When determining what is expected and what is not expected between leaders and employees, leadership theory and social exchange theory emerges as an effective link in the success of an organization (Almaaitah et al., 2017). A mutually beneficial relationship between leadership and employees is required to yield a positive outcome for organizational success. Therefore, adapting a strong system of leadership such as transformational, leader-employee exchange, and ethical leadership ensure the link between leadership and employee is established (Hackett et al., 2018). Through a good relationship created between a leader and an employee, the organization will be in a great

position of generating and implementing ideas that guarantee the success of the organization through feedback and full inclusion. The type of leader and person in position of leadership also weigh heavily on the outcome of leader employee relations.

Basit (2017), Frazier et al. (2017), Mat et al. (2019), and Maximo et al. (2019) posited that the most reliable and important determinant of employees' psychological safety in an organization is leadership. The type, form, structure, and individual in the leadership position determine the success or the downfall of an organization. Most organizations fail to compete strongly due to the limit of ideas; they must make decisions and implement effective strategies that enable the organization to be more productive than other organizations (Carmeli et al., 2014). In the quantitative cluster sampling research of 405 small and medium-size companies across Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei, Iqbal et al. (2020) asserted that leaders depend on the employees for production while employees depend on the leaders to create a psychologically safe environment. Based on leadership theory, leaders should be transformative to reshape employees towards productivity by creating a safe productive environment for the workers (Carmeli et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2016). Javed et al. (2019) supported leadership consideration by concluding that leadership actions and behaviors stimulate open communication, which is likely to have an optimistic effect on the application of psychological safety. Edmondson (2018) noted that creating employees' psychological safety is a leader's role, and leaders should intervene in creating a more psychological safe environment for their employees' performance. Thus, leaders should be transformative in nature. In the following section transformational leadership theory is discussed.

Transformational Leadership. Transformational leadership contributes towards

establishing an organizational working environment that is most suitable for learning and job performance (Li, Sajjad, et al., 2019). In doing so, employees emerge at the forefront of implementing productive strategies for personal success and organizational success through what they have learned. A good organization is one that provides employees with adequate time for learning and advancing their careers through reflection (Carmeli et al., 2014). Therefore, it is the responsibility of transformational leaders to grant their employees adequate time for learning and gaining more experience for task performance (Hackett et al., 2018). Transformational leaders who encourage a psychologically safe environment enable the workers to share their ideas, and thoughts, as well as reasoning openly, thus enabling them to develop through risk-taking and experience gathering (Edmondson, 2018).

Based on the quantitative cross-sectional study of 281 employees from diverse multinational corporations in China by Li, Sajjad, et al. (2019), transformational leadership encourages workers to trust in leadership, learn from mistakes, and develop innovatively as they feel psychologically safe within an organization. Li, Sajjad, et al. indicated that employees are influenced and inspired innovatively through transformational leadership that provides support and trust through a common vision. Their indications further support the importance of leadership and how leaders have a direct impact on employee actions, including psychological safety perception and outcome. The strategy of transformational leadership is useful for organizations in transforming the environment into psychologically safe and high performing businesses (Baer & Frese, 2003).

Through quantitative analysis and research, Duan et al. (2017) concluded that

transformational leadership has a positive influence on the psychological safety of an employee through voice and employee identification with the role of leadership. Furthermore, Duan et al. recommended that future research in leadership should explore qualitative studies that examine the influence of perception and the outcome of employee behavior in relationship to voice. Such recommendation has a direct association to other forms of employee influence and perceptions such as in psychological safety, of which voice is a predominate pillar (Chughtai, 2016). Up next a summary of the review of literature in leadership and psychological safety is provided.

Leadership and Psychological Safety Summary. In this section the influence of leadership on psychological safety, a significant area within the focus and identified gap of this research, is explored. The literature revealed how the leaders' behavior influences the learning orientation and team climate (Frazier et al., 2017). Leaders have a positive influence on psychological safety when they promote feedback, approachability, and transparency (Liu et al., 2018). Organizations are ideal for generating and implementing successful ideas when there is a good relationship between the leader and the employees. Quantitative cross-sectional research conducted in a Pakistan food company also demonstrated how leadership styles influence psychological safety (Chughtai, 2016). For instance, ethical, leader-employee exchange and transformational leadership have a positive influence on psychological safety (Edmondson, 2018; Hackett et al., 2018). Transformational leadership supports employee identification, a suitable working environment, and a suitable learning environment, which positively influence psychological safety (Li, Sajjad, et al., 2019).

The findings in the review of literature are significant in leadership and influence

on the psychological safety of employees. As a guide to the focus and purpose of this research, the area of leader influences on psychological safety as noted by previous researchers was further explored (Frazier et al., 2017; Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Javed et al., 2019; Maximo et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017; Page et al., 2019). Additionally, as discovered in the review of literature, most existing studies used a quantitative or mixed-methods approach to examine the relationship between leadership and psychological safety. The research gap in this study called for an assessment of leadership influence on psychological safety, as described by employees, which Merriam and Tisdell (2019) asserted is best achieved through a qualitative approach grounded in the specific perspectives and contexts of people in those settings. This research took note of the preexisting study methodologies and prior study recommendations and followed a qualitative descriptive design, which is further described in Chapter 3. In the next literature review theme, factors that influence psychological safety in the organization is discussed.

Factors Influencing Psychological Safety

Organizations must remain aware of the influences and factors that affect psychological safety as contributors in organizational settings. This section reviews factors that influence the creation of a psychologically safe, non-judgmental, and collaborative space through a synthesis of the literature exploring the context of peer-to-peer described experiences. The experiences and data from existing mixed-methods investigations and qualitative descriptive research suggests that individual behavior, mutual trust and respect, group dynamics, organizational climate, communication, and practice field and simulation space are important factors in a psychological safe

environment (Kostovich et al., 2020; Stephen et al., 2020).

Due to the hypercompetitive and dynamic environments, organizational success has shifted to continuous improvement involving innovation, change, and learning. Exploring and understanding the specific factors that influence and create psychological safety, especially those factors supportive of learning and innovation, are crucial. Furthermore, innovation supported by psychological safety depends on the nature and level of interaction between the members of a team in an organization or workplace (Shen et al., 2015). Past researchers have conducted studies to raise awareness around the factors that influence psychological safety, which can impact the mental health of employees in the workplace and encourage conversations on methods for promoting psychological safety (Andersson et al., 2020; Frazier et al., 2017; Han & Roh, 2020; Lee et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2017; Silla & Gamero, 2018). The importance of influential precursors on psychological safety in the organizational culture is particularly important for amplifying a firm's dynamic capability of learning and innovation (Andersson et al., 2020).

Just as previous research suggested, the findings from this study confirmed that influence on psychological safety is important to the support of innovation which in turn contributes to the evolution and success of the organization. Knowing the factors supportive of psychological safety brings about practical implications and precursors, which this study describes further in the recommendations section of Chapter 5. When leaders support influential factors and create awareness of psychological safety in the workplace, individual behavior changes in ways supportive of organizational success. In the next section, individual behavior in the psychologically safe environment is

discussed.

Individual Behavior. A fundamental of psychological safety is an individual's ability to express opinion, accept mistakes, and interact without worry of embarrassment or fear of repercussion (Stephen et al., 2020). Psychological safety involves a shared belief that explains the safety present when people are engaged in a group yet relies on individual behavior. Psychological safety promotes work engagement between individuals in the organization, whereby trust between individuals increases even during a mistake, avoiding the individual focus on self-protection (Frazier et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2017). An individual with qualities and behaviors supportive of psychological safety is linked with positive outcomes in daily work and daily performances (Kolbe et al., 2020). The introduction to the existing literature indicates the impact of individual behavior on psychological safety as a factor of influence in psychological safety within organizations and society.

In the quantitative cross-sectional psychological safety research conducted on 104 field sales and service teams in South Korea by Kim et al. (2020), a look into the individual behavior of team members was explored. Kim et al. reported that psychological safety dramatically improved the outcomes of a workplace as studied in the context of individuals within teams at diverse local sales companies. Kim et al. asserted that psychological safety is directly related to behavior in the workplace, especially through individual behavior in teams. The outcome of individual behavior shows that positive results in the workplace derived from the behavior that teams exert when the individual behavior within the team contributes to teams working together. The results shared by Kim et al. found that the crucial role of individual interaction and behavior in

teams affects the positive outcome of psychological safety. The revelation from the previous research in individual behavior in the team context has a broad impact when translated to the overall organization.

In another look into individual behavior, Roussin et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative observational study exploring the connection between self-viability and psychological safety perception effects in simulation learning. Roussin et al. used surveys to collect data regarding self-assessments and reactions to the education experience in simulation learning. In the research, Roussin et al. discovered that those individuals who have increased self-efficacy focus on clarifying explanations. Roussin et al. concluded that it is essential to improve an individual's psychological safety and maintain individual self-efficacy to boost the way people learn and record positive outcomes. In essence, Roussin et al. determined that self-efficacy can significantly affect an individual's psychology, leading to poor outcomes in all sectors, including the workplace. This brings to attention that one's own self-efficacy plays a role in the confidence and influence in a psychologically safe environment.

In other studies, researchers have suggested there exists a relationship between individual behavior and influence on psychological safety. In research conducted by Frazier et al. (2017), Kim et al. (2020), and Roussin et al. (2018), findings revealed that individual behavior affects psychological safety, which was found to be a core factor of influence. Therefore, employers must determine the workers' levels of psychological safety and put interventions in place. Given the implications of individual behavior in the workplace, more research should be done concerning the contributions of individual behavior and the influence this introduces on the concept of psychological safety in work

outcomes. The next segment explores mutual trust and respect in a psychologically safe environment.

Mutual Trust and Respect. Trust and respect are significant influences on psychological safety in an organization or society at large. Kolbe et al. (2020) argued that psychological safety creates confidence among individuals. However, that confidence mainly depends on the mutual trust and respect among the team members. Due to psychological safety's fragile and dynamic perception, individuals must feel their leaders' or teams' trustworthiness (Edmondson, 2018; Kolbe et al., 2020). Through a quantitative cluster random sampling methodology on 277 supervisors and 562 employees, Agarwal and Farndale (2017) argued that from the obtained results, lack of mutual trust and respect exposes employees to difficulties in voicing their opinions, concerns, and admitting ignorance. On the other hand, when trust and respect are promoted, it becomes possible to foster shared knowledge among individuals, allowing the emergence of psychological safety. Therefore, if mutual trust and respect levels are high, individuals can feel safe and free of blame when voicing opinions crucial for organizational and societal success.

It is important to note that when individuals become persistently blamed, they begin feeling incompetent in everything they do. The increase in blame can degrade the strength of trust and respect and eventually affect an individual's psychological safety. According to Delizonna (2017), establishing a climate of curiosity must be reinforced to foster psychological safety which allows for a shift in focus from blame to one of learning. The process entails engaging individuals in exploration and asking for solutions in a safe space of practice. Sometimes, those who have created problems often have

solutions (Delizonna, 2017; Edmondson, 2018). With blame and guilt, it is possible to escalate a conflict, which attracts defensiveness and disengagement. However, when blame becomes replaced with curiosity, people desire to find solutions (Edmondson, 2018). Through that process it becomes possible to realize psychological safety and experience full openness of one's voice in a positive and safe organizational climate with mutual trust and respect. In the next section, group dynamics and its role in the psychological safe environment is discussed.

Group Dynamics. Group dynamics describes the way in which people in a group interact with one another (Delizonna, 2017). Creating psychological safety depends on the collaboration promoted by organizational and societal members. Delizonna (2017) suggested that instead of speaking as an adversary when approaching conflict, one should do so primarily as a collaborator. In quantitative experimental research, Gissel and Johnstone (2017) investigated the effects of psychological safety and auditor knowledge on subordinates' willingness to share privately known and fraud-relevant information during brainstorming. Gissel and Johnstone tested a model illustrating how partner leadership affected subordinates' perceptions of psychological safety. The authors revealed in the more psychologically safe condition, the partner engendered a supportive, non-threatening group dynamic and a style that encouraged idea sharing. Gissel and Johnstone implied the criticality of encouraging team dynamics that engendered psychological safety for less-knowledgeable subordinates. Such a process creates a psychological safety environment, allowing for improved ideas that facilitate collaboration and innovation built from shared group dynamics based on interaction. Next, the researcher discusses the concept of organizational climate and its influence as it

relates to psychological safety.

Organizational Climate. Organizational climate is an enduring concept that separates one organization from another and directly influences the organization, especially over that of individuals (Schneider et al., 2017). Although psychological safety is a continuum series with many phases, employees' perception of the organizational climate and surroundings eventually dictate the behavior. A direct and significant relationship between the employees' environmental perceptions and the team's actions exists (Edmondson, 2018). Employee environmental perception hinges on the influence received from management guidance in the climate of an organization, which then influences worker well-being, engagement, and productivity (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). As a result, the climate in an organization has a direct effect on the psychological safety, culture, teamwork, and behavior of employees.

The psychological safety belief is built on the notion that a well-integrated culture of safety and teamwork elevates the attitudes of employees in the workplace and is a crucial metric in the overall psychological safety climate analysis. Andersson et al. (2020) posited that organizations should cultivate a safe ground for growth and overall psychological safety. Using a sample of 367 professional drivers and a quantitative structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, Silla and Gamero (2018) found psychological safety climate was negatively associated with time pressure and burnout and positively influential on professional drivers' general health based on the environmental, or climate influence. With this, it was revealed that an organizational climate that exerts a positive influence on the foundation of psychological safety would significantly reduce the time pressure demands, which simultaneously bridges the gap

between a psychological safe environment and the well-being of drivers' general health (Silla & Gamero, 2018). The results suggested that organizational climate factors, such as time pressure and perceptions of climate safety directly influence the individual and group psychological safety of the organization.

In the absence of a healthy workplace, an unfriendly and harsh climate can emerge. The existence of an unfriendly organizational climate translates to perceived risk, work pressures, and barriers, much of which employees fear in the form of harsh and negative criticism (Page et al., 2019). Existence of a pleasant workplace on the other hand helps induce both a direct and indirect positive influence on psychological safety (Wong & Chan, 2020). Using a quantitative cross-sectional study consisting of 1,023 Chinese hotel employees who completed a self-administered questionnaire, Wong and Chan (2020) examined workload, organizational constraints, lack of work control, psychological strain, and psychological safety. Their results indicated that psychological strain exerted from the organizational climate negatively impacts psychological safety and mediates the effects of work antecedents on two dimensions of overall safety behavior (Wong & Chan, 2020). In their conclusions, Wong and Chan demonstrated that poor work conditions and poor organizational climate induce high levels of psychological strain, resulting in a negative influence on psychological safety and feelings of guilt. In the following section, the influential factor of communication in psychological safety will be discussed.

Communication. Psychological safety is improved by ensuring employees can freely communicate with each other. Edmondson (2018), Iqbal et al. (2020), and Kim et al. (2020) posited that organizational innovations and performance benefit from idea-

sharing and communication among employees. Employees cannot communicate when there are barriers resulting from organizational policy that limit interaction and idea-sharing in the organizational work structure. Barriers in the organizational work structure and communication plan influence psychological safety. Therefore, adequate time and methods of communication should be provided for the employees to interact. In a quantitative analysis of 100 South African hospital employees participating in team-based gaming, Parker and du Plooy (2020) revealed that when employees have the freedom of interacting while on the job, a mechanism that allows for idea-sharing is formed to correct mistakes and direct the organization toward its goal. In doing so, freedom through communication is established within the organization to strengthen psychological safety and encourage employee engagement towards overall safety.

Leaders and managers improve psychological safety by encouraging participation, honesty, and ideation (Hu, Zhu, et al., 2018). Through this strategy of encouragement through participation, leaders are in a great position to safely engage individuals, address individuals through communication, and enable individuals to put their focus on tasks and perform such tasks as a team (Kim et al., 2020). The premise of psychological safety is contingent on healthy employee interactions. By creating psychological safety among workers, the entire organizational culture can be shifted to teamwork and individual performance, resulting in increased psychomotor and communication development (Kahn, 1990; Turner & Harder, 2018).

While there is research suggesting that too much communication during work hours reduces work output in terms of quantity of work (McLinton et al., 2018), a low consensus on this belief was found to exist. On the other hand, in a mixed-methods

approach sampling 300 managers from 55 Belgian private family firms, Vandekerckhof et al. (2018) considered increased communication as the core factor that reduces losses in an organization by creating a safe environment consisting of sound decision-making and mutual interpersonal trust. A potential balance of communication practice can be found in opportunities that arise from learning simulations and opportunities to conduct pre-briefings aside from the live working environment. Implementing structured pre-briefing activities, including concept mapping and fiction contracts, could contribute to increased team psychological safety and enhanced openness in performance (Roh et al., 2018). Such participation in a safe zone can create an approach for improving the safety climate and overall psychological safety of workers in a non-distracting segment and safe space to communicate therapeutically within the organization (Turner & Harder, 2018). Up next, the method of using practice fields and simulation space will be discussed in the psychological safe environment.

Practice Field and Simulation Space. The practice field and simulation space, defined as a method that introduces problems and practices in a safe simulation-based environment, places individuals in scenarios that prepare them for challenges in real life (Senge, 2014). The use of the practice field has been considered a core factor that promotes psychological safety in the workplace (Kang & Min, 2019). Senge (2014) coined the term practice field in the 1990s while describing one learning organization hallmark. Senge identified that most organizations do not deploy practice and reflection in improving employees' skills. While practice fields and simulation space are pillars to building psychological safety, the process must also be a core strategy that organizations use in adapting individuals to a culture or professional practice (Kang & Min, 2019).

After recruiting individuals for the organization, it is essential to train and enable the individuals to gradually adapt to the organizational culture as this provides what Kang and Min (2019) posited as a facilitator to optimizing psychological safety. Through the practice field concept, an individual's skills and understanding are improved, thus creating a psychological safe environment (Turner & Harder, 2018). When an employee is familiar with a particular field, the individual will be in a great position of performing tasks without tension or any kind of pressure. This situation of feeling empowered and safe in a workplace generates psychological safety. Turner and Harder (2018) asserted in their qualitative Walker and Avant methodological study that an individual is considered psychologically safe in a work environment when they know that their work or task cannot be given to another person, and they cannot be fired at just any given point in time. Although predicting such a situation is not easy, Campbell-McBride (2018) noted that skills and experience are the core defenders for the psychological safety of an individual in a work environment. Such a level of safety is developed through practice field and practice space where an individual is given enough time to learn from the mistakes in the practice field and gradually improve for exemplary performance.

Practice reduces recurring mistakes and eliminates various habits that are vulnerable to mistakes or errors (Roh et al., 2018). Additionally, practice contributes to experience which is associated with the number of times in the field of practice and how many times an individual has learned from making mistakes. For a greater level of experience, an individual must make some minor mistakes, learn from the mistakes, and improve the work technique. The more the individual makes a mistake and learns, the more the individual increases psychological safety within the workplace (Delizonna,

2017).

A practice space in a simulation-based environment creates a safe zone where individuals practice, make mistakes, and learn without fear of being penalized (Kang & Min, 2019). These simulation-based environments are usually intended for trial, training, and learning rather than the critical real-life environment that may generate a huge loss to the organization in the case of failure (Stephen et al., 2020). An example is pilots training in flight simulators before flying an aircraft, especially a new type of aircraft. Surgeons also practice, observe, and assist in various surgeries before conducting an operation on their own patients. As such, an individual can learn new strategies and procedures for conducting various practices in the practice space, leading to increased psychological safety (Turner & Harder, 2018). Practice space and simulations lead to safe zones, which in turn influence the psychological safety of individuals.

Creating safe zones for practice and communication are essential through a strategy of simulation-based environments to strengthen learner psychological safety and improve cognitive skills (Roh et al., 2018). To better understand the benefits of pre-briefing and scenario-based learning in the field of psychological safety, Roh et al. (2018) conducted an observational study in the health care sector with an experimental group and a control group that involved pre-briefing activities consisting of medical skills practice, scenario review, and concept mapping. Roussin et al. examined how occupational self-efficacy and psychological safety perceptions influenced active and honest participation in simulation-based learning. Throughout a two-year assessment at a European simulation center, Roussin et al. concluded that participants with greater occupational self-efficacy levels and greater perception of psychological safety were

more likely to speak up and voice their opinion. Roussin et al. further recommended that future research explore other factors of influence in the interprofessional space and highlighted the importance that individual and environmental factors have on a psychologically safe environment.

In similar research, Kostovich et al. (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study using an online survey of simulation-based nursing faculty. The results of the study by Kostovich et al. revealed that creating a psychologically safe environment in simulation-based safe zones was a best practice for improvement in learning outcomes. Using content analysis in a simulation setting, Kostovich et al. revealed five themes: (a) setting the stage, (b) it's ok, it's simulation, (c) everyone is here to learn, (d) planned strategies, and (e) facilitator as observer. Kostovich et al. implemented strategies throughout the simulation-based phases to facilitate student risk-taking as part of the learning process. During the process, faculty watched for verbal and non-verbal cues by students signaling a potential psychologically unsafe learning environment so that they could intervene to protect them if necessary. Kostovich et al. concluded that faculty perceived that they played a role in establishing a psychologically safe learning environment during all phases of the simulation-based experience. Furthermore, Kostovich et al. expressed that simulation-based safe zones bring value by reducing stress and increasing risk-taking during the learning process where mistakes in practice fields become teachable moments.

In a qualitative descriptive study by Stephen et al. (2020), pre-licensure nursing students' perceptions of psychological safety were explored in the context of the simulation-based learning environment. Stephen et al. revealed five themes across the three phases of simulation-based learning: (a) faculty presence; (b) learning without fear;

(c) working together; (d) setting expectations; and (e) positive conversations. Stephen et al. concluded that students felt a greater sense of psychological safety when they possessed more control over their role, felt safe to ask for guidance, were supported, and had freedom to speak up. Additionally, in the findings of psychological safety in healthcare simulation-based environments, by Stephen et al., when an individual felt psychologically safe in simulation, the likelihood of meaningful engagement and open input to the process were more prominent through feedback because of self-reflection and reflection on the actions of others. The results of the studies by Kostovich et al. (2020) and Stephen et al. (2020) point to the importance of practice fields within the organization and the role of leaders and facilitators in setting the stages, recognizing their influence on others, and identification of interventions in psychological safety in group settings.

The practice field is effective in ensuring that employees develop skills that will help them improve their practices and provide them with greater opportunities for perfecting psychological safety while performing critical operations. The practice field enables the employees to make mistakes in their practices rather than in the real field (Turner & Harder, 2018). According to Yoon and Solomon (2017), most employees prefer to enhance their operations in the practice field by making mistakes and identifying the right performance strategies rather than making mistakes in the actual field. Therefore, in a field like medicine and engineering, most learners take ample time in the practice field to enhance their operations in the real operational field. Yulita et al. (2020) revealed that there is a direct association between the practice field and influence on psychological safety in real-life operations. This claim is also shared by Guchait et al.

(2019), Kim et al. (2020), and Newman et al. (2017) who supported the correlation between the practice field and psychological safety establishment as it relates to live real-world operations. Next, a summary of the review of literature in factors influencing psychological safety is provided.

Factors Influencing Psychological Safety Summary. The review of literature in this section demonstrated how individual behavior, mutual trust and respect, group dynamics, organizational climate, communication, and practice field and simulation space are important factors in the psychologically safe environment. Specifically, self-efficacy, as individual behavior, influences how people construct a psychologically safe environment (Roussin et al., 2018). Trust and respect create a safe environment for employees to voice opinions crucial for societal and organizational success (Kostovich et al., 2020; Stephen et al., 2020). While the dynamic in group interactions supports collaboration and innovation, which are critical to the psychological safety environment (Delizonna, 2017). The literature demonstrated how organizational climate impacts the behavior of employees, teamwork, culture, and psychological safety (Page et al., 2019; Schneider et al., 2017). Furthermore, the literature revealed that organizations can improve psychological safety by simply supporting communication among the employees (Parker & du Plooy, 2020; Vandekerckhof et al., 2018). Likewise, it is assumed that a safe space to communicate can improve the psychological safety of workers (Roh et al., 2018; Wong & Chan, 2020). Finally, the literature revealed that the concept of practice field and simulation space aid in limiting recurring mistakes and habits that are vulnerable to errors and mistakes (Turner & Harder, 2018). Overall, the literature reviewed supported the correlations between individual behavior, mutual trust and respect, group dynamics,

organizational climate, communication, practice field and simulation space and their influence on psychological safety. In the following section, the influence of psychological safety on employees is discussed.

The Influence of Psychological Safety on Employees

Psychological safety is an established organizational norm and common belief that provides open and trusting relationships to foster frank and candid discussion without fear of retaliation, rejection, or dismissal (Boylan & Turner, 2017). The candid and trustful relationships developed through psychological safety exhibit influence on the ability to express feelings or emotions without fear of negative consequences from team members or employees. The psychological safety concept is found in the interpersonal link, in which individuals who think that they are less risky interpersonally will try new ways and strategies of performing the operation (Newman et al., 2017).

Through high levels of psychological safety, organizations establish inclusive environments allowing employee engagement, upward voice behavior, and commitment resultant of the establishment of positive organizational citizen behavior (OCB) (Chaudhary, 2019; Ghani & Hyder, 2020; Komljenovic et al., 2017). Thus, for firm success the organization should ensure the workplace is psychologically safe to positively influence employee engagement, voice, and organizational commitment. The following sections will delve into the influence of psychological safety on employee engagement, upward voice behavior, and commitment through OCB.

Psychological Safety and Employee Engagement. Employee engagement is an attitude and level of personal commitment that an employee demonstrates towards organizational values and mission, both intellectually and emotionally (Aninkan &

Oyewole, 2014). In personal engagement one seeks to connect with an organizational role through behavior that is representative of self-expression in three dimensions that are categorized as cognitive, emotional, and physical expression (Kahn, 1990). As outlined by Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot (2016), the cognitive dimension of employee engagement refers to mindfulness and attention in the role the employee fulfills. The emotional dimension of employee engagement reveals how the employee feels about work and how the employee invests energy emotionally based on demands of their organizational role. Finally, in the physical dimension of employee engagement, concerns regarding physical energy exerted by the employee remains at the forefront, especially in regard to employee physical efforts over an extended length of time. In personal engagement, an employee does not just bring himself or herself to the workplace but desires more in their role and responsibility in the organization (Kahn, 1990). Likewise, Kahn (1990) asserted there exist a psychological aspect of influence on engagement that consist of psychological safety rooted in feelings of value, worthwhile and usefulness in the employee's work. Edmondson (2018) posited a clear link between employee engagement and psychological safety in the workplace when given freedom of expression. Therefore, a disengaged employee may serve as an indicator of the lack of psychological safety in the workplace.

A disengaged employee lacks a position in strengthening teamwork, thus limiting the workforce and success of the organization (Jain et al., 2016). According to Edmondson (2018) and Jiang et al. (2019), the best way of engaging employees is creating a psychologically safe environment in which the workers can interact safely and communicate effectively. In the observations of Kahn and Heaphy (2013), the engagement and disengagement of employees is directly related to psychological safety

through interpersonal relationships, type of management, and norms expressed within the organization.

To remain positive, psychological safety requires a supportive relationship where individuals work together and engage within the workplace. Without open and safe interpersonal relationships, the employees will not be in a good position that fosters teamwork through engagement (Chaudhary, 2019). As such, the level of engagement depends on the employee interpersonal relationships, especially with the leaders of the company or the organization (Kahn, 1990; Shuck et al., 2011). In addition, the management style adopted for the organization determines the level of employee engagement and thus influences the organizational performance and establishment of an atmosphere of try and fail where individuals are free of consequence (Kahn, 1990). An atmosphere that consists of a try and fail construct is a safe atmosphere free of harm, embarrassment, and repercussion that Kostovich et al. (2020) explained as a psychologically safe environment. Thus, leaders build relationships upon trust and freedom of expression that strengthens employee engagement through a psychologically safe and consequence free environment (Boylan & Turner, 2017).

The employee-leader relationship is influential on the psychological safety of employees and their engagement within the organization. According to Subhakaran and Dyaram (2018), different organizational hierarchies have different levels of psychological safety within an organization. These management hierarchies also have a great influence on the level at which an employee is engaged. Likewise, employees feel safer and more engaged in a resilient relationship with leaders who understand the possibility of mistakes and with leaders who can handle mistakes without causing psychological unrest (Mat et

al., 2019). In horizontal leadership, employees are likely to have a strong engagement due to the strong relationship they create with their managers and leaders (Edmondson, 2012). A psychologically safe environment where employees are in a greater position of interacting with leaders increases the engagement level in the workplace since employees feel safe in their daily operations and activities (Iqbal et al., 2020).

According to Frazier et al. (2017), organizational norms have a great association with employee engagement and psychological safety. An employee who adheres to the organizational norms has a higher capability of contributing to psychological safety and improving their performance and productivity based on the sense of organizational justice and reciprocity (Lyu, 2016). Organizational norms allow employees to try various techniques of engagement in their daily operations with greater capability of safely handling risks without causing social unrest. Therefore, as Lyu (2016) suggested, psychological safety serves as direct influence on the outcome of engagement in organizations, especially in situations of interaction in safely controlled environments, such as those with agreed upon norms.

Kahn's cognitive, physical, and emotional dimensions should be considered in the promotion of employee engagement to unleash an individuals' spirit at work (Basit, 2017; Frazier et al., 2017; and Iqbal et al., 2020). May et al. (2004) asserted that employee engagement involves a process of bridging the divide between the organizational sphere and the individual sphere through an exploration and challenge of the human spirit. The human spirit improves work performance and is directly influenced by work and psychological safety in the organization prompting the need for employee fulfillment (May et al., 2004). In the case where the employee is afraid of taking on task,

human spirit towards work will reduce; however, enhanced psychological safety creates a good environment that accelerates an individual's spirit towards work performance bringing to light the fulfillment experienced during engagement (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2016). Additionally, psychological contracts, or agreed upon expectations created by establishing psychological safety, are considered an influencer on employee engagement (Payne & Katrinli, 2020). According to Basit (2017), it is essential to form a psychologically safe workplace for improved engagement and productivity. Through the psychologically safe environment, employees feel free to interact and engage for better performance of the organization. In the next segment, a discussion on psychological safety and its influence on employee voice is provided.

Psychological Safety and Employee Voice. Within an organization, the employee generates ideas and solutions contributing to the organizational success through speaking up and voicing concern. Ghani and Hyder (2020) explained that employee voice is the process by which employees deliver innovation, change, and suggestions to improve the organization. Tu et al. (2019) defined an environment rich in support and freedom to be a psychological safe environment since the voice of an employee is equal to a manager or a leaders' voice.

According to Ghani and Hyder (2020), ideas and opinions communicated through employee voice behavior are considered the only way employees feel empowered to express views and opinions regarding work in the organization. Additionally, Ghani and Hyder asserted that employees only speak in situations where voice is openly welcomed, emphasizing the need for management to leverage psychological connections that promote open employee voice. In contrast, Roussin et al. (2018) asserted that in a setting

where management fails to optimize the environment for psychological safety, employees may be criticized, embarrassed, or rejected because of their opinion and less likely to speak up. The conclusion by Roussin et al. indicated a link between increased employee voice and psychological safety given that individual perception of management focuses on a psychologically safe and empathetic environment results in employees speaking up.

For a workplace to encourage idea-sharing and acceptance of employee voice, leaders and fellow employees should show trust and open safe relationship with each other. Safdar et al. (2017) explained that organizations that allow and incorporate employee opinions into their operations or decision making have high chances of succeeding in a competitive market. Wexelbaum (2016) related employee voice to long-serving capabilities by stating that employees who have the freedom of speech and participation feel safer in serving the organization than employees whose opinions are restricted and only mandated to the task that concerns them. According to Ayub et al. (2020), a supportive and non-threatening manager plays a great role in fostering psychological safety identification and creation of a safe space. These actions by managers to create a psychologically safe working environment contribute towards performance and operations by enhancing employee voice.

An employee is likely to improve their performance in an organization enriched with freedom and supported by management. As indicated by Tu et al. (2019), an organization that is both supportive and free is indicative of a psychologically safe environment since employee voice is representative and equal to that of the organization management voice. Existing research supported the association between affection commitment and psychological safety since the employee feels safe when the

organization considers their ideas or opinion towards a particular issue. Robinson and Shuck (2019) described the process of making an employee voice count to the organization as a psychologically safe situation that wins the heart of an employee and makes an employee improve in their strategies. When the employee voice counts in an organization, the employee feels safe and accepted within an organization. Employee acceptance is when companies allow employee voice to fully contribute to decision-making and innovation for the success of the organization in a safe and open environment, such as evident by companies like Tesla (Dabić et al., 2020). By prioritizing employee voice through a psychologically safe environment, an employee may have a greater chance and capability of improving their commitment and performance in an organization. In the next section the researcher will discuss psychological safety and its influence on organizational citizenship behavior.

Psychological Safety and Organizational Citizen Behavior. Becoming a contributing citizen is fundamental in society and in the organization. Ghani and Hyder (2020) explained that through organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), positive change is enacted by members of the organization. This positive change behavior, or OCB, is characterized by behavioral dimensions based on the premise of altruism or helping behavior, voice behavior, and contextual performance behavior (LePine et al., 2002). By bringing together operations through new means such as psychological safety, employees and the organization are in a greater position of identifying new ways and improving key performance for the success of the organization.

The impact of psychological safety on the contextual performance behavior element of OCB is important to the employee and the organization. According to Payne

and Katrinli (2020), employees who are psychologically safe have a greater intensity of performing better than employees who have a fear of being punished or embarrassed in an organization. Iqbal et al. (2020) noted that psychological safety can change citizen behavior since individuals adapt to organizational culture. This alludes to the premise that a management structure that creates psychological safety may increase employee benevolent intentions and shift employee behavior through positive influence on OCB (Hu, Zhu, et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2020). Resultantly the belief is that since OCB also promotes individual benefits, employees may prioritize various behaviors based on self-serving benefits rather than altruism and organizational concerns (Peng et al., 2019). Next, a summary of the review of literature regarding the influence of psychological safety on employees is provided.

The Influence of Psychological Safety on Employees Summary. Psychological safety encourages open and trustful relationships to facilitate candid discussions without fear of rejection or reprisal (Boylan & Turner, 2017). Psychological safety exhibits influence on expressing feelings or emotions without fear of negative consequences from team members or employees. For a firm's success, the organization should ensure that it positively influences employee engagement, voice, and organizational commitment through psychological safety (Chaudhary, 2019; Ghani & Hyder, 2020; Komljenovic et al., 2017). A disengaged employee lacks a position in strengthening teamwork, thus limiting the workforce and success of the organization (Jain et al., 2016). Psychological safety requires a supportive relationship where individuals work together and engage within the workplace. Without open and safe interpersonal relationships, the employees will not be in a good position that fosters teamwork through engagement (Chaudhary,

2019). In the next literature review theme, the influence of psychological safety on the organization is discussed.

Psychological Safety and the Organization

Organizations improve organizational adaptability and performance through psychological safety practices fostered in the workplace. McLinton et al. (2018) reported psychological safety to be vital in the hierarchical organizational structure, complex organizational systems, and on occasions where an error may result in dangerous consequences. Edmondson (2018) suggested that for a team member to feel free in information gathering, communication, and idea-sharing, they must be sure of their psychological safety. In this section, psychological safety influence in organization adaptability and organization performance is explored.

Organizational Adaptability. Due to the ever-changing business environment, businesses must evolve and adapt their culture and operational strategies to fit the needs of employees and consumers. Organizational adaptability is an understanding of how an organization can effectively evolve in response to needs and is a construct related to organizational agility and the ability to shift through innovative response (Geiger et al., 2020). For the business to adapt to its environment, it must consider factors like information seeking, critical information identification, and acting quickly for the success of an organization (Duchek, 2020). Likewise, management must consider employee satisfaction to ensure adaptation is respectful and mutually beneficial to the organization and employees based on shared vision and organizational goals (Geiger et al., 2020; Rogers & Ashforth, 2017).

Organizational adaptability and achievement of goals relies on employee

satisfaction, mutual respect, and shared trust. Rogers and Ashforth (2017) asserted that employees should satisfy their needs while also adapting to the needs of the organization. This assertion by Rogers and Ashforth of employee satisfaction considers self-related outcomes in the context of adaptability within the organization, which translates to a sense of belonging through a psychologically safe environment. Additionally, Kim et al. (2020) suggested employee satisfaction and commitment is contingent on psychological safety in the organization, which enables adaptation under challenging situations where trust and shared outcomes exist. Kwon et al. (2020) contended that an environment rooted in positive psychological safety enables employees to become adaptable through innovation and creativity to achieve both personal satisfaction and organizational needs. Sorensen et al. (2018) posited that adaptability is supportive to both the organization and worker when for instance money becomes secondary to employees in lieu of organization support of good health and safety. Through a psychologically safe environment, personal well-being could be satisfied, and employees find themselves contributing to tasks that improve the organizational performance and adaptability (Dollard & Bakker, 2010).

Psychological safety enables a safe space for free sharing and open gathering of information, leading to adaptation to change in an evolving world. According to Turner and Harder (2018), psychological safety of the organization could promote the continuous and active seeking of information by employees. Geiger et al. (2020) asserted that information sharing is an important characteristic for organizational adaptability and agility. Kim et al. (2020) suggested that employees who feel psychologically safe within an organization have a greater capability of sharing ideas and improving organizational adaptation through learning and information sharing. Kim et al. and Geiger et al.

highlighted the importance of psychological safety to promote information sharing and contribution to organizational adaptability.

In business analysis, employee information access is critical to identifying the key threats and opportunities of a business or an organization's operation (Newman et al., 2017). Business analysis entails the ability to sense change, seize opportunity, and transform the organization using the input of employees as the organization strives to adapt and remain flexible (Geiger et al., 2020). Employees will not act quickly in terms of information identification and transformation if they have no chance of speaking up, sharing ideas, or making decisions for the organization (Boylan & Turner, 2017; Herway, 2017). Hence, the correlation between psychological safety and organizational adaptability remains relevant in the ever-changing business environment when open information sharing is created for the employee through a safe working environment.

According to Jiang et al. (2019), organizations that offer an expressively safe environment have a greater tendency to adapt to the ever-changing business environment. When every stakeholder has the opportunity of advising managers safely, the organization becomes better adaptive through creative information generated by employees (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017). The employees will then find it easier to share information without fear of being embarrassed or rejected in an open and safe environment (Stephen et al., 2020). Geiger et al. (2020) posited that adaptability is required for the organization to evolve. Jiang et al. (2019) and Kim et al. (2020) suggested that to strengthen adaptability requires a foundation of psychological safety supportive to employee contributions. The contributions in research by Geiger et al. (2020), Jiang et al.(2019), and Kim et al. (2020) highlighted the connection that

psychological safety plays in the influence of organizational adaptability. In the next section psychological safety influence on the organization performance is explored.

Organizational Performance. Previous research suggested that a correlation between organizational performance and psychological safety is strong. Organizational performance, as defined by Antony and Bhattacharyya (2010), revealed how well an organization is managed and presented an indication of value and benefit delivered to stakeholders. Edmondson (2018) related the organizational performance to the workforce of the organization; employees indicate good performance in an environment where there is coordination, consideration, and support. Dirani et al. (2020) considered such an environment as a social climate of trust where employees are in a greater position of performing when they have trusted leaders who consider them in times of difficulty.

An employee protected in an organization, just as a son is protected in a family, is one of the greatest influencers for organizational performance. According to Rao-Nicholson et al. (2016), the employer or a leader's practice and relationship to the employee is a motivating force that drives employee performance. There is a great dependency on leaders and employees in organizational performance. The connection is that the organization depends on leaders to improve their operation for its success, while the leaders depend on the employees to improve their practical skills and performance for the achievement of the organization (Cai et al., 2018). When the link between an employee and the leader breaks, the employee is likely to underperform (Fransen et al., 2020). However, a strong bond or relationship between employees and leaders improves organizational performance by creating a psychologically safe environment that consists of trust and a positive working relationship.

Creating a psychological safe environment provides the flexibility required for innovation and dynamic operations for the performance of an organization (Javed et al., 2019). Iqbal et al. (2020), Edmondson (2018), and Shao et al. (2017) suggested that trust, cooperation, and idea-sharing are the key drivers for organizational success. However, Chen et al. (2019) claimed that trust, cooperation, and idea-sharing cannot be managed without creating a safe working environment that guarantees employees psychological safety. If an organization needs its workforce to be stable and performing, then there is a need to unite these individuals to build a team. In a quantitative cross-sectional study, consisting of a web-based survey of 165 workers from midsized companies, Yin et al. (2019) identified that psychological safety is linked to the firm's performance, where process innovation is considered a mediating variable. Yin et al. also concluded that the managerial implications were key in the development of teamwork and perceptions of psychological safety, especially through transformational leadership training that supported information sharing.

Innovation results through idea generation, information, and implementation of strategies in an open and safe environment that improves the performance of the organization. When employees have no guarantee of psychological safety, they become afraid to share ideas that may solve organizational issues, which then affects employee and organizational performance (Obrenovic et al., 2020). Companies such as Apple Corporation and Google Inc. rely on employee information and ideas to improve their product evolution and performance (Gehani, 2016). Toyota Corporation provides open employee participation, which has resulted in new ideas that support a just-in-time and lean production process that outputs a higher quality product (Sahoo & Yadav, 2018).

Employees are aware of the internal and external operations; therefore, it is essential to consider their ideas and operations for organizational performance through open information sharing (Geiger et al., 2020). In contrast, Mura et al. (2016) noted that giving employees an opportunity for generating ideas and implementing these ideas also brings about risks to the firm's operations since slight mistakes may affect the entire organization. It is important to realize that while idea sharing is mostly positive, there is inherent risk in the process of implementing ideas without proper oversight and interaction by leadership.

Zhao et al. (2020) explained that employee risk in implementing ideas is minimized by coordination and interaction; especially the interaction between employees and managers. This claim suggests that managers have greater responsibilities of minimizing risks and maximizing organizational performance through close interaction with the employees. Edmondson (2018), Javed et al. (2019), and Lee et al. (2020) indicated that there is a great relationship between the process of innovation, working environment, psychological safety, and firm performance. These processes depend on each other, and the core agents for the association are a firm's leaders and employees. Akan et al. (2020) asserted that the working environment and psychological safety positively relate to performance of the organization. Studies by Agarwal and Farndale (2017) as well as Wang et al. (2018) have revealed a positive correlation between innovation, psychological safety, employees' performance, and organizational performance. Therefore, creating safe interaction between managers and employees through psychological safety delivers increased success in organizational performance based on the trust from the employee-manager relationship (Cai et al., 2018; Dirani et al.,

2020). In the following segment, a summary of the review of literature in psychological safety and the organization is provided.

Psychological Safety and the Organization Summary. Psychological safety is essential in an organization to allow team members to feel free to gather information, share ideas, and communicate (Edmondson, 2018). Employee satisfaction, mutual respect, and shared trust are priorities in organizational adaptability (Geiger et al., 2020; Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). Employee satisfaction is a self-related outcome in organizations translating to a sense of belonging through a psychologically safe environment (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). Psychological safety enables employees to become adaptable through innovation and creativity to achieve personal satisfaction and organizational needs (Kwon et al., 2020). Organizational adaptability is supportive to both the organization and the worker. Studies have shown that in a psychologically safe environment, employees act quickly in terms of information identification and transformation since they have a greater chance of speaking up, sharing ideas, or making decisions for the organization (Boylan & Turner, 2017; Herway, 2017). The correlation between psychological safety and organizational adaptability remains relevant in the ever-changing business environment when open information sharing is created through a safe environment consisting of trust (Javed et al., 2019). Up next, the influence of psychological safety on non-profit organizations is discussed.

The Influence of Psychological Safety on Non-Profit Organizations

Organizations consist of a variety of stakeholders to which they depend on for existence and survival. Stogdill (1950) defined the organization in the most general sense as “a social group in which the members are differentiated as to their responsibilities for

the task of achieving a common goal.” The existence and survival of an organization is driven by positive attitudes and purpose driven attributes which consist of individual well-being and a psychosocial construct (Dhanesh, 2020). Recognizing this fact in both a for-profit and non-profit organization is similar based on the general assumption by Dhanesh that stakeholders possess the power of pressure that shapes organizational goals and responsibility. This pressure is important to the organization, especially in consideration of psychological safety which becomes a profitable tool for all organizations when effectively implemented (Edmondson, 2018).

In this section the influence that psychological safety has on the organization, the organization as defined in the general sense by Stogdill (1950), is explored through the construct of the non-profit organization. This path for exploration was based on the review of literature which revealed current research to be more focused in the influence of psychologically safety in for-profit rather than non-profit organizations (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Page et al., 2019). Although the focus of current psychological safety research revealed extensive exploration in for-profit organizations, which guided the research towards the gap in non-profit federal government organizations, psychological safety in for-profit organizations will still be discussed in some detail for comparison with the review of psychological safety in non-profit organizations.

In a for-profit organization, employees focus on monetary rewards rather than motivational desire (Benz, 2005). In non-profit organizations, employees and managers work voluntarily with the aim of satisfying consumer needs (Benevene et al., 2018). For an individual to work in an organization without monetary profit, the individual must feel

welcome in such an organization. According to Johnson (2020), non-profit organizations are expected to have a more psychologically safe environment than any other organization since employees are attached to the working environment rather than profits.

Webb (2018) claimed that the type of leader in a non-profit organization determines the success of the organization. To that regard, for a leader to create a stable workforce in a non-profit organization, leaders must first create a psychologically safe workplace (Kang & Min, 2019). A psychologically safe environment means that leaders need to focus on promoting a friendly working environment that allows employees to become involved in the decision-making process through openness and voice, a fundamental pillar of psychological safety (Ghani & Hyder, 2020; Tu et al., 2019). Additionally, Webb (2018) asserted that non-profit organizations perform greatly when they make employees feel ownership in the organization. Webb further explained that making an employee feel a sense of ownership means that leaders have created a flexible and open working environment that encourages freedom and a desire to contribute. Likewise, Agarwal and Farndale (2017) asserted that a flexible and open working environment stimulates psychological safety for the employees, providing better working conditions that improve individual and organizational performance.

Collective responsibility is essential for non-profit organizations. Likewise, collective responsibility also exists as a derivative of a psychologically safe environment when an open space to speak up is fostered (Diegmann & Rosenkranz, 2017). Therefore, in essence, psychological safety fosters what Diegmann and Rosenkranz consider the perception of mutual support and responsibility, revealing a strong link between collective responsibility, teamwork, and a psychologically safe environment. According

to Marques and Gomes (2020), in an environment where leaders are focused on their own roles and employees are held to their own boundaries, a system emerges where focus becomes segmented. This segmented strategy splits the organization into different paths, making employees lack close relationships with the leaders and each other, countering the common purpose and goal of an organization (Stogdill, 1950).

Yin et al. (2019) noted that a psychologically safe and friendly environment is a working environment where leaders have a close relationship with the employees, and an individual's mistake is a mistake of the entire team. When everyone is tagged for their mistakes, they will feel rejected, especially in a non-profit organization where motivation and job satisfaction outweigh monetary value (Benz, 2005). Deardorff (2020) holds that a non-profit organization is characterized by unity, cooperation, and teamwork. To that regard, Edmondson (2018) asserted that through teamwork and engagement, fostered by psychological safety, organizations succeed as the characteristics of communication and unity are formed. Most non-profit organizations and organizations in general cannot succeed without unity and cooperation; therefore, a psychological safety environment should be prioritized for organizational performance. Next, a summary of the review of literature in the influence of psychological safety on non-profit organizations is provided.

The Influence of Psychological Safety on Non-Profit Organizations

Summary. As revealed from the review of literature, psychological safety is an essential tool when implemented effectively for shaping organizational responsibilities and goals in all organizational constructs, both for-profit and non-profit. In for-profit organizations' employees focus on monetary rewards rather than motivational desire (Benz, 2005); in non-profit organizations' managers and employees focus on satisfying consumers' needs

(Benevne et al., 2018). Consequently, non-profit organizations have high expectations of a psychologically safe environment to maintain the voluntary employees attached to the working environment (Johnson, 2020). This assertion of psychological safety linking to organization attachment is what Johnson points to as a mechanism for building employee engagement and ownership in the decision-making process within the organization. Furthermore, implementing a psychologically safe environment translates to collective responsibility, which is essential for non-profit organizations as it encourages mutual responsibility, support, and teamwork (Diegmann & Rosenkranz, 2017). Teamwork and engagement are fostered by psychological safety and attract the key characteristics of any organization of unity and communication; thus, psychological safety is paramount in all organizations.

Problem Statement

It was not known how federal government employees described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The general population of interest for this study was federal government organization employees. The target population of this study was employees in federal government organizations in Hawaii. The unit of analysis was individual federal government employees in Hawaii. The sample included 46 federal government employees who met the following inclusion criteria: (1) a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii and (2) employed in a federal government organization for more than two years. The study was significant because the results provided federal government organizations and their leaders with evidence-based guidance regarding supervisor influences that can foster an organizational culture of

psychological safety. Recommendations for future practice are discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

There was a need for qualitative research on this topic because there was little qualitative empirical data available on the influence of leaders on psychological safety in the context of non-profit organizations, such as in federal government organizations (Maximo et al., 2019). As noted by Page et al. (2019), Maximo et al. (2019), and Frazier and Tupper (2018), most of the existing research in psychological safety had been solely focused on for-profit organizations. Methodology, as indicated in the review of literature, revealed research in psychological safety had been mostly quantitative or mixed-methods by design, supporting a need for more qualitative based research. Newman et al. (2017) further supported the need for qualitative research based on a review of 78 studies in psychological safety over 25 years, of which 74 were quantitative in design. Likewise, Maximo et al. (2019) suggested that other methodologies be used in future psychological safety research, such as that of a qualitative design. In addition, little was found in the existing research on the influence of leadership on psychological safety overall (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Javed et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017). Conducting this qualitative descriptive study provided new knowledge and insight for leaders in federal government organizations to better understand their influence on psychological safety and health in the workplace.

The proper implementation of leadership guidance and workplace policy regarding psychological health and safety may improve the performance and adaptability of federal government organizations in the United States. Improving the well-being and productivity of federal government employees is a product of influential leaders who

promote psychological health and safety (Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017; Javed et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017; Page et al., 2019). Thus, the scope and importance of this research is that it contributes to the development of evidence-based recommendations to assist leaders in federal government organizations in cultivating and maintaining a culture of psychological safety. Further discussion on the findings and recommendations are provided in Chapter 5 of the study.

A qualitative methodological approach was used in this study in the field of psychological safety and organizational leadership influence. The phenomenon investigated was employees' descriptions of supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety. A qualitative methodology was optimal for conducting this open-ended exploration of participants' perceptions of the phenomenon due to the descriptive meaning's participants are able to assign to a given phenomenon through a qualitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Additionally, as further posited by Merriam and Tisdell, using qualitative research helps to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena in their natural settings, through open-ended data that remains grounded in the specific perspectives and contexts of people in those settings, making it appropriate for this study. Because the study aimed to obtain rich contextual data to understand how employees describe supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in a natural setting, the qualitative methodology was chosen and executed. As a result of prior recommendations and use of a qualitative descriptive design, the study achieved the goal of exploring the phenomenon of psychological safety using a rich data set provided by the participants. Further discussion on the chosen methodology and the implementation of the methodology is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Summary

In Chapter 2, the details of this study in psychological safety were introduced as well as the background and existing research on psychological safety, the topic of inquiry. Next, the problem space was identified, followed by a detailed description of the theoretical foundation that supported the study, which consist of the transformational leadership theory and psychosocial safety climate theory. Additionally, Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive review of the literature that delved into psychological safety and the role of psychological safety in the organization, which helped in the development of the study. Last, the problem statement and a summary of Chapter 2 were provided.

A review of the literature revealed that researchers have done a variety of studies to investigate psychological safety in different environmental settings using identified associations with employee engagement, organizational adaptability, organizational performance, and leadership (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Javed et al., 2019; Maximo et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017; Page et al., 2019). The review of the literature was comprised of in-depth information from various scholars on the following main themes: organization safety, leadership and psychological safety, factors influencing psychological safety, the influence of psychological safety on employees, psychological safety and the organization, and the influence of psychological safety on non-profit organizations.

The review of literature led to the conclusion that influence on employee's development through psychological safety and motivation factors promote dignity and trust from supervisors (Page et al., 2019). Furthermore, the literature review demonstrated that with effective implementation of psychological safety, organizational

goals and responsibilities could be shaped (Dhanesh, 2020). The literature review also identified the importance of maintaining a psychologically safe environment in the workplace and revealed staff engagement in decision making as one of the crucial factors in the organization as it encourages teamwork, mutual responsibility, and support (Diegmann & Rosenkranz, 2017; Edmondson, 2018).

Establishing a correlation between psychological safety and organizational adaptability was identified as a significant aspect in the review. In the correlation, both the worker and the organization are supported by organizational adaptability which attracts the priorities of shared trust, mutual respect, and employee satisfaction (Geiger et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2020). Likewise, flexibility in a working environment is brought by a psychologically safe environment and serves to enable dynamic operations and innovation in the workplace to aid in organizational adaptability.

Furthermore, the review found that psychological safety requires a supportive relationship where individuals work together and engage within the workplace. It was also revealed that for a firm's success, the organization should ensure that it positively influences employee engagement, voice, and organizational commitment through psychological safety (Chaudhary, 2019; Ghani & Hyder, 2020; Komljenovic et al., 2017). Also, it was discovered that employees are believed to feel safer and more engaged in a resilient relationship with leaders who understand the possibility of mistakes and with leaders who can handle mistakes without causing psychological unrest. According to the review of literature, management structure contributes to psychological safety and influences employee benevolent intentions that can shift employee behavior through positive influence on OCB which in turn promotes individual benefits (Ghani & Hyder,

2020). Thus, employee engagement increases in an environment where employees are in a greater position of interacting with leaders in a resilient relationship (Chaudhary, 2019).

From the review, a lack of qualitative data to provide a comprehensive picture of how federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace was revealed. Therefore, this study was significant because the methodology and results provide federal government organizations and their leaders with evidence-based guidance regarding the proper implementation of policy in psychological health and safety. In turn, federal organizations can lead to improved well-being and productivity in federal government employees using the findings and recommendations resultant from this study. As a result, the increased performance and adaptability of federal government organizations may then follow.

In an effort to continue research in diverse workplaces, the literature pointed towards the need for expanded psychological safety research in government and a variety of non-profit organizational settings (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Subhakaran & Dyaram, 2018). To advance the knowledge and fill the research gap, this study explored how employees described their supervisors' influence on perceptions of psychological safety in U.S. federal government organizations. In addition, the study's inquiry into leadership, influence, and psychological safety in government organizations remains largely relevant to the expanse of knowledge in the field of organizational leadership and organizational development. As discussed later in the recommendations for future research, much more is still desired. Future researchers are encouraged to build upon the findings and recommendations that are later discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 of the study.

In the next section, Chapter 3, the purpose of the study and the research questions are discussed with details on how they were derived. A thorough explanation of the problem statement that guided this study is also provided. Additionally, a detailed description of the methodology and design selected for this study is provided with supporting rationale. Chapter 3 also details the population and sample, sources of data, trustworthiness of the study, and the procedures used for the data collection and analysis phases of this study. Finally, Chapter 3 discusses the ethical considerations that were employed during this study and elaborates on the assumptions and delimitations of the study as briefly described in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. Lack of guidance and understanding in psychological safety in government increases the likelihood that government organization leaders fail to promote psychological health and safety, which might lead to decreased organizational performance and adaptability (Frazier et al., 2017; Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Page et al., 2019). The proper implementation of guidance in psychological health and safety might improve the performance and adaptability of government organizations, therefore improving the well-being and productivity of government employees (Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017; Javed et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017; Page et al., 2019). The transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and the psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) served as the theoretical foundation for the study to explore supervisor's influence on employee psychological safety in the context of U.S. federal government organizations.

This research, which utilized leadership theory and a framework supported by organizational policy development, may prove impactful to psychological safety and its importance within the organizational leadership discipline at large. According to Liu et al. (2018), leaders hold a unique position within society to project influence on the actions and attitude of their followers. Furthermore, Chughtai (2016) explained that organizational leaders have a direct effect on the psychological safety climate of an organization through the enabling of employee voice and inspiration. Therefore, the

relevancy of this study in the field of psychological safety and its role within the broader discipline of organizational leadership and organizational development were crucial in the advancement of knowledge.

In the preceding chapter, a review of the literature was presented by reviewing research in peer-reviewed journals and books that discuss psychosocial safety climate theory and transformational leadership theory as well as the topics of leadership and psychological safety. Chapter 2 presented the background to the study along with the identification of the problem space. Chapter 2 also introduced the psychosocial safety climate theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) and transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) as the theoretical foundation of the study. Finally, Chapter 2 provided in-depth information from various scholars on the following supporting main themes of the study: organization safety, leadership and psychological safety, factors influencing psychological safety, the influence of psychological safety on employees, psychological safety and the organization, and the influence of psychological safety on non-profit organizations.

In Chapter 3, the focus is on the methodology and research design used to conduct the study. In this chapter an introduction to the chapter, the purpose of the study, and the research questions are presented. Next, the rationale for selecting a qualitative methodology and descriptive research design is justified. The population and sample selection, sources of data, trustworthiness, data collection and management, and the data analysis procedures used in the study are also described. Lastly, a discussion on the ethical considerations used in the study, the assumptions and limitations, and summary of the chapter are provided. In detailing the population and sample selection, the qualitative

sample size and the recruiting and sampling strategy is justified. In presenting the trustworthiness, details of the credibility, the dependability, the transferability, and the confirmability are provided. A summary is presented at the conclusion of Chapter 3.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The phenomenon investigated was supervisors' influence on employee perceptions of psychological safety. Exploring the phenomenon of psychological safety further contributed to the recommended need for knowledge in the areas of enhanced employee and team engagement and performance (Frazier et al., 2017), as well as the improved performance and adaptability of organizations (Edmondson, 2018). The target population in this study was employees in federal government organizations in Hawaii. The unit of analysis in this study was individual federal government employees in Hawaii. The sample included 46 federal government employees who met the following inclusion criteria: a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii and employed in a federal government organization for more than two years.

Psychological safety, the feeling of expressing oneself without fear of ridicule or judgment (Edmondson, 2018), continues to be an emerging area of research with many unanswered questions destined for future research. One aspect requiring further investigation at the start of this study was leader influence on psychological safety as a component of organizational culture. According to Page et al. (2019), expanded research in the organizational setting, especially in psychological safety in various teams,

organizations, and settings, will help to better understand the factors that contribute to psychological safety within an organizational culture. As such the study set forth to explore psychological safety in the context of a government organization to better understand the impact a government construct and leadership may have on employee psychological safety.

The research instrumentation used for data collection in the study included open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured one-on-one interviews. It was anticipated and confirmed in this research that 30-45 minutes would be necessary to review the consent form, complete the demographic questionnaire and complete the open-ended research questionnaire. An additional 60 minutes was anticipated and confirmed to be necessary for the one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The anticipated time for data collection was based on the results of the field test that was conducted and later confirmed through the execution of this research study. Two research questions guided the study exploration and were used in the development of the research instruments. Data analysis for this study followed the six-step procedure as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), which aided in the review and research translation of the participant data. In the next section the phenomenon is briefly discussed, and the research questions are introduced.

Research Questions

It was not known how federal government employees described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. Existing knowledge of psychological safety encompasses many fields of study. However, much of the existing psychological safety research has been focused on the antecedents and effects in a broader sense, leaving a gap for more focused investigations of significant areas of

inquiry to future researchers (Lee et al., 2020; Newman et al., 2017; Wong & Chan, 2020). Two areas of inquiry in which researchers had noted a need for additional investigation were leader influences on psychological safety as a characteristic of organizational culture and psychological safety in non-corporate contexts, such as government organizations (Page et al., 2019). To fill the need and gap, this study explored how federal government employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in the workplace. The phenomenon investigated in the study was supervisors' influence on employee perceptions of psychological safety.

The theoretical foundation of the study was built upon the transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and the psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010), which guided the exploration of the phenomenon. Transformational leadership theory provided a lens for the interaction and influence of leaders, and PSC theory provided a guide into the exploration of employees' perceived leader influences on psychological safety. The combination of the transformational leadership theory and the PSC theory provided guidance for the research questions and the development of data collection protocols to address the research problem of this study. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

The first research question addressed the gap in knowledge related to how employees in government organizations perceive and describe the psychological safety

climate in their workplace (Lee & Idris, 2017; Subhakaran & Dyaram, 2018). The second question supported the gap in knowledge regarding leader influence on psychological safety (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Javed et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017). Together, the two research questions focused the study on addressing the defined gap in the literature regarding how employees describe their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in government organizations (Frazier et al., 2017; Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Page et al., 2019).

To collect meaningful data for the study, open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured one-on-one interview protocols were utilized. The researcher developed the questionnaire and interview protocols in psychological safety, received evaluation by an expert panel of three doctoral level experts, and then field tested the evaluated protocols. An initial recruitment flyer (see Appendix J) was posted on LinkedIn, which included all relative information regarding the study, such as purpose of the study, inclusion and exclusion criteria, researcher contact information, and a link to SurveyMonkey, which included access to the informed consent form, demographic questionnaire, and open-ended questionnaire. The end of the open-ended questionnaire consisted of a final “yes” or “no” question to recruit participants for the one-on-one semi-structured interview. Participants were also asked to re-share the initial recruitment post from LinkedIn with individuals who may meet the study criteria. Interviews were held virtually through Zoom. All of the data collection tasks were of a voluntary nature.

Rationale for a Qualitative Methodology

A qualitative methodological approach was used in the study to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their

supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The phenomenon investigated was supervisors' influence on employee perceptions of psychological safety. A qualitative approach was optimal because it helps to conduct open-ended explorations of participants' perceptions of a given phenomenon and reveals the meanings the participants assign to it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019; Yin, 2017).

In this study, a qualitative research method was deemed appropriate for the study to explore supervisor's influence on employee psychological safety in the context of U.S. federal government organizations. Qualitative research is used to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena in their natural settings through open-ended data that are grounded in the specific perspectives and contexts of people in those settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Additionally, a qualitative research method allows for consideration of the context of the research phenomenon under study and the perceptions of study participants with their contextual influences (Yin, 2017). The qualitative research methodology was selected for the study because this research method facilitates open-ended explorations of the phenomena that cannot easily be separated from their specific individual, organizational, social, and cultural contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Although the qualitative method was deemed appropriate for this study, it is not without its disadvantages.

A disadvantage of selecting qualitative research, closely associated with its ability to yield in-depth, richly contextualized data, is that the findings cannot be confidently transferred from the sample to the population of interest, and transferability of the findings to other settings and populations is likely to be limited (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). Given the naturalistic and interpretive approach that the qualitative method

provides, the predictions about the outcome are also likely to be unachievable (Sandelowski, 2010). In contrast, quantitative methods are more defined guidelines that provide a statistical analysis of variables tested against predictions to explain a phenomenon under study (Allen, 2017). Based on the perceived disadvantages of qualitative research, a quantitative methodological approach was considered in the process of the methodology selection for the study. Although a quantitative approach was explored, the qualitative methodology was still the most appropriate application to the study given the desire to understand the phenomenon from the as lived perspective of those individuals who have experienced it.

Through qualitative methods, researchers may have only an idea or an approximation of the objective for the research study they wish to conduct (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Considering the downside of the qualitative method as a defined process, this method of research was fitting in the conduct of this psychological safety research, as it fit the intended purpose to understand a phenomenon rather than determine if specific relationships exist (Isa, 2019; Vance et al., 2013). Given the flexible process in qualitative methodology, the application within the study provided a feasible approach to the desired interpretation and understanding of lived experiences (Kim et al., 2017).

Moreover, as discovered in the review of literature, existing studies primarily used a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between leadership and psychological safety. Maximo et al. (2019) suggested that further studies of psychological safety should be explored utilizing a qualitative method. With that, the study involved collection of data from individual semi-structured interviews and online open-ended questionnaires to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii

described their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. Participants were expected to share their perspectives in their own words to open-ended questions, as recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2019). Because the study aimed to obtain rich contextual data to understand how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in a natural setting, the qualitative methodology was chosen for the study.

By contrast, quantitative research was not appropriate for the study to explore supervisor's influence on employee psychological safety. A quantitative research method is used to calculate statistical relationships between variables that can be represented numerically (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019), whereas the qualitative method is understanding the unique and lived experience of a phenomenon (Vance et al., 2013). As such, while quantitative research is suitable for calculating generalizable results, which typically must be decontextualized from specific settings and perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019), a qualitative approach allows for flexibility when seeking to interpret and understand an experience (Kim et al., 2017).

Moreover, a quantitative research method is usually for researchers to confirm or disconfirm hypothesized statistical relationships, rather than being explanatory (Yin, 2017). This study explored how the participants described their supervisor's influence on psychological safety in the workplace, which is explanatory in nature rather than statistically bound by variables or their relationships (Allen, 2017). Therefore, quantitative research would not have been appropriate for the study as it seeks to find a statistical analysis rooted in predicted outcomes rather than a flexible qualitative

approach to provide explanation of a phenomenon and lived experience. Next, the rationale for the design is discussed.

Rationale for Research Design

The study used a qualitative descriptive design to explore employee psychological safety and their supervisor's influence on psychological safety in the context of U.S. federal government organizations. A qualitative descriptive research design is used to explore a phenomenon in its natural state with the purpose of obtaining information relevant to the description of the given phenomenon (Siedlecki, 2020). A qualitative descriptive design focuses on participants' descriptions of real-world conditions, rather than on the abstract, theoretical foci of other qualitative designs (Sandelowski, 2010). As such, the problem and research questions in this study required a focus on participants' described perceptions of real-world conditions associated with leader influences on psychological safety. Therefore, a qualitative descriptive design was determined to be appropriate for this study.

While other qualitative designs were considered, the qualitative descriptive research design was deemed the most appropriate for this study in psychological safety. The problem needing to be addressed was employees' descriptions of their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety. While true that a limitation in descriptive design is the ability to demonstrate or transfer causal relationships, the strength and suitable of the descriptive design is that it can facilitate the need for researchers to obtain information candid and direct from the experiences of the participants who have lived a phenomenon (Bradshaw et al., 2017; Neergaard et al., 2009; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). A qualitative descriptive design differs from

traditional qualitative designs in being genuine and free of artificial content (Sandelowski, 2010) by dispensing with defined techniques and procedures required in other qualitative designs (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Given the exploration and comparison of other qualitative designs and the need to be open and non-binding in the process of collecting data for interpretation from a lived experience, the descriptive design was deemed the most appropriate for this study.

A phenomenological study was explored and found not suitable for the study. The philosophical stance underlying phenomenological approaches imposes a focus in data collection and analysis on internal experiences and a corresponding de-emphasis of the external components of the experience (Sandelowski, 2010). Thus, while a disadvantage of descriptive research is that it does not incorporate the philosophical assumptions that would enable and structure a deep exploration of what it was like to undergo a given lived experience, the advantage of the descriptive approach is that the absence of those philosophical assumptions allows the analysis to remain close to the data, instead of imposing a predefined, theory-based emphasis (Sandelowski, 2010).

The problem and research questions in this study required a focus on participants' described perceptions of real-world conditions associated with leader influences on psychological safety. In the selection of an appropriate qualitative design, several were considered but were ultimately rejected. A phenomenological design would not have been appropriate because it would have focused on the internal structure of participants' subjective experiences (Moustakas, 1994), whereas this study in psychological safety required a more balanced focus on participants' perceptions and descriptions of external conditions and events. A grounded theory design was unsuitable because it would have

focused on generating a theory to account for the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014), and theory development was not needed in this study that explored the field of leadership and psychological safety.

A case study design was not appropriate for this study because its focus would have been on interpreting and exploring one or more bounded systems (Yin, 2017), whereas in this study of psychological safety, the goal was to provide an unfiltered summary of individual participant descriptions of the phenomenon as found through a descriptive approach (Neergaard et al., 2009; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). Narrative inquiry was inappropriate for the study because it would have put a holistic focus on participants' personal stories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019), whereas this study focused more narrowly on the phenomenon of leader influence on psychological safety as participants perceived and described it. Given that participant perception and description of lived experiences were the focus in this research into psychological safety, the most suitable design was determined to be qualitative descriptive. In the next section, the population and sample selection are discussed.

Population and Sample Selection

The research area of this study was the State of Hawaii. The general population of interest in this study was federal government organization employees. The target population for the study was employees in federal government organizations in Hawaii. The unit of analysis for the study was individual federal government employees in Hawaii. In all, the study targeted an estimated 12,053 employees in federal government organizations from the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group. The sample included 46 federal government employees who met the following inclusion

criteria: (a) a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii; and (b) employed in a federal government organization for more than two years.

Current studies in the field of psychological safety have focused on for-profit organizational constructs that include the mining industry in South Africa (Maximo et al., 2019) and medium-sized companies in the Midwest United States (Page et al., 2019). At the start of this research investigation, there was a dearth of information in psychological safety in non-profit contexts, such as that of government organizations, which had been suggested for future research (Maximo et al., 2019). More specifically, focused research in understanding supervisor influence on psychological safety at the U.S. Federal level and within the region of Hawaii was found to be needed resultant from the dearth of information. As such, the target population selected was appropriate for conducting the study because this qualitative descriptive study explored how federal government employees of Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. Furthermore, the dearth of information on psychological safety in a non-profit context (e.g., government organizations in Hawaii) supported the selected target population and research need at the study inception, which now provides expanded knowledge in the field of organizational leadership and organizational development. Further discussion of the sample size is provided next.

Qualitative Sample Size

The study targeted an estimated 12,053 employees in federal government organizations from the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group to achieve a total of 46 participants for the questionnaire that was delivered online through SurveyMonkey. Among the questionnaire participants, 14 participants were recruited for

interviews. Qualitative studies require a minimum sample size of 12 participants to reach data saturation (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Data saturation is determined when participant responses no longer produce newly developed philosophies or perceptions on the research topic, and similarity begins to emerge (Sim et al., 2018; Sohn et al., 2017). Fusch and Ness (2015) explained that data saturation varies and requires an iterative process that continues until all themes are explained and data saturation is achieved based on the methodological and research design. As such, data saturation was achieved in the study. While the discussion on data saturation continues briefly in the next section, further evidence of data saturation is presented later in Chapters 4 and 5, the results and conclusion sections.

Studies have shown that in qualitative research where 12-15 exhaustive questionnaire or interview responses produced a rich description of participant experience in a phenomenon, data saturation is met (Sim et al., 2018). While some qualitative researchers implicitly identify a need to reach data saturation (Yin, 2017), Sandelowski (2000) explicitly identified that 10 interviews should be sufficient to produce descriptive data. Therefore, constructing a data collection plan that included 46 questionnaires and 14 interviews provided adequate data to reach data saturation in the study as recommended by previous researchers. Following the recommended guidelines of data saturation, the final number of participants chosen was dependent upon reaching a point where individual participant perceptions sounded similar to those of others even though each participant's experience with the phenomenon was different (Sohn et al., 2017). Additionally, upon observance of data saturation, three additional interviews were

conducted in addition to the minimum required, to ensure no new data emerged. In the next section, the recruiting and sampling strategy is explained.

Recruiting and Sampling Strategy

The inclusion criteria of the study participants included (a) a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii; and (b) employed in a federal government organization for more than two years. The criteria used in the study was based on participant experience of the policies, practices, and procedures within the federal government. The interview participants for the study were selected in a purposeful process based on the respondents with the highest years of experience to explore their unique perspective in the federal government, specifically in the unique setting of Hawaii (Ames et al., 2019).

The study plan used a purposive homogenous sampling technique and the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group to select the participants as a primary means of recruitment. The use of a homogenous sampling technique can ensure the study participants share the same characteristics in relation to the topic of the research (Etikan et al., 2016). Homogenous samples enhance the transferability of the study findings, which Yin (2017) asserted is best in qualitative research. A non-probability snowball sampling technique was used as a secondary means of recruitment, to obtain the minimum number of participants for the study. Because the study participation numbers and the required data saturation were met after using the primary and secondary means of recruitment, the tertiary method of recruitment that would have expanded to the researcher's own personal LinkedIn page, which at the time contained 508 professional

connections who were primarily government workers located throughout Hawaii, was not used.

Purposive sampling was the primary means for recruitment in the research study. In a purposive homogenous sampling technique, the researcher decides how to find the participants for knowledge and experience sharing based on specific shared characteristics, such as geographical access and years of experience (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling using social media was used because the technique allows for identifying and selecting those participants that the researcher is most interested in (Etikan et al., 2016; Sibona et al., 2020). Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic experienced throughout the duration of the study, the specific means of sampling using social media provided easy access to participants safely and cost-effectively using online resources. In a purposeful manner, participants who indicated the highest years of working experience on the demographic section of the study questionnaire were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Selecting the purposive sampling technique using LinkedIn social media and members employed in the federal government in Hawaii was assumed to be homogenous to the overall population of U.S. Federal employees in Hawaii (Etikan et al., 2016).

While purposive sampling through social media and a process of selecting participants who indicated the highest years of working experience on the demographic questionnaire was deemed feasible for the study, given the circumstances of the current pandemic and the benefits of research access and affordability, it remains unclear just how well the total population was represented through LinkedIn social media. Additionally, it was acknowledged that purposive sampling comes with the limitations of

bias and subjectivity in the selection of participants based on researcher generalization and assumptions (Etikan et al., 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2021). While there are limitations in using purposive sampling, the benefits in contrast to convenience sampling are the enhanced transferability that purposive sampling may provide to additional researchers through replication of the study in other populations (Etikan et al., 2016). Through purposive sampling, government employees within the United States were able to be screened for the investigation to provide the researcher with a higher probability of achieving experience-based answers to the research questions (Ames et al., 2019).

As a secondary means of recruitment, snowball sampling was utilized to account for participant attrition. Snowball sampling is defined as a non-probability sampling technique in which the samples have traits that are rare to find (Sadler et al., 2010). Snowball sampling is advantageous when there is a need to collect additional participants for a study and is done so by recruiting potential participants through existing participants acquaintances (Sarstedt et al., 2017; Sharma, 2017). While useful in recruitment, snowball sampling is not without limitations, such as induced bias by research participants and their acquaintances, which can lead to individuals with like-minded thinking and sentiment towards a specific phenomenon or issue (Lim et al., 2021). The 14 participants for the one-on-one semi-structured interviews were pooled from the 46 participants who completed the open-ended questionnaire. To expand further, a discussion on the limitations of sampling and recruitment is presented later in the limitations and strengths and weaknesses sections of Chapters 4 and 5.

To begin the recruiting and sampling strategy, site authorization (Appendix B) for the primary recruitment plan was obtained from the Federal Employees of the U.S.

Government LinkedIn Group administrator, which at the time consisted of 12,053 U.S. Federal government employees. Contact with the LinkedIn private group administrator was conducted through the direct messaging feature within LinkedIn and through personal email. During communication with the LinkedIn group administrator, the purpose of the study, the number of participants to be recruited, approximate recruiting start and end dates, and researcher contact information were provided. Since data from human subjects was enlisted, an application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to obtain written approval to collect data. After securing approval from the IRB, the primary means of recruiting the study participants commenced by posting a recruitment flyer (Appendix J) on the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group page. The recruitment flyer included a direct link to the online SurveyMonkey application to review the informed consent, demographic questionnaire, and open-ended questionnaire questions. Using a link embedded in the recruitment flyer, participants were able to click to proceed to the SurveyMonkey hosted informed consent form and agree to the terms and conditions of the study. Only after participants had read and agreed to the informed consent and conditions of the study, were they allowed to move forward and start the questionnaire process.

To lessen participant attrition and to enhance the recruitment of participants, study participants were asked to share the recruitment flyer with other potential candidates, which is the process of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was encouraged as a secondary means of recruitment since the primary recruitment of participants from LinkedIn was deemed inadequate to achieve minimum participant numbers and to reach data saturation. Snowball sampling also allowed those who may not have qualified for the

study the opportunity to share the recruitment flyer with someone else. As potential participants were recruited through snowball sampling, the same inclusion criterion to participate in the study was also applied.

Additionally, if individuals would have still been needed to reach the minimum participant numbers and required data saturation, recruitment would have expanded to the researcher's own personal LinkedIn page as an approved tertiary means of recruitment. Site authorization would not have been required to recruit from the researcher's own personal LinkedIn page, given that one is considered the administrator of their own personal LinkedIn page. The researcher's own personal LinkedIn page, which was intended as the tertiary plan for recruitment, at the time contained 508 professional connections, primarily government workers located throughout Hawaii. If it would have been required, the protocol for sharing the recruitment flyer via the tertiary plan would have followed the same process used in the primary recruitment strategy minus the site approval process, which would not have been required. Although a detailed level of planning into a tertiary plan was proposed and approved during the IRB process, it was neither needed nor invoked for this study. Further discussion of the primary, secondary, and tertiary recruitment plans and their actual use in the study is later discussed in Chapter 4. Next, a discussion on the entry into the study resultant of the recruiting and sampling strategy is discussed.

Before data collection, each participant was required to complete an informed consent form (Appendix D). Completing the informed consent ensured participants understood the expectations of their involvement in the research process. In that regard, verbiage within the informed consent document was developed in plain language for

simplicity and understanding. The beneficence criterion was upheld through procedures implemented to minimize risks to participants and through a thorough explanation of protections and what was to be expected. To protect participants from any consequences that could have resulted from the disclosure of their identities, participants' identities were protected through de-identification of transcripts and by removing all personal identifiable information (PII) and replacing participants' real names in all study materials with pseudonyms (i.e., pseudonym1, pseudonym2, etc.). Beneficence was also ensured by conducting the interviews remotely, by Zoom video chat, to allow the interviewer and interviewee to observe social distancing and stay-at-home guidelines required as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Since the consent to participate was a voluntary process, respondents were able to withdraw from the study at any time of their own volition. Risk was mitigated through adherence to ethical research guidelines and through informed consent.

According to the Belmont Report, the ethical research criterion of justice is upheld when the benefits and costs of research are equitably distributed (Belmont Report, 1979; Miracle, 2016). Costs to participants in the study were minimal, as participants were not placed at any greater risk than they are during their normal, day-to-day activities. The benefits of the research results include contributions to the cultivation of cultures of psychological safety in federal government organizations. This outcome is beneficial to the well-being of organizational leaders and employees of the target population and explained in further detail in the results and conclusions sections of Chapters 4 and 5.

Throughout the participant recruiting, the purpose of the study, the study participant recruiting criteria, and the significance of the study were fully explained. There were no inherent risks surrounding participation in the study. Compensation was offered to the participants in the form of a Visa gift card, which is further explained later in Chapter 4. The participant recruiting process continued until a sample of at least 40 study participants was selected and data saturation was reached. The results section in Chapter 4 expounds further on the recruiting process and presents the final participant details and results using a descriptive approach. Up next, the sources of data used in the study are discussed.

Sources of Data

In this qualitative descriptive study, data was collected from two primary sources to conduct the research investigation. The first source of data was a researcher-developed open-ended questionnaire delivered online through SurveyMonkey to collect broad responses to the phenomenon being explored. The second source of data resulted from a researcher conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interview process that pooled 14 participants from those who had completed the open-ended questionnaire. Interviews were conducted virtually through the video chat application Zoom and sought to collect in-depth details from participants on the phenomenon and tenants of the underlying theories used in the study's theoretical framework.

Prior to use in the study, three scholars with doctoral degrees familiar in the field of knowledge conducted an expert panel review of the questionnaire and interview protocols (see Appendix K). The questionnaire and interview protocols were updated based on the feedback from the expert panel. After that, a field test of the questionnaire

and interview protocols was conducted using three volunteers that shared a similar background with the target population but were not a part of the target population for the study. The data collected from the field tests were not included in the data analysis. Field test of the questionnaire and interview protocols provided an enhancement to the trustworthiness and dependability by reducing flaws and inherent biases before collecting the data (Oplatka, 2018; Yeong et al., 2018; Yin, 2017). Additionally, the field tests provided knowledge that helped the researcher improve and refine the quality of the open-ended questions (Yeong et al., 2018). After receiving the IRB approval for conducting the study, a recruitment flyer containing a SurveyMonkey link to the informed consent form, demographic questionnaire, and study questionnaire was posted on the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group. After completing the informed consent form, participants were allowed access to the questionnaire questions. Further details of the data collection process are discussed in the data collection and management section of Chapter 3. Next, the questionnaire data source will be discussed.

Questionnaires

The first source of data was collected through a developed open-ended questionnaire (Appendix E). Questionnaires are research instruments for measuring the preferences of participants, assessing what they perceive, and describing their experiences, either in a group setting or individually (Yin, 2017). The questionnaire in this study was administered online through the SurveyMonkey application and focused on the broader aspects of the phenomenon in psychological safety that was being explored.

Online questionnaires have gained international recognition as a convenient and advantageous cost-effective instrument for data collection (Minnaar & Heystek, 2019). Questionnaires are also considered a reliable form of human interaction to convey a message (Galasiński & Kozłowska, 2012), which is independent and safe when involving unfamiliar human subjects. Acknowledging there exist limitations of self-report bias that a questionnaire can deliver and the ability of individuals to sometimes recall past experiences and transfer them into written form (Godwin et al., 2020), the feasibility of using a questionnaire during the COVID-19 pandemic was considered a safe and reliable method for data collection as previously discussed in the anticipated limitations section of Chapter 1.

The aim for the study was to recruit 40 participants to complete the questionnaire who had met the following inclusion criteria: (a) a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii; and (b) employed in a federal government organization for more than two years. The questionnaire consisted of a 30–45-minute protocol that included 12 open-ended questions preceded by the study informed consent form and demographic questionnaire. The final question in the questionnaire was a “yes” or “no” question reserved to facilitate self-selection into the semi-structured interview process. Interested participants were given the opportunity to answer “yes” they are willing to participate in an audio-recorded 60-minute interview and provide their contact information or indicate “no” that they are not willing to participate. In the next section, the interview data source is discussed.

Interviews

The second source of data was a semi-structured interview conducted using the video conference application Zoom. In an interview research setting, a researcher or researchers can feel free to make inquiries about any facts, people's thinking and perceptions, and their opinions about any phenomenon or behaviors (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The list of interview questions was developed based on the review of the literature and the specific problem and research questions under study. Interview questions developed for the study homed in on the finer details of the psychological safety phenomenon in government organizations using the theoretical framework as a guide to collect a more in-depth description from study participants.

The use of interviews has both advantages and limitations to the use. Additionally, selecting to use a semi-structured rather than structured interview requires an understanding of purpose and relevancy in what they provide in the context of research. Parvaresh-Masoud and Varaei (2018) explained that one of the most important challenges to the use of an interview is the ethical risk of inadvertent disclosure of participant information. However, this and all ethical challenges were addressed within this study by using a proper ethics strategy, which is discussed later in the ethical considerations section of Chapter 3. With that, the ethics strategy took into consideration the concerns of privacy and protection of human participants and was maintained throughout the study. The research acknowledged this by adhering to the principles of the Belmont report that provide respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Belmont Report, 1979; Marshall et al., 2013). As for the advantage, the use of interviews helps to convey rich messaging in a synchronous communication method, especially in a semi-

structured setting (Dadzie et al., 2018). DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) explained that information exchange through interviews helps the interviewer leverage the interviewee interaction and ambiance to create good conversation and possibilities. Good conversation and rich messaging are important in qualitative descriptive research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019), which becomes further evident in the presentation of the results in Chapter 4.

Likewise, the interview method in research was also important and the basis of the selection of the semi-structured interview for this research given the need to generate a candid conversation of the phenomenon being explored. In a structured type of interview, the questions are graded against a scale, can be asynchronous, and do not allow for the open-ended flexibility that a good conversation needs to provide in qualitative research (Kim et al., 2017; Parvaresh-Masoud & Varaei, 2018). By using a semi-structured interview, the interviewer can present developed open-ended questions that allow creativity and flexibility in the rich data that will be provided by the interviewee (Dadzie et al., 2018). Therefore, to ensure an open and flexible response from participants, the use of the semi-structured interview was selected and used during this study to interview 14 participants.

The 14 interviewees were recruited from the questionnaire participants and purposefully selected using the highest years of experience indicated on the demographic section of the study questionnaire. All the semi-structured interviews in the study were audio-recorded, averaged 60-minutes in length and were transcribed verbatim by the built-in Zoom transcription service. The average time for the one-on-one semi-structured interviews was anticipated based on the results of the field test that was conducted by the

researcher and strived for a goal of no less than 60 minutes in length for all interviews conducted. To ensure the semi-structured interviews were presented logically and consistently across all study participants, a research protocol that had been expert reviewed and field tested by volunteers similar to the study participants was used (Appendix E). Further descriptive details of the interview participants and the results of the interviews are presented later in Chapter 4 of the study. In the next section, the expert panel used to review and provide feedback on the interview and questionnaire protocols is discussed.

Expert Panel

The interview and questionnaire protocols were submitted to three individuals for expert panel review. The expert panelists consisted of three scholars with doctoral degrees familiar in the field of study and qualitative design methodology. The expert panelists examined the appropriateness of the demographic questions and assessed the alignment between the questionnaire protocol, interview protocol, and the study research questions. Recommendations from the expert panelist consisted of adding information regarding the participants rights, confidentiality, and definitions of terms, as well as addressing grammatic and punctuation issues. Adjustments to three questions in the interview were also recommended based on terminology and proper alignment with the research questions. The feedback received from the expert panelists (Appendix K) was used to modify the protocols (Appendix E) and to enhance the trustworthiness of the questions. Next, the field test used to test the data sources and protocols is discussed.

Field Test

A field test was conducted with three volunteers who were employees in a federal government organization but not a part of the study using the questionnaire and interview protocols (Appendix E). Participant responses from the field test helped to enhance the trustworthiness of the questionnaire and interview process. The field test volunteers had a similar background with the target population but were not a part of the target population of the study. The field test provided an opportunity to validate that the developed questionnaire and interview protocols executed smoothly and that they met the intent of the study, while also allowing familiarity and practice of the interview process.

Results from the field test did not reveal issues with the protocols that required any changes to be made. However, it was acknowledged that familiarity and practice in the interview process was instrumental to the study success and that with each question the prompts would differ dependent on the participant and participant response. The data collected from the field test (see Appendix M) was not used in the data analysis and was only used to ensure that preparation had been conducted to properly distribute the questionnaire and to conduct the interview process. Table 3 represents the length of each of the field test interviews with pages transcribed and the pages of data derived from the participants' questionnaire responses. While the average length of the field test interviews was just below 60 minutes, the goal remained at no less than 60 minutes for the interviews conducted during the investigation. Actual study interview details are discussed later in Chapter 4 and detailed in Appendix N. The additional data collected using a demographic questionnaire, and its purpose and use, are discussed next.

Table 3***Descriptive Data of Field Test***

Field Test Volunteer	Interview Test Setting	Interview Duration (minutes)	Interview Transcription (*pages)	Questionnaire Test Setting	Questionnaire Data (*pages)
CASTOR	Zoom	01:09:14	21	SurveyMonkey	1.5
POLLUX	Zoom	00:51:10	16	SurveyMonkey	1.5
SUNSHINE	Zoom	00:48:25	12	SurveyMonkey	1.5
Average		00:56:16	16		1.5
Total		02:48:49	49		4.5

* Single Spaced – 12 pt. Times New Roman

Additional Data

A demographic questionnaire was delivered through a SurveyMonkey link embedded within the recruitment flyer and preceded the open-ended questionnaire of Appendix E. The demographic questionnaire collected key information concerning the sample participants. Because it is important for the demographic questionnaire to remain relevant to the purpose of the study (Colorafi & Evans, 2016), the questions presented included age, gender, current position in the organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for current supervisor. The information collected was used to purposively select participants based on years of experience and confirm that the sample participants met the inclusion criteria set within the study. The collected information also provided important details about the findings through the descriptions and background of study participants. Further use of the additional data collected is included in the results sections of Chapter 4 to provide richness to the results and the participant details. In the next section, the trustworthiness of the study will be discussed.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the quality of research findings, a researcher establishes the reliability and validity of a study, the goal of which is to reduce biases (Yin, 2017). Trustworthiness of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods the researcher uses to strengthen the quality of a study (Connelly, 2016). Quality criteria for all qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To enhance the trustworthiness of the study in leadership and psychological safety, criteria was applied for measuring the quality of qualitative research methods in addition to specific criteria for each method. The strategies and techniques to enhance trustworthiness of the study are provided in the following discussion. Up next is a discussion of the credibility in the study.

Credibility

Credibility of the study is confidence in the truth of the study and thus must strive to ensure the findings of the study match with reality; therefore, credibility is the most important criterion (Connelly, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). While no one can fully capture reality given the multitude of variables and circumstances that surround any given phenomenon, qualitative researchers can attempt to isolate, explore, and study reality to reveal new knowledge about a given topic. Through credibility, researchers hope to show that a study's conclusions are credible and appropriate (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019; Yin, 2017).

To enhance the credibility of this study, the research adopted a well-established data collection plan that has explored and taken into consideration the culture of the population to be researched, U.S federal government organizations (Shenton, 2004).

Knowledge of the participant culture can produce what Shenton explained as a plethora of unique and valuable insight when entering research. In the federal government sector, familiarization with this culture was achieved through immersion within the federal government sector for over two decades, exploration of specific terms used in the federal government and personal discussions with members of various government organizations. Furthermore, understanding the population culture established trust and a common bond between the researcher and participants to enable open and honest rich data to be shared (Vuong et al., 2016).

Another area that provided enhancement to study credibility was the ability to conduct research in natural settings, using participants relevant to the phenomenon under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Resultant from the review of existing literature, exploration of psychological safety in unique organizational context, such as government organizations, was deemed necessary (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Page et al., 2019). By tailoring the research to government organizations at the federal level and exploring a feasible sector of the population within the State of Hawaii, the findings present a valid representation of the phenomenon, government employee descriptions of their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Member checking in the study was conducted through individual participant verification of their own interview transcript. Through member checking, participants reviewed their respective interview transcripts to accurately validate the participant experience (Nowell et al., 2017). The study utilized individual participant member

checking of interview transcripts to further enhance the creditability as suggested by Nowell et al. (2017).

Thematic analysis was also used to strengthen the credibility of the findings by facilitating the identification of themes that incorporated the experiences of all or most participants, thus minimizing the influence of participants' individual biases or errors (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Threats to creditability manifest in the form of bias and a lack of quality in the data (Noble & Smith, 2015; Yin, 2017). Through use of the aforementioned steps, the threats of bias were recognized to provide enhanced efforts that increased the quality of the data collected. Up next, dependability of the study will be discussed.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the degree to which research procedures are documented and are found reliable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Additionally, dependability includes the aspect of consistency (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Therefore, to enhance dependability, a check of the study alignment and rigorous data collection procedures were executed by transparently describing all steps from start to finish and by using an audit trail of the research path (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Data collection procedures in the study are described in further detail later in this chapter and in Chapter 4 of the study.

As suggested by Korstjens and Moser (2018), a strategy of audit trail and documenting the inquiry process to aid in addressing the threat to dependability was utilized (see Appendix P). Provided was a complete set of notes on decisions made during the research process, reflective thoughts, sampling, research instrumentation, emergence of the findings, and information about the data management. Adopting an audit trail enables an auditor to study the transparency of the research path and provides

an in-depth explanation of how the qualitative research process occurred and how the threat to dependability was addressed. In the next section, transferability will be discussed.

Transferability

Transferability concerns the applicability of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the study, a thick description of the participating employees and the research process has been provided; this process enables the study audience to assess whether the research findings are transferable to their own setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Additionally, the sufficiency and appropriateness of the sample size has been ensured. As previously discussed in the recruiting and sampling strategy section of this chapter, the recruitment strategy sought to reach a minimum 40 participants from federal government organizations in Hawaii and ultimately resulted in achieving a total of 46 participants for this study.

To address the threats of transferability, which often originates in the approach of data collection and analysis, bracketing during data collection and analysis was utilized. Bracketing strengthened the confirmability and transferability of the data analysis outcomes. Bracketing involves reflecting on, being mindful of, and working to counteract and mindfully suspend preconceptions and biases while conducting study procedures (Janak, 2018). Bracketing in this study was supported by maintaining a reflexive journal (see Appendix L) that examined preconceptions and biases which had the potential to influence the study. Additionally, as posited by Janak (2018), the use of bracketing allowed the researcher to note and examine emotional reactions as the study progressed. The execution of bracketing during the research investigation is discussed further in the

reflexivity and bracketing protocol section of Chapter 4. Up next, confirmability of the study will be discussed.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the neutrality of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this aspect, the researcher secures the inter-subjectivity of the data and ensures the interpretation is not based on the researcher's own preferences and viewpoints but is grounded in the data. Common techniques to enhance the confirmability include audit trail and reflexivity (Bowen, 2009). To enhance the confirmability of the study, an audit trail technique was applied. A complete set of notes has been provided on decisions made during the research process, reflective thoughts, sampling, research instrumentation, the emergence of the findings, and information about the data management (see Appendix L, Appendix O, and Appendix P). Moreover, there was close attention given to researcher reflexivity conducted throughout the data collection process as well as data analysis, which reminded the researcher to maintain awareness about how the research results unfolded and enabled documentation of emerging patterns as suggested by previous researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Palaganas et al., 2017).

Reflecting on, being mindful of, and working to counteract and mindfully suspend preconceptions and biases while conducting study procedures was accomplished through bracketing (Janak, 2018). The use of bracketing in the study data collection and analysis was supported by maintaining a reflexive journal to examine preconceptions and biases and to note and examine emotional reactions as the study progressed (Janak, 2018). Through the use of bracketing and reflexivity, enhanced efforts to thwart the threats to confirmability in this study that explored supervisor's influence on employee

psychological safety in the context of U.S. federal government organizations was therefore placed at the forefront. The reflexivity and bracketing process used to support confirmability is discussed in further detail later in Chapter 4. Up next, the data collection and management process used in the study is discussed.

Data Collection and Management

This qualitative descriptive study involved a systematic process for data collection. Respondents participated in an open-ended online questionnaire and one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was administered online through the SurveyMonkey application. Interviews were audio recorded through Zoom conferencing and transcribed verbatim by the built-in transcription service in the cloud recording option within Zoom. Data collected from the questionnaire and interviews was used later during the data analysis and is presented in the results and conclusions sections in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively. In the following sections, the detailed process used in the data collection and management will be discussed. Up next, the site authorization to the conduct the study is explained.

Site Authorization to Conduct the Study

The process for data collection began with site authorization approval (Appendix B) received from the administrator of the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group, which at the time consisted of 12,053 U.S. Federal government employees. Contact with the administrator of the LinkedIn private group was conducted through the direct messaging feature within LinkedIn and through personal email. Although a tertiary plan to post directly to the researchers LinkedIn page was proposed and not needed, permission to recruit from one's own personal LinkedIn page would not

have been required given that one is considered the administrator of their own personal LinkedIn page. In the next section, the expert panel process used to review the data instruments is explained.

Expert Panel

The questionnaire and interview protocols were developed to guide the data collection. These two protocols were reviewed by three expert panelists who hold a Doctorate in Education, including one individual with a specialization in Curriculum Development and Research Methods and two individuals with specialization in Organizational Change and Leadership and Qualitative Design. The expert panelists reviewed the research protocols and verified that the questions were aligned and sufficient to yield data that would address the overarching research questions and the phenomenon, how employees describe their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety. The questionnaire and interview protocols (Appendix E) were updated with the panelist's comments and suggested revisions (Appendix K).

The administrative section of the interview protocol was updated based on feedback from two panelists who recommended including the "right to withdraw" details from the study confidentially section and inclusion of the details regarding the member checking process. Question six in the questionnaire was updated to address grammatical errors of incompleteness. Questions one, two, and sixteen in the interview contained the phrase "psychological health," which was deemed misaligned with the intended study and the research questions focus on psychological safety. Therefore, the term psychological health was removed from the questions and replaced with psychological safety. Finally, although the wording of each question was deemed okay, one panelist

noted the punctuation issue of some questions, which was addressed accordingly. The recommendations received from the scholars during the expert panel review provided validity and enhancement to the trustworthiness of the questions (Connelly, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Next, the field-testing process of the data instruments and protocols used in the study are discussed.

Field Test

After the questionnaire and interview protocols were updated, based on feedback from the expert panel, a field test of the questionnaire and interview protocols was conducted. The field test included three volunteers who were employees in a federal government organization and shared a similar background with the target population but were not a part of the target population for the study. The field test allowed for an increase in the trustworthiness of all questionnaire and interview questions. Additionally, the field test validated the process of the interview protocol to ensure an opportunity to ask probing questions existed and that the researcher's ability to transcribe, analyze, and code the data could be achieved.

The results of the field test did not reveal issues with the questions or the design of the self-developed data collection protocols that went through an expert panel review. However, an observation was made that the practice of interviewing and familiarity with SurveyMonkey, Zoom conferencing and MAXQDA software is instrumental to the success of the study and that with each question and participant the prompts may differ. Of the many benefits of the field test, one most appreciated from the process was the ability to become familiar with the data sources and protocols and to practice the art of data collection and management in research.

Although data was collected during the execution of the field test, the data collected in the field test was not used in the data analysis. Rather, the information gathered from the field test was used to ensure the proper preparation to distribute the questionnaire and conduct the interview process. The questionnaire and interview protocols used for the study can be found in Appendix E. Next, the AQR Level 2 peer review process used in the study is briefly discussed.

AQR Level 2 Approval

Once the site authorization was obtained, expert panel review was completed, field testing was conducted, and committee approval was received, the study proposal was submitted for AQR level 2 review. Upon receiving AQR level 2 approval, the study proposal was then defended to the committee. After a successful proposal defense, the proposal moved to the IRB stage where final approval to commence the study was obtained. A brief explanation of the recruitment step is up next.

Recruiting

Once IRB approval was obtained, the recruitment flyer (Appendix J) for the study was posted to the site approved Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group. The recruitment flyer contained the researchers' credentials, the purpose of the study, participant criterion with qualifiers and disqualifiers, the activities included in the research study, how data will be protected, and the contact information for the researcher. A link to the privacy policy of LinkedIn was also included in the recruitment flyer so that perspective participants would understand that any information they shared directly on LinkedIn could not be given a guarantee of privacy. Potential participants were asked to avoid responding openly on LinkedIn in an effort to protect their identity. Further details

of the recruitment process as executed in the study are discussed later in Chapters 4 and 5. In the next section, the sampling and screening process for the study is discussed.

Sampling and Screening

To obtain participants for the study, inclusion criteria was applied to screen the intended sample within the informed consent. The inclusion criterion of the study required that participants were (a) a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii; and (b) employed in a federal government organization for more than two years. The criterion was included upfront in the recruitment flyer and as a part of the informed consent section. The study plan used a purposive homogenous sampling technique and the LinkedIn social media platform to obtain the study participants as a primary means using the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group. A secondary means to obtain the sample utilized a snowball technique to extend the reach and gain additional study participants. Given the global reach of social media and the ability to cast a wider net using a snowball technique (Kaliszewski et al., 2021; Kozłowski et al., 2021; Sibona et al., 2020), the use of LinkedIn was deemed a viable option to obtain the sample. Additionally, amid the COVID-19 global pandemic, obtaining a sample while remaining safe and socially distanced was easily mitigated using the LinkedIn social media platform. Lastly, if the required participants would have not been obtained using the primary and secondary means to acquire the sample, a tertiary means to obtain participants would have used the researcher's own personal LinkedIn page which at the time contained 508 professional connections who were primarily government workers located throughout Hawaii. However, due to sufficient study participants and achievement of data saturation, the

tertiary recruitment plan was neither required nor invoked. Further discussion on the strategy to obtain the sample and on data saturation is discussed in Chapter 4. Next, the informed consent of the study is discussed.

Informed Consent

The informed consent was required to be reviewed and acknowledged by all prospective participants prior to joining the study. The informed consent was included upfront as a part of the questionnaire which was hosted by the SurveyMonkey application and delivered through a link available in the posted online recruitment flyer. Only after perspective participants had read the informed consent and agreed to the terms and conditions of the study, were they allowed to move forward to enter the study and start the questionnaire process. Additional discussion on the informed consent step and the informed consent process, as executed in the study, is discussed later in Chapter 4. The following section briefly discusses the delivery of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire

Once IRB approval was obtained, the recruitment flyer for the study was posted to the site approved Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group. The recruitment flyer contained the researchers' credentials, the purpose of the study, participant qualifiers and disqualifiers or screening, the activities included in the research study, how data will be protected, and the contact information for the researcher. A link to the privacy policy of LinkedIn was also included in the recruitment flyer so that participants would understand that any information they shared directly on LinkedIn could not be given a guarantee of privacy. Potential participants were asked to avoid responding openly on LinkedIn in an effort to protect their identity. The recruitment flyer

also included a direct link to the online SurveyMonkey application to review the informed consent, demographic questionnaire, and open-ended questionnaire questions. Only after participants had read the informed consent and agreed to the terms and conditions of the study, were they allowed to move forward and start the questionnaire process. The recruitment flyer with a link to the questionnaire that was used in this study can be found in Appendix J. Next, the scheduling and execution of the interview protocol is discussed.

Interviews

The open-ended one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted by recruiting 14 employees from the initial group of 46 employees who had completed the online questionnaire. Permission of the participants had already been acknowledged and obtained through the informed consent form (Appendix D) provided in the initial questionnaire stage. To initiate the interview phase, contact was made with participants who had volunteered for interviews to schedule a date and time for their interview.

The interviews for the study were scheduled according to the availability of the participants (Cutler et al., 2021). Contact was initiated with the participants who had indicated their willingness to participate in the semi-structured interview process using their preferred contact method to schedule a date and time to interview. Interview confirmation was obtained by sending an email invite to conduct the recorded meeting via Zoom. Before the interview process, a Zoom test call verification was conducted to ensure there were no technical complications with the Zoom platform. If technical issues had emerged via Zoom (e.g., software or internet issues), participants would have been

contacted immediately and been provided with the option to conduct their interviews via a phone line using Conference NOW, a dial-in conferencing application.

Interviews were conducted via the video chat application Zoom. Interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate reporting of data. During the interviews, the interviewer noted body language, emotional behavior inflections, and voice tones of the participants (see Appendix O). Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the built-in Zoom transcription service available in the cloud recording option in Zoom. Through recordings, the researcher was able to enhance the accuracy of transcribing interview data more than note taking alone (Ellis & Levy, 2009). By using Zoom conferencing, the researcher was able to take notes while simultaneously recording the interview, which provided more accuracy to the interview data being collected (Sandelowski, 2000). Based on the results of all 14 interviews conducted for the study, the researcher achieved an average duration of 71 minutes, which surpassed the anticipated average of 60 minutes resultant from the field test that was conducted for the study. To guide the interview, a researcher-developed interview protocol was used. The protocol included 18 open-ended questions previously validated by an expert panel and field tested by volunteers. Interview responses were used to answer the study research questions using overarching themes which emerged from the data and data analysis.

On the day of the scheduled interview with each participant, the interview was conducted by following a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix E). The interviewer reminded each participant that the interview was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. At the end of each interview, the participants were extended a thank you for participating in the study. The transcription from each

interview was then reviewed to ensure they accurately aligned to the audio from the interview. As the recorded transcription was analyzed, a comparison to the audio file in real-time was conducted to ensure the transcribed data was comprehensive and accurate.

After the transcript review of each participant interview was complete, a copy of each transcript was sent to each respective participant via email to begin the member checking process. Member checking allows the researcher to meet trustworthiness requirements for data collection and management by ensuring that the transcribed data is accurate (Birt et al., 2016; Shenton, 2004). The interview transcripts were member checked, as recommended by Yin (2017) and Denzin and Lincoln (2012), by emailing the participant a copy of his or her own interview transcript. Participants were provided five days to review and return their transcript with a response either verifying its accuracy or recommending corrections.

To expedite the process, a follow-up reminder was sent via email to participants on the third day. In the event there had been errors in the transcript, revisions would have been made to the transcript and returned back to the participant for their approval. However, since all 14 members indicated no issues with their transcript this process was not required. Each transcript was marked to indicate if member checking was completed or not. While member checking was encouraged, it was not required. It was anticipated that member checking by each interview participant would require an additional 45 minutes of their time to review their own personal interview transcript. Since member checking was completed by all 14 interview participants, no impact on the limitations of the study were incurred. Next, the bracketing and reflexivity process is discussed.

Bracketing and Reflexivity

A personal bias could have existed on the researcher's part as the researcher identified as a government employee, who at some point, may have experienced differing or similar experiences as the study participants. As a measure to mitigate bias, reflexivity and bracketing were utilized. Reflexivity is a qualitative process that allows the researcher to acknowledge self-bias, beliefs, and personal experiences that may impact the researcher's thought process pertaining to how participants may respond to the study and how the data is interpreted (Dodgson, 2019). Bracketing on the other hand is a written reflection process that augments the reflexivity of the study; the process allows the researcher to record personal reactions that may arise during the data collection phase and post interview which can assist in enhancing the overall results (Janak, 2018).

Bracketing was practiced when carrying out the guiding interview protocol and during the conduct of the semi-structured interviews. The bracketing process involved documenting biases that may have had an impact on the data being collected. The process included identifying words, phrases, or thoughts that may be expected to serve as a continuous reminder to not look for those items during the interviews. Bracketing continued to be employed before and during data collection and during analysis and interpretation. Using such a method mitigated possible bias, allowing not only the researcher but also the participants to guide the direction of the interview (Chan et al., 2013). Bracketing also helped contain all past experiences, preconceptions, and opinions to avoid influence of personal ideas and perceptions on the data analysis (Giorgi, 1997). This method, in turn, allowed for an untainted and open dialogue between the researcher and interviewees (Ellis & Levy, 2009).

A common research technique used to practice reflexivity and remain aware of bias is through the use of a diary or journal, where the researcher writes down thoughts, feelings, and perceptions (Chan et al., 2013). Based off the recommendation from Chan et al., notes were kept in a reflexive journal, which included quick notes taken during the interview and notes reflecting on the interview after each semi-structured interview was complete. Keen attention and listening were carried out, paying close attention to the participants' identification of any unique observations while answering questions. The process of reflexive bracketing aided in identification and avoidance of bias as well as being aware of any assumptions throughout the data collection and data analysis process.

The reflexive journaling outlined and adopted (see Appendix L) for the study captured the researcher's personal reactions to the interviews both during the process and after it concluded. Documented notes in the reflexive journal were based on the researcher's own past and present experiences and the awareness of results observed in prior research studies. The process of bracketing and note taking in a reflexive journal allowed critical reflection on actions throughout the research process so that the research was not tainted by preconceived notions during the data collection or analysis and interpretation. Further discussion on the bracketing and reflexivity protocol that was carried out in the study is discussed later in Chapter 4. Up next, the study data management process is discussed.

Data Management

All study-related soft-copy electronic documents, interview recordings and transcriptions, and questionnaire data were retained electronically on a password-protected USB thumb drive, which was preserved in a locked and secure location

accessible only to the researcher by key (Ellis & Levy, 2009). All electronic stored data was scheduled to be deleted from the USB thumb drive after a retention period of three years, and thus be deemed destroyed by deletion (Marshall et al., 2013). Hard copies of notes were placed in labeled hanging folders and stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office. Hard copies of the raw data from each questionnaire and interview transcription exported from SurveyMonkey and the Zoom cloud were printed for thematic analysis and stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office. The hard-copy files were separated based on the data source (e.g., questionnaire and interviews). Individual manila hanging file folders were labeled to maintain the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts under each participant's researcher-selected pseudonym. At the conclusion of the three-year time period following the end of the study, all hard copies were scheduled to be destroyed through cross-shredding. All recommendations from the Belmont Report were observed to minimize any damaging forms of evidence or data that could potentially be harmful to study participants (Ellis & Levy, 2009). In the next section, the data analysis procedures used in the study are discussed.

Data Analysis Procedures

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. Data analysis in qualitative research is a descriptive process that uses thematic analysis to provide a rich and detailed account of the data (Doyle et al., 2019). Utilizing the thematic analysis approach, the researcher was able to immerse himself in the data to demonstrate a consistent and systematic

approach to the interpretation of the data (Sandelowski, 2000). Upon the conclusion of data analysis and the study completion, all collected data was retained and protected for a duration of three years as detailed in the data management section of this chapter. After three years had elapsed since the completion of the study, all electronic data collected was destroyed by deletion and all hard-copy data was destroyed through cross-shredding. The data collection and analysis for the study answered the following research questions:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

Further details of the findings which derived from the data collected are presented in the results section of Chapter 4. Up next, cleaning and preparation of the data is discussed.

Data Cleaning and Preparation

This qualitative descriptive study collected data from two sources, open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The raw data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews was prepared through the process of data cleaning. Data cleaning is a practice of detecting errors and repairing those errors (Chu & Ilyas, 2016). The process used for data cleaning helped to prepare the questionnaire and interview data for further analysis and verified that the data was complete.

The first step of the data cleaning and preparation process involved a review of the online report generated from the SurveyMonkey application, which included the total number of completed responses for each questionnaire question and specific indications if data entries were missing or if participant responses contained errors. In step 2 of the

process, the questionnaire responses were downloaded from SurveyMonkey in an Excel document generated by the online application. To organize and track the data, all completed questionnaires were redacted of PII and assigned a pseudonym associated with the letter “Q” to identify the data as a questionnaire response. For example, the first participant response was collected and stored in a password-protected folder on a USB thumb drive as a file labeled “pseudonym_Q.”

In step 2a a full review of each questionnaire was completed, including a determination of those respondents who were willing to be interviewed based on an indication of “yes” to the question regarding the interview phase and the inclusion of their contact information. In the next step, 2b, the researcher began the process of contacting identified participants to schedule a one-on-one interview.

After collecting 46 completed questionnaires, a review of participants who volunteered for the interview phase was conducted, starting with the purposeful selection of those participants who indicated the highest years of experience on the demographic questionnaire. The purposefully selected participants identified from the questionnaire responses were contacted to schedule an interview at their earliest convenience. Upon the identification of 14 willing participants with the highest years of experience, the researcher assigned the letter “I” to their previously assigned pseudonym to identify their data collected as an interview response (Step 2c). For example, the researcher stored the completed interview responses using the assigned participant pseudonym in a password-protected folder on a USB thumb drive under the following naming convention “pseudonym_I.” As previously addressed in the recruiting and sampling strategy, the researcher-selected pseudonyms protected participants from any consequences that might

have resulted from the disclosure of their identities by replacing participants' real names in all study materials.

In step 3, each individual interview recorded by Zoom and their respective transcript that was transcribed verbatim by the built-in Zoom transcription service was listened to and verified by the interviewer simultaneously to check for accuracy. In step 3a, the member checking process was employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Each of the 14 interview participants verified their respective transcript upon email receipt from the interviewer through the process of member checking, as recommended by Yin (2017) and Denzin and Lincoln (2012). Once the interview transcripts were member-checked for accuracy and validity and returned to the researcher by email, the researcher conducted another review and made edits as necessary before coding (Step 3b). In step 3c, the member checked transcripts were then saved in a password-protected file under the participant's researcher-selected pseudonym. In step 3d, the researcher printed the member checked transcripts to begin the process of establishing emerging codes.

As set forth in the ethical considerations and data management sections of this study, all sources of data were securely stored and redacted of PII and participants real names were replaced with a pseudonym (i.e., pseudonym1, pseudonym2, etc.). Hard-copy paper data was organized by questionnaire and interview in hanging folders labeled with each participant's pseudonym and stored in a locked file cabinet in the researchers' home office. Soft-copy electronic data were organized by questionnaire and interview in file folders labeled with each participant's pseudonym and stored on a password-protected USB thumb drive which was stored in a secure and locked location accessible

only to the researcher (Ellis & Levy, 2009). To adhere to university guidelines, all data was securely stored for at least three years following the completion of the research. Following the end of the three-year time frame, all hard-copy data was scheduled for destruction by cross-shredding and all soft-copy data was scheduled for destruction by deleting the digital files. In the next section, the thematic analysis process used to become familiarized with the data and further analyze the data is explained.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was a major component of the data analysis process for both the questionnaire and interview data. Thematic analysis is a systematic process requiring familiarization with the data and recognizing patterns and themes (Lester et al., 2020). Guest et al. (2012) asserted that thematic analysis helps identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning, particularly for qualitative studies. Thematic analysis was a key part of this research study since it helped to identify themes from the collected data (Kim et al., 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe a process of inductive thematic analysis, which includes: a) becoming familiar with the collected data, b) developing emergent codes, c) searching for relevant themes, d) analyzing the themes, e) describing and naming the themes and f) conducting a report.

By conducting an inductive thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) process, implementation of an open-coding research structure that is data-driven to identify themes that exclude any pre-existing codes or personal engagement aligned to the proposed problem, was made possible. Identifying themes in the data collected is a critical part of completing a qualitative descriptive study. The thematic analysis for this

study took place in six phases utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) outline for undertaking the data analysis:

1. Becoming familiar with the collected data. This was done by listening to recorded audio and by reading and re-reading interview transcripts and questionnaire responses repeatedly with an emphasis on noticing points of potential analytical significance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Particular attention to the points of analytical significance involves noticing similarities in data that point to common experiences in a phenomenon. Furthermore, in this study of psychological safety, emerging new points in the data presented new revelations based on common occurrences or frequent reference to a particular thing.
2. Developing emergent new codes. The coding process consisted of an inductive open-coding descriptive process to hand-code data from the questionnaires and the interview transcripts into a researcher created codebook (Appendix F). Using the inductive open-coding process allows emergence of data-driven code free of pre-existing structure or researcher preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The result is a rich description of the data through *in vivo*, or participant choice of wording, from which patterns begin to form directly from the participant experience (Elliott, 2018). Patterns emerged from the study data as a result of the process to collect, transcribe, reduce, code, and categorize the questionnaire and semi-structured interview responses of participants (Sandelowski, 2000). As a means of crosschecking the hand-coded process, the software program MAXQDA was used to provide computer assisted open-coding and organization of the phrases and words extracted from each data source. Sandelowski (2000) recommended employing the descriptive coding technique. This technique involves summarization of the data down to short phrases, or a single word, based on meaning, topic, and descriptiveness to designate labels to be utilized in an inventory list for convenient referencing (Belotto, 2018). When different excerpts from the data expressed similar meanings relevant to answering a research question, they were clustered to form a code. The code was then given a brief and descriptive label to indicate the meaning of the data assigned to it, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).
3. Searching for relevant themes. Codes were examined for repetitive patterns and grouped into intermediate categories and then similar categories were grouped into initial themes. A process known as pattern coding was used to piece together similar code clusters that had emerged from natural participant descriptions (Saldaña, 2021). Codes were grouped when they expressed similar meanings or when they converged as different aspects of a broader theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Theme formation was inductive and semantic to move the researcher from an isolated to a broader interpretation (Lester et al., 2020). Semantic themes are descriptions of patterns in the data rather than theory-based interpretations of those patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lester et al., 2020). The inductive formation of semantic themes was appropriate for, and consistent with, the goal of

a descriptive design, because the themes became descriptions of patterns in the data (Sandelowski, 2010).

4. Analyzing the themes. This was done after reviewing and refining the initial themes by comparison with the original data to ensure accuracy and relevance to answering the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through comparison, the researcher can interrelate and contrast data, thus piecing together a puzzle to provide the researchers depiction of the collected data (Lester et al., 2020).
5. Describing and naming the themes. The themes were named and defined to clarify their significance as answers to the research questions following the recommendation by Braun and Clarke (2006).
6. Conducting a report. This was accomplished by presenting the results in Chapter 4 of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Results are presented by research question and within research question by theme. The discussion of each theme includes initial themes and quotations from the data as evidence. A description of the implementation of the data analysis procedure provided for transparency and verifiability, including narrative discussion and tabular presentation of code and theme frequencies, including which codes were clustered to form the themes (Lester et al., 2020). The presentation of results in Chapter 4 uses tables, charts, and graphs where appropriate to showcase pertinent information (e.g., duration of interviews and the number of transcription pages).

The MAXQDA software was utilized to crosscheck the hand-coded process and organize the phrases and words extracted from the responses of the participants. The aim of utilizing the MAXQDA software was to provide a computer assisted examination and to efficiently streamline management of the intricate undertaking of data coding in order to comprehensively conduct the study. The utilization of MAXQDA enhanced the examination of data and provided an assist to the hand-coding to allow for patterns to emerge that better describe the data (Marshall et al., 2013). Using the matching of patterns, the data pertaining to the employee description of psychological safety in the workplace and supervisor influence on psychological safety and prior psychological safety literature was isolated based on relationship or commonality (Ellis & Levy, 2009). This process allowed the information to be condensed to smaller analytical units as

required for the identification of patterns (Belotto, 2018). MAXQDA has the features and characteristics that qualitative academics identify as important to conducting scientific and reliable thematic analysis (Lester et al., 2020), making it a beneficial tool for the qualitative study. MAXQDA offers tools specifically for qualitative academics to enhance the hand-coded analysis of data from pages and documents and was instrumental in the success of the study. Up next, data saturation is discussed.

Data Saturation

Despite data collection and analysis being performed concurrently in qualitative research, data analysis does not conclude when collection is complete (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Instead, data analysis intensifies with a focus on finding similarities, identifying themes, and discarding dissimilarities until the point of data saturation, or when no new discoveries are being produced. This procedure is an iterative process that continues until all themes are explained and data saturation is achieved based on epistemological, methodological, practical, and pragmatic issues in addition to the selected research design (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The study ensured that data saturation was obtained before making a determination that enough participants had been successfully recruited and interviewed. Data saturation is a fundamental process in which the participant responses continue to sound the same as each other and no new themes arise in the data (Sohn et al., 2017). While data saturation has been found to be an important part of research, it is often a neglected area that researchers have varying opinions on (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Many factors play into the neglect and disparity of reaching data saturation, mainly because the when and how of one reaching data saturation is largely dependent

upon the study design (Fusch & Ness, 2015). However, given the varying opinions in research, data saturation does provide a means to reach a level of obtaining data that is both rich and thick for interpretation (Dibley, 2011). To ensure data saturation was obtained in this study, an iterative process was employed that continued to seek additional data until all themes were explained and data saturation was achieved based on the methodological and research design (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

While Sandelowski (2000) identified that 10 interviews would be sufficient in a descriptive study design, Yin (2017) argued that a more structured method is required where numbers may vary. To support the need for data saturation, the study aimed for a goal of 12-15 participants for interviews which Sim et al. (2018) concluded as exhaustive enough to reach a rich description of participant experiences of a phenomenon. Because 12-15 interview participants were deemed appropriate for the study and a total of 14 participants was achieved to provide a repetitive and rich description of experiences of the phenomenon under investigation, additional participants were not required. Furthermore, upon reaching a repetitive discovery of similar data from 10 study participants and upon emergence of analogous themes within the data, indicating the occurrence of data saturation, a minimum of three additional interviews was achieved to ensure no new data emerged. The executed study plan aided the researcher in determining that the required rich and thick data had been obtained and that data saturation had occurred. In the next section, ethical considerations used in the study are discussed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were maintained at all times. The researcher obtained approval from the GCU IRB to conduct the study using the original research proposal. The

researcher also included the IRB approval letter with the researcher's dissertation, providing evidence that approval was granted (see Appendix C). To promote ethical standards, the researcher followed the IRB guidelines and principles of the Belmont report to include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Belmont Report, 1979; Marshall et al., 2013). In doing so, the researcher acknowledged respect and fairness for the participants of this voluntary study. Finally, to support ethical standards throughout the study, the researcher made sure that all IRB and Belmont Report guidelines were complete in the recruitment, consent, data collection, data analysis, and participant confidentiality.

Regarding the voluntary nature of the study and respect for persons, the ethical principle recognizing the autonomy of people, entitlement to own choices and protection of those who are in-capable of self-determination was applied and preserved by obtaining the informed consent (Marshall et al., 2013). The online questionnaire began with the terms of the informed consent, allowing participants to select the option of understanding the terms and consent to proceed as a participant. Included in the informed consent was a statement indicating to the participants that although the researcher worked to maintain the identity of those who participated in the study with strict confidentiality, the researcher's doctoral committee (e.g., doctoral chair, methodologist, and content expert) were allowed access to all study information, including access to the raw data files upon request. The study participation did not commence, nor was data collected, until each participant voluntarily agreed to the informed consent.

To ensure the guidelines and principle of beneficence and doing good, data from the questionnaires was securely encrypted according to the online SurveyMonkey

guidelines with pseudonyms assigned to each participant to help protect their identity.

Audio recordings from the Zoom interviews were downloaded from the cloud and protected in the researcher's possession as previously mentioned in the data collection and management section. In an effort to maintain justice and to avoid manipulation, the researcher-maintained privacy and confidentiality of the participants throughout the study. Additionally, the researcher informed participants that they could end the interview at any time and reminded them that their participation was completely voluntary.

Since the participants were recruited from Hawaii, the region where the researcher resides, it was in fact possible that the researcher may have known some participants of the study sample. However, the researcher did not expect nor exert coercion or any conflict of interest. The researcher was held accountable to the integrity of the data instruments and had no influence on any of the responses or answers taken from the study sample. Furthermore, the recruitment was done using LinkedIn social media, which had no affiliation with the researcher other than being an online social media service selected for recruitment purposes. To enhance the study's trustworthiness, the researcher utilized an expert panel of scholars and conducted a field test of the data instruments with individuals similar, but not a part of the target population. Additionally, the researcher conducted bracketing during the data collection and data analysis stages of the research, to record and mitigate any biases that could have developed on the researcher's behalf (Janak, 2018).

After completion of the study, the researcher transferred the electronic soft-copy research data to a password-protected USB thumb drive stored in a locked file cabinet

within the researcher's personal office. Hard-copy research data was stored in file folders in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's personal office. The password-protected USB thumb drive containing the soft-copy research data and the file folders containing the hard-copy research data was maintained by the researcher and will be for at least three years after the study conclusion, in accordance with GCU guidelines. After the three-year time frame, the researcher will permanently delete all electronic soft-copy files from the USB thumb drive and will shred and discard the hard copy data. The researcher addressed all issues relevant to the study data management, data analysis, and publication of findings to ensure the Belmont report fundamental principles of respect for person, beneficence, and justice were maintained throughout the study (Belmont Report, 1979; Marshall et al., 2013). Up next, the assumptions and delimitations of the study will be discussed.

Assumptions, and Delimitations

In this section, the researcher identified the assumptions and specified the delimitations of the study. The researcher defined the terms using citations from the literature, and then listed the assumptions and delimitations. The researcher provided a rationale and appropriate citations for statements of assumptions and delimitations.

Assumptions

In a research study, whether qualitative or quantitative, the researcher reveals a unique list of assumptions that are anticipated prior to conducting the study (Wolgemuth et al., 2017). Assumptions are the ideas and beliefs considered to be true or plausible by those conducting research and those reading the documentations of the given research (Wolgemuth et al., 2017). In research, these self-evident truths are considered truths that

come to the research realm pre-loaded, and the researcher's awareness of their pre-loaded nature acts to protect the research from faltering from its pursuit of the truth (Wolgemuth et al., 2017). The researcher has made the following assumptions with provided rationale for this study.

1. It is assumed that participants provided truthful and honest information in their questionnaire and open-ended individual interviews with the researcher. All participants took part in the study voluntarily, and responses were kept confidential by the researcher. The confidentiality and voluntary participation information conform to the requirements set forth in the Belmont Report (1979) and the study information was presented in the informed consent (see Appendix D). The assumption of honesty is based upon the rationale that no evidence exists that would suggest a deceitful nature of participants (Foss & Hallberg, 2014). Additionally, given the preparation and voluntary nature of the study and that participant's responded to recruitment willingly, this assumption was accepted.
2. It is assumed that participants fully understood the purpose of this proposed research study and the open-ended questionnaire and interview protocols. Participants' full awareness and understanding of the study can significantly impact the outcomes and conclusions of the proposed research (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). To support this rationale, an expert panel of three scholars reviewed all the questions in the questionnaire and interview protocols to improve the reliability of the instruments. Field tests of the questionnaire and interview protocol was also conducted to further enhance the reliability of the data instruments. Based on the rationale that the expert panel of scholars assisted in providing clear understanding and relevance in the questions and that the field test served to enhance reliability of the instruments, this assumption was accepted.
3. It is assumed that participants reviewed the data transcripts associated with their participation in the study. In other words, it is assumed that participants member checked the data they were sent. Member checking is crucial to the study as it allows participants to validate the authenticity of their responses and further enables the researcher to meet trustworthiness requirements for data collection and management by ensuring that the transcribed data is accurate (Shenton, 2004). Given this, the researcher was unable to confirm whether participants fully conducted the member checking, or to what degree member checking occurred. Based on the rationale that there exists no evidence to suggest that participants would be deceitful (Foss & Hallberg, 2014) and that participants were aware of the requirement to member check in the informed consent they acknowledged, this assumption was accepted.

Delimitations

Delimitations are restrictions over which the researcher can exercise control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). Delimitations are consciously and purposefully set by the researcher to safeguard the integrity of the research (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). In this study, the following delimitations were identified with provided rationale.

1. The study was delimited by the selection of a qualitative descriptive study design. All data collected was qualitative in nature, relying on texts and narratives to generate the needed data for the study. The consequence of this scope and delimitation is that no statistical findings were reported. All findings are based on the themes that were generated from the thematic analysis of the data which can be dependent upon the interpretation by the researcher as a key instrument (Bresler, 2021). The use of qualitative research and the descriptive design allows in-depth open-end exploration from the participant perspective in a research phenomenon under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019; Yin, 2017), which was the goal of the study. Likewise, empirical studies conducted in psychological safety over the span of 25 years indicated that 74 out 78 studies were of the quantitative design (Newman et al., 2017), revealing a need for more qualitative research to contribute to the field of psychological safety. Therefore, based on the need to explore the phenomenon of supervisor influence in psychological safety and the low yield of qualitative studies within the field of psychological safety, the use of the qualitative descriptive design was therefore accepted.
2. The study was delimited by the selection of participants who were employed in a U.S. federal government organization in the State of Hawaii for more than two years. The delimitation of two years allowed participants who are vested federal government employees and have passed the standard federal government probationary period of employment to participate, but those who have not were excluded. Employees who are new within an organization and under the threshold of two years are historically observed for dark and hidden personalities and cannot be relied on to provide a candid account of organizational behavior and experiences (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2021). The delimitation of region and within the State of Hawaii allowed for accessibility and feasibility to conduct the research in a manageable time. Selection of employees of U.S. federal government organizations in the United States and from the State of Hawaii was based on research and the suggested gap in knowledge on the chosen sample and the factors influencing their psychological safety in the workplace (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017; Page et al., 2019). The consequence of this delimitation is that transferability and applicability may not extend past U.S. federal government employees within the same geographic area of Hawaii. However, given the accessibility and feasibility of participants, this delimitation was accepted.

3. The study was delimited to employees in U.S. federal government organizations in Hawaii who were recruited online through the business networking social media site LinkedIn. This delimitation was established due to the researcher's desire to filter the study to the geographical location of the State of Hawaii, which is the researchers home state and allowed for the safe accessibility through social media. Given the global reach of social media, the need for safe social distancing during the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the ability to further recruit participants using a secondary snowball recruitment technique online, the feasibility and sustainability of the study was enhanced (Kaliszewski et al., 2021; Kozłowski et al., 2021; Sibona et al., 2020). Based on the rationale that LinkedIn social media and use of the researcher's home location during the global COVID-19 pandemic was a safe and viable option to ensure feasibility and completion of the study, this delimitation was accepted.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the methodology, overall research design, and analysis techniques that were used in the study to explore supervisor's influence on employee psychological safety in the context of U.S. federal government organizations were all presented in a comprehensive manner. To summarize, the problem statement was: It is not known how federal government employees describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. This problem statement resulted in the development of two research questions exploring the phenomenon of how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety. The first research question asked, how do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace? The second research question asked, how do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace? The researcher aimed to answer these research questions by completing the data collection and data analysis processes using a questionnaire and interview protocol, which were outlined in this chapter and further presented in Chapter 4.

The researcher deliberately chose the study to be administered using a qualitative approach. Since the researcher aimed to present results that provided a description of the phenomenon, quantitative methodology would not have been suitable. The researcher arrived at this conclusion after examining empirical articles of similar and related studies supporting a need for qualitative methodology (Frazier et al., 2017; Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Javed et al., 2019; Maximo et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017; Page et al., 2019). Thus, the purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.

The population of interest in the study consisted of people who were employed in a federal government organization in the United States. The target population consisted of employees in a federal government organization in Hawaii. The LinkedIn social media site assisted in the recruitment of 46 questionnaire participants who all met the following inclusion criteria: (a) a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii; and (b) employed in a federal government organization for more than two years. Additionally, the researcher recruited 14 interviewees from the initial group of 46 questionnaire participants for an audio-recorded interview using Zoom. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the built-in Zoom transcription service, methodically reviewed by the researcher, and member checked by participants. The researcher closely adhered to all data management and storage procedures detailed in this chapter including the appropriate locking and securing of files and maintaining privacy and confidentiality of all research participants. All information was stored in the custody of the researcher

for at least three years and scheduled for destruction in accordance with the procedures listed in the data management section of this chapter.

In this chapter, the researcher has presented the key steps listing the detailed process of data collection, data management, and data analysis for the study. The researcher aimed to make the study both transparent and easily replicable for other researchers who want to conduct similar studies in the future. In qualitative research, transparency and replicability are two fundamental factors connected to trustworthiness (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019). Qualitative research can be positively reinforced by demonstrating the process of trustworthy thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Additionally, the researcher discussed the use of bracketing and reflexivity to ensure that his personal thoughts, attitude, bias, and beliefs about the phenomenon did not skew the results. Furthermore, the deep level of the detailed research protocol helped to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study that explored supervisor's influence on employee psychological safety in the context of U.S. federal government organizations.

In a research study there are necessary ethical guidelines, assumed plausible beliefs, and researcher-controlled delimitations (Marshall et al., 2013; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019; Wolgemuth et al., 2017). To that extent, the researcher provided assumptions and anticipated delimitations of the study in their respective sections in this chapter. Ethical considerations were also detailed separately to provide readers with knowledge regarding how the researcher worked to protect participant identity and maintain the data collected amongst other ethical standards. To support the ethics required of the study, the researcher ensured compliance with GCU guidelines and the three principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice as indicated in the

Belmont report. The researcher outlined ethical considerations and the deliberate steps that were taken to minimize exposure risks for participants throughout the duration of the study.

Findings and results of the data collection and data analysis are presented in the next chapter, Chapter 4. The presentation of results uses a descriptive narrative and tables, charts, and graphs where appropriate to showcase pertinent information (e.g., duration of interviews and the number of transcription pages). The data analysis and presentation of the results is organized by addressing the research questions and using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis as described in this chapter. The results of the analysis direct the basis for the discussion in the concluding chapter of the study, Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. An overview of the study with results of the qualitative investigation are included in Chapter 4. Additionally, an explanation of the data analysis procedures used, and the limitations present in the study are also discussed in the chapter. Finally, the results from the study, which focused on the phenomenon of psychological safety, are presented through descriptive and visual representations with evidence to support the findings.

Psychological safety, a belief by which individuals in an organization feel empowered to contribute to organizational change (Edmondson & Lei, 2014), was an unknown area of knowledge in government during the initial stages of this research, specifically in the context of how government employees described the phenomenon. While research in the field of psychological safety has been largely explored using quantitative methods as revealed in the literature discussed in Chapter 2, a scarcity of information regarding accounts of psychological safety in U.S. federal government organizations was repeatedly observed. Additionally, during the review of literature, recommendations in existing research began to form a suggestive framework that then resulted in this study focusing on the need to understand the personal accounts of psychological safety as it may be impacted by leadership in various organizational settings such as government (Frazier & Tupper; Maximo et al., 2019; Page et al., 2019).

Guided by the purpose and intent of the study to explore psychological safety in a government workplace, an exhaustive exploration of psychological safety research and literature was conducted. Resultant from the review of existing literature, a dearth of information on government employee accounts of psychological safety was revealed. Given the lack of employee accounts in the phenomenon of psychological safety in government organizations, a qualitative rather than quantitative investigation was born to explore psychological safety through the lens of leadership and policy in government, thus establishing the guiding framework built on the real-life accounts of federal government employees.

To advance the body of knowledge, the investigation utilized a qualitative descriptive methodology focused on the need to understand psychological safety in the context of the government organization. Implementing a framework that explored the real-life accounts of the phenomenon of supervisor influence on psychological safety from the government employee perspective was deemed the best approach given the lack of such personal accounts which are best described using a qualitative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019; Neergaard et al., 2009; Sandelowski, 2010; Siedlecki, 2020). The results of the investigation of psychological safety in U.S. federal government organizations is therefore revealed, examined, and presented in this chapter to provide future researchers and practitioners with key areas within the phenomenon that can be explored and improved upon in a government organization.

The phenomenon that was under investigation was how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety. Using a qualitative descriptive research design, the researcher was able to achieve descriptions of real-world

experiences in psychological safety in the workplace, rather than abstract or theoretical focused content (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019; Sandelowski, 2010; Yin, 2017). Furthermore, the qualitative descriptive approach allowed the researcher to ask probing questions to invoke deep thought that formed a holistic understanding of the participant's descriptions of their supervisors' influence on employee perceptions of psychological safety.

To ensure the effective development of research protocols, the review of literature, the subsequent gap in research identified, and the recommendation for individual accounts of the phenomenon were both important and necessary in the design of the protocols. Because previous research largely explored psychological safety at the macro-level in for-profit organizations, the study instruments focused in on the micro-level in a non-profit governmental organization and the individual components of the organization such as supervisor influence, leadership behavior, and organizational policy as precursors to a healthy psychologically safe workplace (Edmondson, 2018; Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Javed et al., 2019; Maximo et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017). Therefore, given the review of literature detailed in Chapter 2 and the recommendations of prior research detailed in the background section of Chapter 1, the study purpose, research questions, and investigative protocols helped to advance the knowledge of psychological safety in federal government organizations and fill a gap in the existing literature of how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in a federal government organization.

To guide this qualitative descriptive investigation into the gap in knowledge within the field of psychological safety, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

To address the research questions, the framework of the study used a purposive homogenous sampling of participants who self-identified as an employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii. The sampling method was a result of prior research suggesting that purposive sampling provides the ability for participants to be screened for the study, which provides the researcher a higher probability of achieving experience-based answers to the research questions (Ames et al., 2019). While it can certainly be debated in the limitations as to whether the study's recruitment and sampling strategy using social media was the best approach, it remains a belief that the study framework was able to achieve a homogenous sample which helped to ensure that the participants of the study shared the same characteristics in relationship to the topic under investigation (Etikan et al., 2016).

To initiate the recruitment and sampling for this study, the primary strategy started with posting a recruitment flyer for the study on the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group, which consisted of 12,053 U.S. Federal government employees at the time. Following that, the researcher invoked a secondary strategy of purposive snowball sampling to recruit additional participants by asking participants to share the recruitment letter with other potential candidates that potentially qualified for the study. Initially, the researcher had proposed a tertiary, or third, method of recruitment that would have involved posting the online recruitment flyer to his own personal

LinkedIn page, which at the time of the study contained 508 professional connections who were primarily government workers in the State of Hawaii. Given the number of study participants and the low attrition rate achieved using the primary and secondary recruitment plans, the tertiary recruitment plan was neither needed nor invoked. With that, no amendments which would have required expanded IRB review and approval were required during the data collection phase of this study. Additionally, no amendments to any part of the original proposal, as described in Chapters 1-3, were required.

In summary, Chapter 4 is a presentation of the descriptive findings of the investigation to offer insight into the participants described accounts of their supervisor's influence on psychological safety as employees in a federal government organization in the State of Hawaii. Additionally, the chapter provides a detailed description of how the raw data collected during the study was prepared for descriptive data analysis using the procedures previously proposed and approved through IRB. Following that, the details of the data analysis process, a review of the reflexivity protocol used in the study, how emergent codes were identified and developed, and the identification of code clusters, initial themes, and themes is explained. Next, the results of the study are revealed to present the relationship between each developed theme and the research question the themes support, providing contrast and comparison to previous scholarly observations discovered during the literature review presented in Chapter 2. Lastly, the researcher concludes Chapter 4 with a summary and a transition into the study conclusion detailed in Chapter 5.

Preparation of Raw Data for Analysis and Descriptive Data

Preparation of Raw Data for Analysis

Prior to the commencement of the raw data analysis and findings, the data collected required extensive preparation to support the thematic analysis process. Following the collection of the raw data and before execution of the inductive thematic analysis, the researcher organized all data in support of preventative measures instituted to protect the data, identify errors in the data, and minimize mistakes. This process included an initial online review, downloading of the raw questionnaire data from the SurveyMonkey platform, preparing the participant interview transcripts through listening and comparison of recorded audio to the transcripts in Zoom cloud, and conducting the process of member checking of individual interview transcripts by each participant that took part in the interview before the researcher was able to proceed into the data analysis phase. Table 4 provides a summary of the number of questionnaire's and interview's conducted to include duration, transcription pages, reflexive journal entries, field note pages, and the setting in which each data source was collected.

Table 4

(Q)uestionnaire and (I)nterview Summary

	Conducted (#)	Duration / Average (hh:mm:ss)	Transcript (*pages)	Reflexive Journal (entries)	Field Notes (pages)	Setting
I	14	16:28:53 / 01:10:38	278	80	14	Zoom
Q	46	07:28:17 / 00:41:03	58.5		N/A	SurveyMonkey

* Single Spaced – 12 pt. Times New Roman

Questionnaire Data Preparation. The first step in preparing the raw study data for data analysis was to conduct an initial online review of the questionnaire data in SurveyMonkey, followed by the download, individual segregation, and careful

organization of all data sets accumulated from each questionnaire respondent. At first glance, 58 individuals responded to the researcher developed open-ended questionnaire via the online SurveyMonkey application. Of the 58 questionnaires, SurveyMonkey revealed that 12 respondents did not proceed after the signing of the informed consent and therefore were discarded due to being incomplete.

Upon thorough review of questionnaire data from each participant collected via the SurveyMonkey application, each questionnaire was downloaded in the Microsoft Excel format and then carefully transferred into individual Microsoft Word documents that were stored in a password-protected folder on a researcher-controlled USB thumb drive. To organize, maintain confidentiality, and safely track the data, each completed questionnaire downloaded was redacted of PII and assigned a pseudonym associated with the letter “Q” to identify the data as a questionnaire response. For example, the first questionnaire participant response collected was labeled as “pseudonym_Q.” Lastly, the researcher printed a hard copy of each questionnaire for use during hand-coding and stored the questionnaire in a locked file cabinet in the researchers’ home office using pseudonym labeled folders as outlined in the data management procedures in Chapter 3 of the study.

After a full review of the printed questionnaire response data, including determination of those respondents who were willing to participate in the interview phase, hand coding of the data and identification of emerging codes through cluster and pattern identification was conducted. Once familiarization with the data was obtained and hand coding of the questionnaire data complete, the questionnaire data files were then uploaded to the MAXQDA software program. MAXQDA, which offers tools to organize

and visualize data from documents, is specifically tailored for qualitative academics (Lester et al., 2020). Using MAXQDA, the researcher was able to visualize the data results and further organize phrases and words extracted from the data through computer assisted backup that helped confirm and ensure there were no discrepancies in hand coding of the data.

Interview Data Preparation. Next, the researcher-initiated contact with 15 questionnaire participants who volunteered to further participate in the online one-on-one interview via the Zoom application and set forth to schedule a date and time for their interview ensuring convenience for the participant. The participants for the one-on-one semi-structured interviews were pooled from the 46 participants who completed the open-ended questionnaire, starting with those with the highest years of experience. Overall, while 15 participants were contacted by the researcher to schedule an interview, only 14 respondents proceeded with scheduling and took part in completing the online one-on-one interview. Following the scheduling and completion of interviews, the researcher redacted the participant provided contact information on the questionnaire as a measure of maintaining confidentiality.

The researcher then prepared the interview data by saving the interview transcripts and assigning the letter “I” to the participants previously assigned pseudonym to identify the data collected as an interview response. For example, the researcher saved and stored the first interview transcript using the assigned participant pseudonym from the questionnaire response in a password-protected folder on a researcher-controlled USB thumb drive under the following name “pseudonym_I.” As outlined in the data cleaning and preparation procedures, the researcher-selected pseudonyms protected the

participants from any consequences that might result from the disclosure of their identities by replacing the participants' real name in all study materials.

Next, the researcher created an electronic ledger in Microsoft Excel format to document the study participants real name, assigned pseudonym, and contact information. The ledger was created to document and organize participants, accurately depict each participant in the study findings, and ensure that the information collected was properly aligned across all data sets to provide a descriptive picture that supported the results. The use of pseudonyms was critical in this research to maintain the confidentiality of participants, while also minimizing any damaging forms of evidence or data that could potentially be harmful to the study participants (Ellis & Levy, 2009). The renaming convention and protection of study participants was aligned with the guidelines of the Belmont report to ensure the principle of beneficence, respect for persons, and justice were maintained throughout the study (Belmont Report, 1979; Marshall et al., 2013). Figure 1 provides a redacted snapshot of the electronic ledger used in this study.

Figure 1

Snapshot of Electronic Ledger of Participants

Participant ID	Name	Position/Role	Contract Type	Start Date	End Date	Experience Level	Position	Des. Working for Sust.	Age	Retirement	State	Pages for each C	Cost	Email	Phone	Date Coded	Total	Total #C	Total C	Total Inc	
2	Emma	Y	F	0.00-2.5	1.00	NYC	3	Female	Assistant	2-5	35-44	NYC					40	48	14	34	
3	Ava	Y	F	0.15-9.9	1.00	NYC	3	Female	Travel Assistant	2-5	45-54	NYC									
4	Liam	Y	F	0.00-2.5	1.00	NYC	20	Male	Overseer	2-5	35-44	NYC									
5																					
7	Noah	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Requirements Writer	2-5	35-44	NYC									
8	Olivia	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Requirements Management Specialist	2-5	35-34	NYC									
9	Charlotte	Y	F	0.51-24.0	1.20	NYC	5	Female	Logistics Specialist	2-5	35-34	NYC									
10	Elijah	Y	F	0.37-16.1	1.50	NYC	6	Male	Shipper	2-5	25-34	NYC									
11	Olivia	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Requirements Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
12	William	Y	F	0.32-28.0	1.00	NYC	5	Male	Financial Specialist	2-5	35-44	NYC									
13	Isabella	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Logistics Manager	2-5	35-44	NYC									
14																					
15	Olivia	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Requirements Specialist	2-5	35-44	NYC									
16	Benjamin	Y	F	0.33-59.9	1.20	NYC	6	Male	New Customer Mechanic	2-5	35-44	NYC									
17	Lucas	Y	F	0.12-24.0	1.20	NYC	6	Male	Equipment Specialist	2-5	35-44	NYC									
18	Isabella	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Logistics Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
19	America	Y	F	0.21-20.0	1.20	NYC	7	Female	Financial Analyst	6-10	35-44	NYC									
20	Isabella	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Logistics Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
21	Isabella	Y	F	0.25-35.5	1.00	NYC	9	Female	Financial Management Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
22	Logan	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Logistics Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
23	Michael	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	8	Male	Logistics Specialist	6-10	45-54	NYC									
24	Mia	Y	F	0.38-18.0	1.50	NYC	11	Female	Payroll Clerk	6-10	45-54	NYC									
25	Emilia	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Administrative Assistant	2-5	35-44	NYC									
26	Harper	Y	F	0.30-27.1	1.20	NYC	6	Female	Postal Clerk	2-5	25-34	NYC									
27	Logan	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Order Management Project	2-5	35-44	NYC									
28	Jacob	Y	F	0.20-55.5	1.20	NYC	16	Male	Training Officer	2-5	35-44	NYC									
29	Logan	Y	F	1.00-27.1	1.20	NYC	18	Male	Operations Specialist	11-15	35-44	NYC									
30	Logan	Y	F	1.00-27.1	1.20	NYC	18	Male	Operations Specialist	11-15	35-44	NYC									
31	Logan	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	19	Male	Shipboard Freightliner	6-10	45-54	NYC									
32	Carmella	Y	F	0.10-27.1	1.20	NYC	10	Male	Payroll Clerk	2-5	35-44	NYC									
33	Giovanna	Y	F	0.34-90.1	1.20	NYC	12	Female	Accounting Officer	2-5	45-54	NYC									
34	Isabella	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Management Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
35	Alyssa	Y	F	0.38-19.0	1.00	NYC	12	Female	Management Analyst	11-15	35-44	NYC									
36	Logan	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	11	Male	Management Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
37	Logan	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	4	Female	Logistics Specialist	2-5	25-34	NYC									
38																					
40	Ella	Y	F	0.20-06.1	1.20	NYC	6	Female	Public Affairs	2-5	25-34	NYC									
41	Max	Y	F	0.21-19.1	1.80	NYC	3	Male	Ext Sales	2-5	35-44	NYC									
42	Zoey	Y	F	0.34-58.0	1.20	NYC	4	Female	Ops Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
43	Olivia	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	2	Male	Management Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
44	Logan	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	1	Male	Operations Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
45	Logan	Y	F	0.31-23.0	1.20	NYC	2	Male	Operations Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
46	Aiden	Y	F	0.31-23.0	1.20	NYC	3	Male	Welder Apprentice	2-5	35-44	NYC									
47	Sam	Y	F	0.21-58.0	1.20	NYC	3	Male	Program Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
48	Logan	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	1	Male	Expeditionary Analyst	2-5	35-44	NYC									
49	Logan	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	6	Female	Office Assistant	2-5	25-34	NYC									
50	Logan	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	6	Female	Special Project	2-5	25-34	NYC									
51	Logan	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	6	Female	Special Project	2-5	25-34	NYC									
52	Logan	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	6	Female	Special Project	2-5	25-34	NYC									
53	Logan	Y	F	0.21-27.1	1.20	NYC	6	Female	Special Project	2-5	25-34	NYC									
54	Luke	Y	F	0.21-9.0	1.20	NYC	8	Male	IT Support Technician	2-5	25-34	NYC									
55	Nora	Y	F	0.21-16.1	1.00	NYC	3	Female	Systems Engineer	2-5	35-44	NYC									
56	Mira	Y	F	0.25-62.0	1.00	NYC	4	Female	Training	2-5	25-34	NYC									
57																					
58																					
59																					
60																					
										TOTAL PAGE COUNT		TOTAL FACES		TOTAL PAGE COUNT		TOTAL FACES		TOTAL PAGE COUNT		TOTAL FACES	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10		10		10	
										Q ANSWER		10		10		10					

Upon completion of the interviews, each interview audio recording was named to properly identify them, using the assigned pseudonym and name convention “pseudonym_I.” The researcher then prepared the interview data by ensuring each audio recording from the 14 participants was processed and intact within the online Zoom cloud recording folder to allow for transcription within the Zoom cloud. Following the transcription of each audio recording in the Zoom cloud, the researcher cross checked each transcript by critically reading the transcript while simultaneously listening to each audio file to ensure accuracy of the data. During this time, the researcher corrected any detected discrepancies within the transcription that had misidentified the researcher’s voice label from that of the participant or inaccurately transcribed the participants spoken word. For example, the raw entry transcribed and labeled during Charlotte’s interview as Charlotte: Researcher_1: “Yeah, speak more be more open express your ideas more what would make you feel more comfortable to do that,” combined both the participant and researcher labels, thus requiring repeated playback to correct and match with the audio file.

Another example, found during the interview with Lucas, was initially transcribed as “I think we can have those conversations in. There no reprisal” was actually determined to be “I think we can have those conversations and no fear or no reprisal.” Lastly, since some participants revealed their actual government organization and real names, the researcher made a deliberate effort to redact such information from the transcript out of concern for privacy. Transcripts were then provided a code name in the Zoom cloud ending with the letter “I” using the participants previously assigned

questionnaire pseudonym, such as “pseudonym_I” to identify an individual interview response before being downloaded and saved locally.

Following the online review, downloading, and saving of each interview transcript, the researcher provided each participant a copy of their own transcript to aid in their review and completion of the member checking process. The member checking process allowed each participant to individually verify their transcript, ensuring that their spoken words were accurately portrayed within the data. All 14 participants successfully conducted member checking and approved of their transcription with no requested changes. After participants completed the member checking process and provided acknowledgment, transcripts were printed so that the researcher could begin hand-coding of the data to identify emerging codes and clusters resultant of patterns and trends. Once the researcher had gained a thorough understanding of the data and completed the hand coding of the interview transcripts, the researcher uploaded the raw transcript data to MAXQDA. Like the review and data analysis of the questionnaire transcripts, MAXQDA was used to organize and visualize the most prevalent phrases and words extracted from the data and to ensure there were no discrepancies in the coding process.

Descriptive Data

This section of the study provides a descriptive account of the study participants using the population characteristics and sample demographics collected during the research investigation. For this qualitative descriptive study, the researcher collected data for the research investigation using two primary sources, a researcher-developed open-ended questionnaire protocol and a researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured interview protocol. Each qualifying participant was (1) a current employee in a federal

government organization within the State of Hawaii, (2) was employed in a federal government organization for more than two years, (3) was at least 18 years of age or older, (4) was virtual participation and meeting accessible, (5) was willing to complete a questionnaire, and (6) was willing to be audio and video recorded if interviewed. To aid in the purposeful selection of interview participants using the highest years of experience and to obtain key demographic information concerning the sample participants, demographic information was collected. The demographic information was collected as part of the online SurveyMonkey questionnaire and consisted of age, gender, current position at organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for current supervisor.

To commence data collection, which started with the informed consent and then collection of the demographic information, the investigation invoked the first of three IRB approved recruiting plans. The first of the three approved plans utilized a purposive homogenous sampling technique and the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group to recruit and select the study participants. Using the primary recruitment plan, the researcher recruited 30 participants from the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group post using purposive criterion sampling. The primary recruitment strategy also included a scheduled repost and therefore boost of the recruitment flyer in the Federal Employees of the U.S. Government LinkedIn Group at the beginning of week two and week three to maintain visibility of the recruitment flyer in the LinkedIn Group feed.

Having become evident by week two that recruitment efforts had begun to stall, the secondary plan of purposive snowball sampling became necessary to share the

recruitment flyer and further recruit participants to account for attrition. Using the secondary plan, the researcher recruited an additional 28 participants. Having exceeded the recruitment goal by week seven with a total of 58 respondents of which 46 respondents fully completed the questionnaire, the researcher did not have to invoke the tertiary recruitment plan which would have included posting the study recruitment flyer to the researcher's own personal LinkedIn page. Recruitment of all participants took seven weeks from start to finish using the primary and secondary recruitment plans mentioned above and further detailed within the recruitment strategy in Chapter 3 of the study.

In all, 46 individuals fully completed the researcher developed open-ended questionnaire of which 19 expressed an interest in participating in the follow-on semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. Fifteen of the 19 potential participants were contacted based on their years of experience and invited to participate in the semi-structured one-on-one interviews. One of the 15 potential participants did not respond to the email invitation to participate in the interview process. Therefore, the final sample for interviews was 14 participants. Study participants who completed the open-ended questionnaire were compensated \$10.00, via a virtual VISA gift card contingent on their willingness to contact the researcher and provide their contact information. Participants who completed both the open-ended questionnaire and semi structured interview were compensated \$20.00, via a virtual VISA gift card. In total, \$280.00 in incentives were provided for 14 study respondents who willingly provided contact information to the researcher.

Data Source One: Open-Ended Questionnaire. The first of two data sources used in this investigation was a researcher-developed open-ended questionnaire, delivered using the online SurveyMonkey application. Fifty-eight individuals took part in the researcher developed open-ended questionnaire via the online SurveyMonkey application. However, upon review of the questionnaires, 12 participants did not proceed past signing the informed consent and therefore they provided no data for use in the study and were discarded. Therefore, after 12 of 58 questionnaires were discarded, the study consisted of 46 questionnaire participants from across the State of Hawaii; of which 14 took part in the semi-structured interviews.

The longest questionnaire transcript was received at two and one-quarter pages in length, with the shortest questionnaire transcript received rounding out at one page in length. The average questionnaire transcript length across all open-ended questionnaire respondents was 1.5 pages. Table N1 (Appendix N) provides the full details of the questionnaire participants, including their pseudonym, the setting, and the number of single-spaced questionnaire pages. Table N2 (Appendix N) expounds further and outlines the demographics of each study participant by pseudonym, age range, gender, current position at their organization, years of working in current position at their organization, and number of years working for their current supervisor.

Data Source Two: One-on-one Interview. The second of two data sources used in this investigation was a researcher conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interview with self-identified employees in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii using the online Zoom conferencing app. The use of Zoom for virtual interviews vice face-to-face interviews was due to COVID-19 health and safety restrictions imposed

due to the global pandemic. Additionally, due to an uptick in COVID-19 infections that the State of Hawaii was still experiencing at the time, Zoom was deemed feasible to conduct the study interviews safely.

Moving forward, future researchers should consider face-to-face interviews as they could provide a better understanding given the physical observations and body language that was missed in virtual interviewing. Based on the results of the field test, the one-on-one interviews were scheduled to take approximately 60 minutes; however, the length of the interviews varied with most of them taking greater than the anticipated 60 minutes. As the researcher sought the experiences of employees in government organizations, all participants who took part in the study were employees of federal government organizations in the State of Hawaii. Interview participant's years of experience in a federal government organization ranged from four to 22 years.

The results from the investigation and demographic data revealed that the youngest interview participant was within the age range of 25-34 years of age and the oldest participant was within the age range of 65+ years of age. The mode between all interview participants was the age range of 35-44 years of age. Table N1 (Appendix N) provides the full details of the interview participants, including their pseudonym, interview location, interview duration, and the number of single-spaced interview transcription pages. Table 5 outlines the demographics of each interview participant by pseudonym, age range, gender, current position at their organization, years of working in current position at their organization, and number of years working for their current supervisor.

Table 5

Demographics of Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Age Range	Gender	Current Position	Years Working in Current Position	Years Working for Current Supervisor
LIAM	45-54	Male	Operations	22	2-5
OLIVER	25-34	Male	Emergency Management Specialist	4	2-5
CHARLOTTE	25-34	Female	Management Analyst	7	2-5
OLIVIA	35-44	Female	Requirements Analyst	10	2-5
JAMES	45-54	Male	Maintenance Manager	20	2-5
LUCAS	55-64	Male	Equipment Specialist	8	2-5
ALEXANDER	35-44	Male	Transportation Officer	5	2-5
ETHAN	25-34	Male	Ocean Systems Analyst	5	2-5
JACOB	35-44	Male	Training Officer	16	2-5
LEVI	35-44	Male	Shipboard Firefighter	19	2-5
GIANNA	35-44	Female	Accounting Officer	12	2-5
ABIGAIL	55-64	Female	Management Analyst	12	11-15
MATEO	65+	Male	Operations Officer	13	2-5
JACK	65+	Male	EM Specialist	12	2-5

Questionnaire Data. In all, the researcher collected 46 fully completed questionnaire responses. A sum of 58.5 single-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman questionnaire transcript pages were collected during the questionnaire phase of the research investigation. Questionnaires were comprised of 11 open-ended questions and one additional “yes” or “no” question reserved to facility self-selection into the semi-structure interview process (Appendix E). 453 individual emergent codes were initially identified while hand-coding the open-ended questionnaires, a sample of which can be

found in Table 6. These individual codes were later converged with the emergent interview codes through a cyclical review of the data and collapsed to a combined 112 emerging codes upon observance of clusters and through the implementation of pattern coding. Because the questionnaire responses were collected directly from the participant hand-typed responses, member checking of the questionnaire transcripts was not required. The data obtained from the questionnaire responses was meaningful to this study, as the questionnaire data aided in the affirmation of trustworthiness of the research when combined with the interview data. Table 6 below provides an overview of the codes and code frequencies identified in the questionnaire data.

Table 6

Sample Codes, Code Frequencies, and Code Definitions of Questionnaire Data

Code	Frequency	Definition of Code
approachability	23	Employee description of leadership accessibility
attentive	6	Supervisor attention span and behavior when employees provide input
autonomy	5	Expressed as the ability to work independently
barriers	2	Obstacles to interact with leadership
be heard	3	Description of how employees want to feel
collaboration tools and space	8	Employee discussions of the tools and means they have to collaborate with the organization, such as Microsoft Teams, video teleconferencing apps, email
collaborative teams	20	The team structure that works to solve problems and provide solutions
encouraging	9	A supervisor behavior that enables employees to succeed in various areas
family	10	A description of the workplace construct that employees share in the organization
lack of transparency	3	A description of leadership inability to share and communicate with employees
makes time for others	10	Describing how supervisors give of their time to their employees
share information	22	The impact that psychological safety has upon the workplace environment to provide and share information
supportive	26	A supervisor behavior that allows employees to feel supported in their efforts in the workplace
understanding	15	A trait that employees feel is necessary for an effective supervisor
waste of time	4	The description of how employees feel when they provide input, and no action is taken

Interview Data. During the interview phase the researcher scheduled each semi-structured one-on-one interview to last 60-minutes using the Zoom conference application. A length of 60-minutes for the interviews ensured adequate time and opportunity for each participant to accurately describe their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety as employees in a federal government organization. Throughout the interview phase multiple interviews were conducted over the span of 30 days, including two interviews which were scheduled and occurred on the same day. To enhance trustworthiness and avert prejudice and bias, the researcher used bracketing and reflexivity to mitigate preconceptions from previously completed interviews. The use of bracketing and reflexivity was conducted prior to each interview and in accordance with the process described in Chapter 3 of the study.

In total, the researcher conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with participants, using an expert panel approved researcher-developed interview protocol to enhance the study's overall trustworthiness. A sum of 278 single-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman transcript pages were resultant from the 14 completed interviews. The semi-structured researcher-developed interview protocol used during the interview phase consisted of 18 questions guided by the theoretical framework and research questions of the study (see Appendix E). In addition, the researcher-developed interview protocol included 34 probing questions to promote an in-depth discussion between the researcher and each participant, invoking deep thought and critical thinking aligned with the research questions (see Appendix E). The average transcript length resultant across all 14 interviews was 20 pages per respondent. The interview duration across all 14 participants ranged from a minimum length of 42 minutes to a maximum length of two hours. In all,

the researcher collected a total of 16 hours and 28 minutes of interview data, which averaged out to roughly one hour and 10 minutes across all 14 interview respondents. Noticeable data saturation occurred after 10 interview responses were collected and was observed during the preliminary data analysis. However, to confirm data saturation was indeed achieved and to ensure an adequate sample size was reached, four additional interviews were conducted.

In total, 987 individual emergent codes were identified during the hand-coding of the semi-structured interview transcripts. These individual codes were later converged with the emergent questionnaire codes through a cyclical review of the data and collapsed to a combined 112 emerging and prevalent codes following observance of clusters resultant of pattern coding. Table N1 and table N2 (see Appendix N) provide the details of the interviews and interviewees, including pseudonyms, interview setting, demographics, and number of single-space interview transcript pages. Table 7 on the following page provides an overview of the codes and code frequencies identified in the interview data.

Data Analysis Procedures

This qualitative descriptive study explored how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The study utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process to conduct an inductive thematic analysis of the data collected. The six-step process included: a) becoming familiar with the collected data, b) developing emergent codes, c) searching for relevant themes, d) analyzing the themes, e) describing and naming the themes and f) conducting a detailed report. Data analysis in qualitative research using the

Table 7

Sample Codes, Code Frequencies, and Code Definitions of Interview Data

Code	Frequency	Definition of Code
accessibility	17	How employees talk of the access to leaders
be myself	7	Employee description of not having to change their personal characteristics or personal attributes when working
communication policy	74	A look at the organizational policies and process that support communication
culture of openness	101	A culture that is open and free to share ideas and thoughts
engagement	77	Description of the interaction between the employee and supervisor and employee and coworkers
feel valued	31	Employee descriptions of feeling a part of the organization
inclusive	19	How employees describe being included in the organizational process
mutual respect	26	Employee descriptions of respect that flow two-way between employee and supervisor
no fear	60	The overall description employees describe of their workplace
organizational change	4	A discussion of the overall change within the organizational construct
psychological safety impact	117	Employees describing the quality and productive output of their workplace that is psychologically safe
safe space to work	66	Employees discussing their positive workplace environment
safe to speak up	33	A description of the environment that employees feel safe to speak up in
systems thinking	10	Discussion on the ability to cross barriers and share information and explore the impact in the organization without obstacles
trust	46	An aspect that employees feel is highly important to have faith and belief and interpersonal connection with their supervisor

descriptive design relies on thematic analysis to best provide rich and detailed accounts of the data through interpretations of participant experiences (Doyle et al., 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Accordingly, using thematic analysis of the data collected in a process free of pre-existing codes provided interpretation of the data that aligned to the problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, methodology and design of the study.

The data for the study were collected from two sources of data: a researcher-developed open-ended online questionnaire and a researcher-developed semi-structured one-on-one virtual interview with participants. Questions from both sources of data were used to answer the research questions posed in this investigation:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

The theoretical framework based on transformational leadership and supported by psychosocial safety climate and organizational policy as a guide was beneficial in the development of the research questions to answer the problem statement, it is not known how federal government employees describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. Protocols and questions for the two study data sources were developed by the researcher using the theoretical framework and research questions and were subsequently evaluated by an expert panel of three doctoral level researchers to ensure relevancy and alignment. Following the protocol review and feedback received from the expert panel members, the researcher made recommended changes to each data source protocol to enhance the study's trustworthiness and credibility. Furthermore, the results from the expert panel proved useful in the researcher's goal to enhance the overall implementation of the researcher developed data instruments. Protocols and questions from the validated researcher developed data sources can be found in Appendix E.

Using the expert evaluated protocols in the study, data collection was initiated following IRB review and approval. Following the collecting, cleaning, and preparation of the data using the two primary data sources selected for the study, the researcher utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis process. This process required familiarization with the data and recognizing patterns and themes (Lester et al., 2020). The first source of data included 46 online questionnaire responses. The second source of data included 14 one-on-one semi-structured virtual interview transcripts.

First, the researcher reviewed questionnaire transcripts and interview transcripts one source at a time, becoming familiar with each participant's personal experiences and expression of thought without identifying any relevant patterns, themes, or categories. Next, the researcher used an inductive open-coding structure to identify initial codes, adding each code into the electronic codebook created using Microsoft Excel (Appendix F). This process allowed the researcher to organize and track code definitions and frequencies of codes in a well-managed electronic codebook, which was useful for organization and analysis of the codes and supporting data. The process that followed included reflexive journaling and bracketing and completing the thematic analysis procedures as outlined in the data analysis steps in this chapter and in Chapter 3.

Reflexivity and Bracketing Protocol

The subjectivity of the researcher's background and experience as a government employee observantly served as an inherent threat to the confirmability and trustworthiness of the study. Having a background and experience in the government sector suggests that the researcher was likely to find answers more germane to the researchers own unconscious bias, rather than to the phenomenon under investigation.

For example, the researcher's preconception of how government organizations disseminate information and include all employees in decision-making had to largely be ignored and checked, given the personal experience and internal bias. Additionally, while the researcher had little knowledge of psychological safety at the start, the advanced understanding of government organizations increased the need for extreme restraint of thought to separate researcher preconception from actual participant reality.

To thwart the threat of researcher preconception based on the researchers detailed understanding of the government organization construct, extra care was taken proactively and diligently. Throughout the data collection and thematic analysis procedures of the research, the researcher used the fundamentals of reflexivity and bracketing. This was done to minimize prejudice, self-bias, personal beliefs, and personal experiences that could have negatively impacted the researcher's thought process (Dodgson, 2019; Janak, 2018). These precautions were especially relevant when it came to interpreting participant responses and data. What follows is a discussion on reflexivity and bracketing and the efforts implemented during the conduct of the investigation.

In qualitative research, reflexivity is crucial to establish a continuous reflection throughout the research process (Dodgson, 2019). Bracketing on the other hand is a written reflection that augments the reflexivity of the study to ensure that the researcher records personal reactions that arise during the data collection and following the interview process, which can enhance the overall results (Janak, 2018). Resultantly, to limit self-bias the researcher made a concerted effort during the data collection and data analysis phases to ensure adequate time was allotted for reflexive journaling and bracketing.

During the data collection phase, the researcher implemented reflexive journaling (see Appendix L) as a mitigation strategy to identify and avert self-bias and preconceived assumptions. In doing so the researcher was able to remain objective throughout the data collection process, providing focus on active listening and a keen attention to the participants' identification of unique observations and experiences while answering questions. Additionally, the deliberate implementation of reflexive journaling allowed the researcher the ability to actively monitor and observe the progress of the study to further enhance the mitigation of self-bias.

Secondly, the researcher included insights and observations of participants and the investigation process both during and after each respective interview using field memos (see Appendix O) as a form of bracketing, which are outlined in the final report. Bracketing using memos allowed the researcher to document and contain personal beliefs of the topic under investigation and therefore remove those beliefs from the research (Giorgi, 1997). Lastly, the process of bracketing and note taking in a reflexive journal allowed for critical reflection throughout the entire research process, enhancing the avoidance of tainted research that may have resulted from preconceived notions during data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the results.

In preparation leading up to the study interview questions, the researcher spent time establishing a clear and calm personal connection with participants using the carefully developed semi-structured interview protocol. In doing so the researcher was able to build rapport and further enhance the data collection by ensuring the participant was able to openly share their experience in free form absent of researcher pressure and persuasion. Additionally, the building of rapport with each participant allowed the

researcher to provide a personal introduction, explain the purpose of the study, discuss the goals and objectives of the investigation, and answer questions before commencing the data collection to ensure alignment and focus on the investigation.

Once the researcher initiated the interview and interview protocol questions, the researcher remained silent apart from asking questions and invoked active listening skills to ensure none of his personal beliefs regarding the questions were interjected into the research or affected the participant response. The only interjection by the researcher during the interview process was when a participant required clarification to a question or ask that a question be fully repeated. This allowed each participant the opportunity to share a true description of their supervisor's influence on psychological safety in the workplace without being led or guided towards an unnatural response. With that, the researcher ensured that all questions provided were clearly delivered and concise to thwart any confusion on the participants behalf, allowing the participants to share a more detailed and rich response.

Due to the desired natural and uninhibited account of the phenomenon under investigation, deliberate methods of bracketing and reflexivity were maintained throughout the data collection and analysis to ensure that prejudice and self-bias did not manifest within the study findings. To do so, the researcher used both bracketing and reflexivity to reflect on the personal experiences and descriptions of his workplace as an employee in a federal government organization. The preconceived thoughts and notions of the researcher were thoroughly reviewed prior to conducting each one-on-one virtual interview and throughout the duration of the investigation.

Throughout the investigation, the researcher repeatedly reflected upon notes and preconceptions to provide a reminder that coded segments identified during interviews and from the data should reflect the participants words and lived experiences and not incur influence or persuasion from personal feelings or self-bias of the researcher. This process of personal reflection served as mitigation and enhancement that initial codes developed were resultant of the words of participants and not pre-conceived. Had self-bias or personal thoughts and feelings been identified within the coding and analysis, the researcher had a mitigation strategy in-place that would have halted the coding process and relied on bracketing to reset and eliminate any biases that might have emerged. Following a reset and elimination of the identified bias within the coding process, the researcher would have then recommenced the research investigation. Due to continuously maintaining conscious awareness of self-bias throughout coding and data analysis, at no point during the research investigation did it become necessary to follow this pre-determined mitigating strategy for the discovery of self-bias or personal thoughts and feelings during the research.

Data Analysis Steps

The data analysis used in this investigation followed a thorough and systematic familiarization with the data using the process of thematic analysis. Using the six-step analysis process detailed in Chapter 3, key themes from the collected data were able to emerge during the investigation in support of the problem, purpose, and research questions posed, a recommendation that previous scholars suggested for qualitative research (Guest et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2017; Lester et al., 2020). With that, no changes to the thematic analysis process discussed in Chapter 3 were deemed necessary to

complete the investigation. All previously discussed thematic analysis steps proposed and approved by the IRB are further described within this section.

Thematic analysis is a process used in qualitative research to reveal prevalent words, phrases, and patterns by allowing the investigator to immerse himself in the data using a consistent and systematic approach to the interpretation of the data (Sandelowski, 2000). The data used for this study was collected using two primary data sources: a researcher developed online questionnaire delivered via SurveyMonkey and a researcher developed one-on-one virtual interview conducted via Zoom conferencing. The researcher carried out hand-coding of each data source individually, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process to conduct an inductive thematic analysis of the data by: a) becoming familiar with the collected data, b) developing emergent codes, c) searching for relevant themes, d) analyzing the themes, e) describing and naming the themes and f) conducting a detailed report. Figure 2 depicts a summary overview of the steps used in the data analysis phase based on the six-step thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke. The six steps visually represented are explained in greater detail within this section.

Figure 2

Phases Used in the Data Analysis



The inductive thematic analysis using six-steps based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) process allows for an open-coding research structure that is data-driven to identify themes that exclude any pre-existing codes or personal engagement aligned to the

proposed problem. Identifying themes from data collected is a critical part of completing a qualitative descriptive study. The thematic analysis for this study was conducted throughout six steps utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) outline for undertaking the data analysis to ensure that a rich and detailed account of the data was constructed and explained in the results (Doyle et al., 2019).

Step One: Familiarization with the data. The first step of the data analysis process required familiarization with each data set individually. Braun and Clarke (2006) asserted that the first step in data analysis is the most important as it provides understanding and meaning in how participant responses addressed the research questions. With that in mind, familiarization with each data set was accomplished by listening to recorded audio and by reading and re-reading interview transcripts and questionnaire responses repeatedly over the course of three intensive reviews. During the first full review, initial familiarization with the collected data was the primary objective. The second and third reviews continued the familiarization and provided additional focus on points of interest using the psychological safety phenomenon and the theoretical framework of the study as a guide.

Throughout all three intensive reviews, attention to detail continued to enhance the detection and correction of any errors while also becoming increasingly familiar with the data. Becoming familiar with each data set allowed the researcher to engage with the interview transcripts and questionnaire responses placing an emphasis on noticing points of potential analytical significance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, by reviewing each questionnaire response and interview transcript individually, the researcher was able

to become immersed in the participant's responses and avoid the establishment of pre-determined patterns, codes, clusters, or themes.

Step Two: Generating initial codes. Following the in-depth repetitive reviews of each questionnaire response and interview transcript, the researcher utilized his novice interpretative skills to begin step two of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, developing initial codes. This process consisted of an inductive open-coding descriptive process to hand-code data from the questionnaires and the interview transcripts into a researcher created codebook (Appendix F). Using the inductive open-coding process allowed for the emergence of data-driven code free of pre-existing structure or researcher preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The result was a rich description of the data through *in vivo*, or participant choice of wording, from which prevalent patterns formed as a result of the participant experience and response.

As a means of crosschecking the hand-coded process, the researcher utilized the software program MAXQDA to provide a computer assisted visual depiction of the phrases and words extracted from each data source. To expound, visualization of participant words with frequency occurrence in MAXQDA helped to back up the results of hand coding by comparing the emphasized words from MAXQDA with the most prevalent words or phrases revealed during hand coding. Figure 3 seen below represents a word cloud visualization developed from participant data that was uploaded in MAXQDA. Larger text reveal repeated trends or occurrences of initial codes in the data which visualize what was most important to participants. For example, the term "waste of time" while identified by several participants in the delivery of their lived accounts of the phenomenon remains relevant, the term "share information" clearly shows a more

prevalent concern given the size depicted in the presented word cloud. Therefore, one could infer that “share information” should be looked at more closely given the emphasis or number of times it was mentioned. The emphasized words in the word cloud were then used in a comparison to the initial codes identified in the hand coding process to enhance trustworthiness and confirm the results in the coding process.

Figure 3

MAXQDA Word Cloud of Emerging Codes



Using the descriptive coding technique as recommended by Sandelowski (2000), the researcher was able to summarize the data into short phrases and single words, based on meaning, topic, and descriptiveness to designate labels to be utilized in an inventory list for referencing. Excerpts from the data which emerged to express similar meanings

relevant to answering a research question were clustered to form an initial code. Each code was given a brief and descriptive label to indicate the meaning of the data assigned to it as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). For example, Sophia said “My coworkers are like family and we are comfortable speaking with each other openly about usually anything.” This phrase, defined as a description of the workplace construct that employees share in the organization, was written down and coded as “family.” This coding process resulted in 10 codes to help answer the research questions.

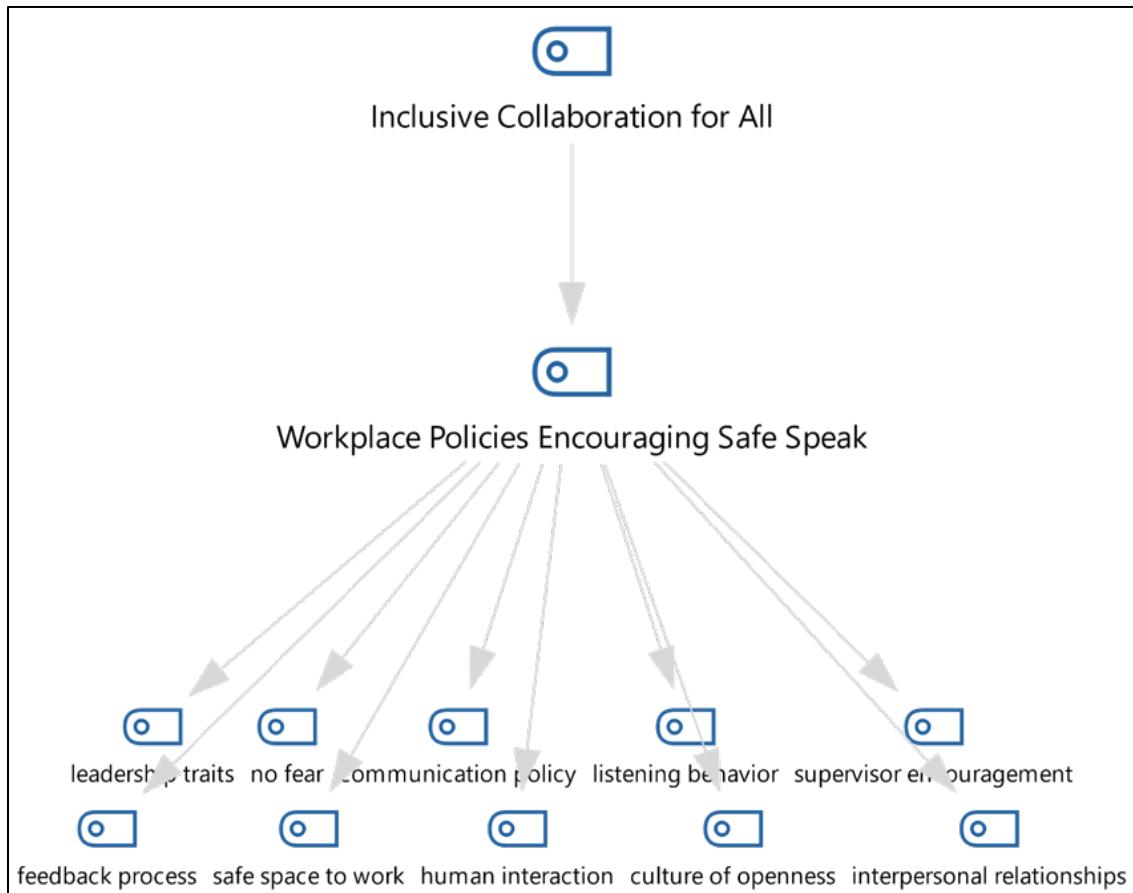
Using this data analysis process allowed the researcher the ability to determine when repetition in the data was achieved, similar codes were revealed, and when new and relevant codes no longer emerged from the data. As the initial codes were identified, an electronic codebook (see Appendix F) was developed to maintain, organize, and analyze each identified code, code frequency, and code meaning. During the hand-coding of the data, codes to segments of the text were applied using highlights and comments to identity a relationship between the documents of each data set individually. Appendix G provides an example of a hand-coded transcript conducted during this analysis step.

To assist in the coding process, each raw interview transcript and questionnaire response were uploaded into MAXQDA, a software program used to visually aid qualitative researchers. The process of using MAXQDA was to electronically crosscheck the hand-coding process and organize the phrases and words extracted from the responses of the participants. Figure 4 represents one exemplar visualization from MAXQDA, using theme 3, to detail emergent codes of importance and how they were organized in MAXQDA. Starting from the bottom of the visualization, the most prevalent words or phrases from participants support the initial theme and then overarching theme at the top

to translate participant real-life accounts into answers to the research questions. A further breakdown of the codes to initial themes to six final themes developed from the data is explained later in the results section of this chapter.

Figure 4

MAXQDA Creative Coding



Using the MAXQDA software, the researcher individually reviewed and open-coded the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts to crosscheck the results from the hand-coded examination of both data sources (Marshall et al., 2013). The utilization of MAXQDA allowed for prevalent patterns to emerge that may better describe and confirm the hand-coded data. Although MAXQDA was used as an aid in verifying the hand-coding process, no additional codes were established in the use of the software. In

fact, by using MAXQDA and conducting further iterations in the review of the data, codes were able to be collapsed and reduced due to similarities in the coded patterns and the comparison of similar codes. For example, the combination of similar codes such as listen, listens, and listened were undertaken to further refine and define the meanings within the participant data. After the electronic review and organization of the data in MAXQDA, many code names were modified or changed to better represent the participant's responses and to align with the overall framework of the study. For example, through the descriptions of participants experiences, terms such as accepting of change, guiding change, and implementing change were initially identified as separate emergent codes, but were later combined to capture the essence of organizational change which aligned to both the framework and description overall.

During the development of initial codes, the researcher identified 453 individual codes in the open-ended questionnaires and 987 individual codes in the semi-structured interviews, for a total of 1,440 unique and individualized codes taken from in vivo and participant choice of wording. Through the process of examining the initial codes for repetitive patterns and code clusters, the final code structure was effectively reduced to a combined 112 codes to definitively describe the natural participant descriptions and account of their lived experience (Saldaña, 2021; Sandelowski, 2000). Prior to conducting data analysis, the researcher utilized field memos both before and after each interview to observe participant body language, emotional behavior inflections, and voice tones of the participants, as well as document his own self-biases, personal experiences, and beliefs as they developed and transpired throughout the data collection phase (see Appendix O). Additionally, prior to developing initial codes and the collapsing of codes

using patterns and code cluster identification, the researcher exercised reflexive journaling (see Appendix L), as previously discussed, to mitigate his personal experiences and pre-conceived notions from impacting the investigation and study results.

In all, during this step and the extensive iterative review of the data, 1,440 individual codes were identified from the questionnaires and interviews using in vivo and participant choice of wording. Using the 1,440 codes, the initial list of codes was then collapsed down to a total of 112 meaningful codes with relevance to the research questions and framework of the study. Table 8 on the following page provides a sample of the codes developed from the data with the frequency, definition, and exemplar quotation from the data. A list of the 112 codes is provided in Appendix F with excerpt documentation of the collapse of code recorded in the coding analysis audit trail document (see Appendix P).

Step Three: Searching for themes. Following the development of initial codes, a search for initial themes ensued. Initial themes are important because they ultimately help interpret the participant accounts into answers to the research questions and provide alignment to the overall problem and purpose of the investigation. Using step three of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, the goal during this step was to find themes utilizing codes and initial themes developed from those codes. The process of developing themes is dynamic and requires detailed construction through meaningful evolution of the code (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Table 8

Codes, Frequencies, Definitions, and Exemplar Quotation

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
collaborative	3	A process of working together to solve problems	"All my coworkers are open and listen. Some more than others but I've never had any bad interaction in discussing things. We share a lot of work ideas and talk sometimes about personal things but mostly work."
human interaction	77	Employee descriptions of the importance of interaction with each other	"I think the major thing that has helped me evolve and understand that it is safe to speak up and to do things is looking at the human interaction from the upper leadership during meetings, whether it be you know one on one meetings or in a group setting just that instead of the institutional regimental meeting structure that I have unfortunately been used to it, it's seeing that leader as a human being."
feedback process	52	Describing the feedback loop and process that the organization maintains	"Having command quarters and allowing to have open forums with the Commander you know I think he allows if anybody has any questions that's a pretty good you know idea of how well people can get feedback, we have some online ways to provide feedback to what we refer to as the Triad and they're just being able to make our command a little bit better."
inclusive	19	How employees describe being included in the organizational process	"The fact that there's encouragement at all levels, both at the upper leadership level, all the way to the department level and down through to include everybody in the conversation when there's an issue or problem that needs to be solved, instead of just running off and solving it but asking people and it only takes a few minutes or it could take several hours or several days to get all of the information to come up with the best solution."
makes time for others	10	Describing how supervisors give of their time to their employees	"My supervisor is always ready to listen. Even if he is busy, he seems to make time to listen and genuinely cares I feel."

To develop initial themes, a thorough examination of the codes was undertaken to identify repetitive patterns and to group meaningful codes together. The similar patterns of code that emerged were then grouped into initial themes. Codes were grouped when they expressed similar meanings or when they converged as different aspects of a broader theme. Theme formation was inductive and semantic to move the researcher from an isolated to a broader interpretation as recommended by Lester et al. (2020). The inductive

formation of semantic based themes was appropriate for, and consistent with, the goal of this descriptive design, because the themes expressed descriptions of prevalent patterns revealed within the data.

To assist in theme development, a recommended process by Saldaña (2021) known as pattern coding was used to piece together similar code clusters which emerged from in vivo and natural participant descriptions of the phenomenon. The phenomenon explored was how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety. In this step the researcher was able to collapse 112 codes into 10 initial themes, and six prospective themes to answer the research questions. The 10 initial themes were developed from analyzing the 112 codes identified in step two of the data analysis. For example, the codes "approachability, avoid contact, care for people, comfortable mindset, communication policy, difference of opinions, engagement, follow through, hypocrisy, in sync, interpersonal relationships, confidentiality, leadership traits, listening behavior, makes time for others, mentor, mutual respect, open door policy, receptive, safe to speak up, show action, trust, understanding, waste of time, and we can relate" were sorted and combined into the initial theme "eliminating barriers and being approachable affects employee actions, behaviors, and relationships." The codes "acknowledge problems, attentive, barriers, collaborative teams, considerate, culture of openness, distant, employee recognition, equality, group discussions, human interaction, lack of transparency, no fear, out of touch, share information, supervisor encouragement, supportive, unavailable, and work related" were sorted into the initial theme "the level of supervisor connection and commitment strengthens or diminishes the feeling of value and engagement in the workplace."

Saldaña (2021) argued that while researchers usually begin the organization of their data into 15-20 subthemes and themes, over time the refinement of data and meaning often results in researchers ending up with 5-10 major subthemes and themes. This allows the researcher to focus and refine the data using qualitative measures that ultimately develop the initial and final themes. Additionally, Saldaña (2021) asserted that when researchers synthesize codes into subthemes and themes, the interpretation by the researcher during analysis of the data is ultimately what determines if codes become merged codes or left as stand-alone codes that then become themes. In this study, there were no stand-alone themes that emerged without at least one associated initial theme.

Table 9 provides an abbreviated example of how the researcher developed and defined code to initial themes, linking codes discovered in the data to the initial themes. In addition to the names of the initial themes, also provided in table 9 are the initial theme definitions, and a representation of initial codes that were supportive to developing the initial themes. An expanded table of code to initial theme is available in table Q1 (Appendix Q). As evidence, table 10 provides an abbreviated list of exemplar quotes from the questionnaires and interviews used to develop the initial themes that addressed RQ1. An expanded table of exemplar quotes supporting RQ1 is available in table Q2 (Appendix Q). Table 11 provides an abbreviated list of exemplar quotes from the questionnaires and interviews used to develop the initial themes that addressed RQ2. An expanded table of exemplar quotes supporting RQ2 is available in table Q3 (Appendix Q).

Table 9

Codes to Initial Themes

Initial Theme	Initial Theme Defined	Code
Encourages collaboration, resulting in a healthy work environment to enhance personal and professional performance	Description of the importance of positive psychological safety in the workplace	collaborative teams, culture of openness, efficiency, engagement, improves morale, personal performance, quality of life
Share thoughts and feelings in an environment of mutual respect absent of fear	Discussion of the aspects of psychological safety that employees find the most impactful in the workplace	care for people, employee well-being, equality, express feelings, feel valued, inclusive, mutual respect, no fear, trust
Builds an innovation network where relationships are built on openness and sharing of information	How employees describe the ideal interaction and support network with their coworkers that is fostered by a psychologically safe environment	common bond, culture of openness, encouraging, family, innovation, interpersonal relationships, listening behavior, transparency, understanding
Fosters a family like structure where employees are supportive of each other and build on common bonds	How employees describe their interpersonal relationships that support good human connection and effective information flow in the workplace	approachability, care for people, employee recognition, equality, face-to-face, family, feel valued, human
Strengthens communication and trust through policies that encourage safety zones and speaking up	A discussion surrounding the policies and processes in place to allow and encourage safety in speaking up	communication policy, confidentiality, family, feedback process, feel valued, human interaction, leadership traits,
Supervisor behavior affects how employees feel as humans and determines the impact of feeling safe in the workplace	The feeling and desire that employees seek from their supervisor to support their basic human needs in the workplace	care for people, considerate, difference of opinions, encouraging, equality, feel valued, listening behavior, makes time for others, mutual respect
Supervisor traits and soft skills affect employee behavior and safety in the workplace	The description of necessary soft skill traits such as communication, collaboration, and encouragement to strengthen the personal connections in the workplace	approachability, attentive, emotional intelligence, encouraging, human interaction, in sync, interpersonal relationships, sup comm skills
The level of supervisor connection and commitment strengthens or diminishes the feeling of value and engagement in the workplace	A description of the investment and connection that employees seek from leadership in the organization	engagement, feedback process, group discussions, human interaction, listening behavior, open door policy, receptive
Eliminating barriers and being approachable affects employee actions, behaviors, and relationships	Describing the ability for supervisors to eliminate barriers to approachability that further enable trust and engagement	culture of openness, engagement, feedback process, follow through, in sync, confidentiality, mentor, supportive, trust
Building rapport with employees in work and non-work-related areas builds a bond and relationship that impacts openness and understanding	How employees describe the relationship with their supervisor in both work and non-work-related areas that helps to build quality rapport and human connection	attentive, care for people, communication policy, helpful, human interaction, inclusive, mentoring, motivation, mutual respect, safe to speak up

Table 10

Questionnaire and Interview Examples for Initial Themes for RQ1

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
Encourages collaboration, resulting in a healthy work environment to enhance personal and professional performance	Camila (Questionnaire)	"Psychological safety is important to me because I want to feel safe when I come to work. I want to be heard and listened to and I want to know that I can say something if I am concerned or worried about a process or even another coworker."
Share thoughts and feelings in an environment of mutual respect absent of fear	Oliver (Interview)	"So yeah, productivity motivation work ethic all increases, especially when my personal psychological well-being is on the positive note, and then on the negative it does decrease your productivity."
Builds an innovation network where relationships are built on openness and sharing of information	Harper (Questionnaire)	"All my coworkers are open and listen. Some more than others but I've never had any bad interaction in discussing things. We share a lot of work ideas and talk sometimes about personal things but mostly work."
Fosters a family like structure where employees are supportive of each other and build on common bonds	Sophia (Questionnaire)	"My coworkers are like family and we are comfortable speaking with each other openly about usually anything."
Strengthens communication and trust through policies that encourage safety zones and speaking up	Evelyn (Questionnaire)	"My office is very open and we respect each other as equals and teammates. Weekly office meetings, training and problem solving together have helps us build and learn to work together and respect each other."

Table 11

Questionnaire and Interview Examples for Initial Themes for RQ2

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
Supervisor behavior affects how employees feel as humans and determines the impact of feeling safe in the workplace	William (Questionnaire)	"My supervisor is committed, easy going and understanding most of the time. Of course, we have disagreements but overall, my supervisor makes me feel comfortable by listening and giving proper attention to me and my fellow coworkers."
Supervisor traits and soft skills affect employee behavior and safety in the workplace	Camila (Questionnaire)	"I trust her more than I have most supervisors in the past. She loves to talk story and we laugh, and things are not so stressful. I can also go to her with an issue and know she will listen and do her best."
The level of supervisor connection and commitment strengthens or diminishes the feeling of value and engagement in the workplace	Mason (Questionnaire)	"My supervisor take in consideration of my views and opinion. As well as gives encouragement in areas, that can or may need focus in also."
Eliminating barriers and being approachable affects employee actions, behaviors, and relationships	James (Interview)	"What they do well, is you know I've talked about the overarching many of the supervisors many of leadership have that personal engagement when they come to a meeting, whether it be a one-on-one meeting I mean it could be stopping in the hallway and talking to somebody but that that personal engagement."
Building rapport with employees in work and non-work-related areas builds a bond and relationship that impacts openness and understanding	Mateo (Interview)	"My immediate supervisor, I'm with him every day. We talk more we talk about things, whether it's work related or non-work related we spend a lot of time discussing you know families that type stuff so it's a it's not you don't feel like you can only talk about work and because of that it makes the work portion much easier to deal with."

Step Four: Reviewing the themes. Once initial themes were formed, the next step involved reviewing and refining the initial themes into final themes by comparison with the original data to ensure the accuracy and relevancy to answering the research questions. As asserted by Lester et al. (2020), through comparison, the researcher can interrelate, arrange, and contrast data, therefore piecing together a puzzle to provide a depiction of the collected data. Braun and Clarke (2006) asserted that during this step reviewing and refinement of themes requires an in-depth review of the coded data to ensure a coherent pattern is formed. As such, arranging the initial themes into final

themes based on similarities relative to the study's proposed research questions brings the data to life in a holistic and descriptive approach.

In this step of the data analysis, the researcher conducted data reduction to identify alignment and meaning between the coded sets of data by looking at each source individually, then later converging each source together. For example, in the review of the raw interview data, notes were made to document participant descriptions for reference with hand-coded results and across all data sets. This was done to focus attention on relevant patterns within the data and to better develop and define patterns and themes within the data.

During the development of initial themes and themes, frequent occurrences within the researchers' notes were reviewed to better understand the contents within the data as they related to the research questions and theoretical framework. Through the process of data reduction, the researcher examined both his notes and the collected data to check for valid explanations of the phenomenon as described by participants lived experiences. This effort in the data reduction process helped to better refine and summarize the data holistically, while maintaining keen attention on responses that directly addressed the research questions and were aligned with the theoretical framework supporting the study.

To assist with refinement and summarization of data during the reduction process, the researcher referred to the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts that were uploaded in MAXQDA. The organization and visualization capabilities within the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis tool, helped to better understand the emergence of relevant data and aided in further refinement and summarization of the data. Table 12

demonstrates how initial themes were further refined to develop final themes that answered the study RQs.

Table 12

Initial Themes Refined to Themes

RQ	Initial Theme	Refined Theme
	Encourages collaboration, resulting in a healthy work environment to enhance personal and professional performance.	Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of mutual respect to share ideas to enhance personal and professional performance.
	Share thoughts and feelings in an environment of mutual respect absent of fear.	
RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?	Builds an innovation network where relationships are built on openness and sharing of information.	Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of innovation and respect where people are valued and treated like family.
	Fosters a family like structure where employees are supportive of each other and build on common bonds.	
	Strengthens communication and trust through policies that encourage safety zones and speaking up.	Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of inclusion and respect with policies and practices that support safety and open communication.
	Supervisor behavior affects how employees feel as humans and determines the impact of feeling safe in the workplace.	Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as impactful to the basic human need of feeling safe and the willingness to openly express oneself.
	Supervisor traits and soft skills affect employee behavior and safety in the workplace.	
RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?	The level of supervisor connection and commitment strengthens or diminishes the feeling of value and engagement in the workplace.	Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as a measure of investment in employee value and worth that impacts employee engagement and collaboration.
	Eliminating barriers and being approachable affects employee actions, behaviors, and relationships.	Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as an enabler of personal engagement, communication, and safety through transparency.
	Building rapport with employees in work and non-work-related areas builds a bond and relationship that impacts openness and understanding.	

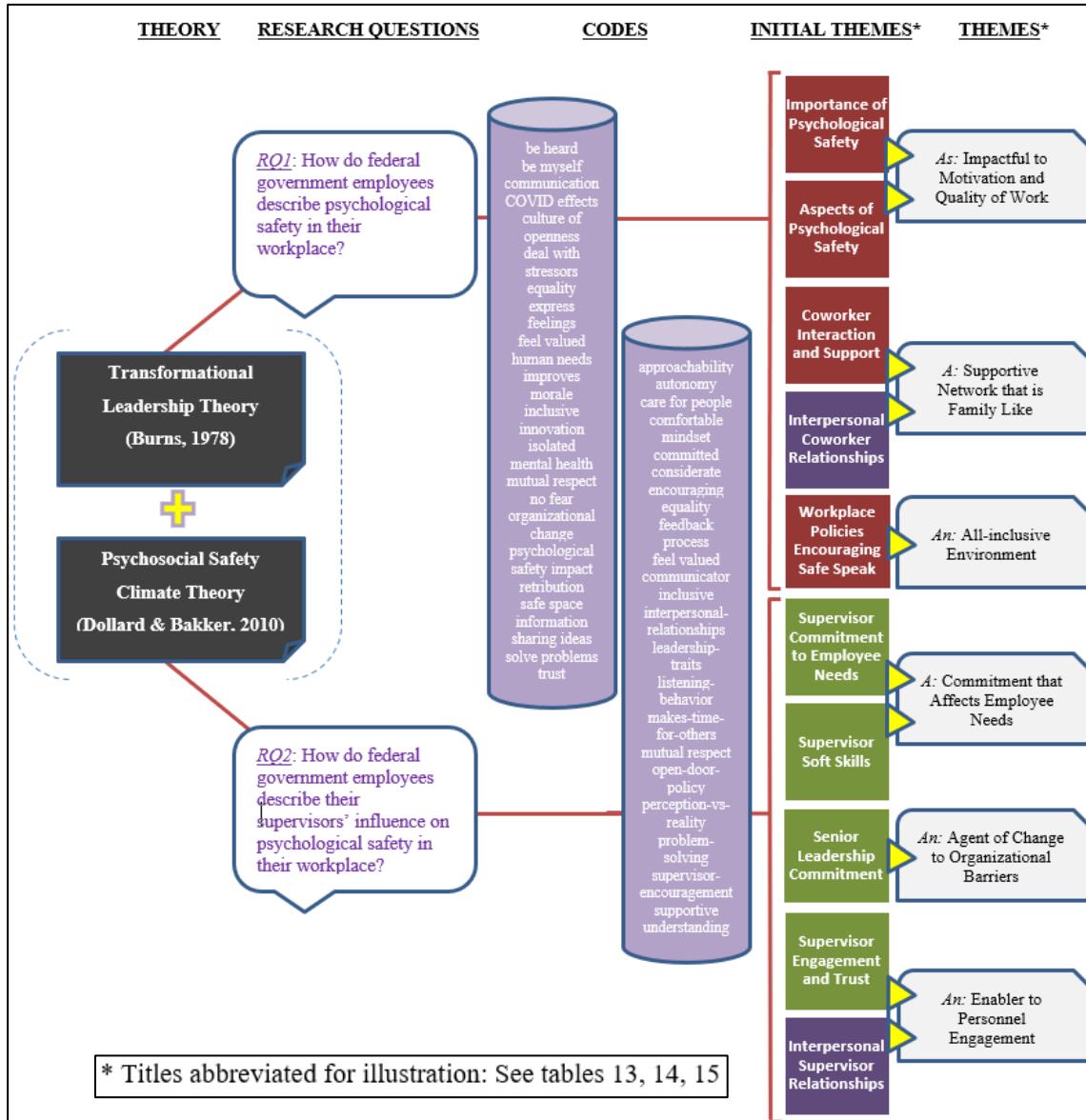
Step Five: Defining and naming themes. At this step of the process the researcher reviewed the initial themes that emerged during the coding process. Using MAXQDA software as an electronic assistant, the researcher defined and refined the initial themes to reduce the similarities and increase the coherency of the data. As a result, 10 initial themes identified were enveloped into six overarching themes: impactful to motivation and quality of work, supportive network that is family like, all-inclusive environment, commitment that affects employee needs, agent of change to organizational barriers, and enabler to personnel engagement. According to Lichtman (2023), the number of themes should be kept at a minimum to keep the analysis clear and concise. With that, Lichtman recommended that qualitative researchers constrain their findings within the range of seven to 10 themes for delivery of coherent findings and results. Table 13 provides a correlation of the refined themes to their abbreviated overarching final theme name. Figure 5 represents a visualization of how the data was filtered using the research questions and theoretical framework to transition from code to initial theme to theme. A flow chart of the respective codes to initial themes to abbreviated final theme is detailed in a corresponding table under each related theme presented later in the results.

Table 13

Themes Summarized

Overarching Theme	Refined Theme
Impactful to Motivation and Quality of Work	Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of mutual respect to share ideas to enhance personal and professional performance
Supportive Network that is Family Like	Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of innovation and respect where people are valued and treated like family
All-inclusive Environment	Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of inclusion and respect with policies and practices that support safety and open communication
Commitment that Affects Employee Needs	Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as impactful to the basic human need of feeling safe and the willingness to openly express oneself
Agent of Change to Organizational Barriers	Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as a measure of investment in employee value and worth that impacts employee engagement and collaboration
Enabler to Personnel Engagement	Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as an enabler of personal engagement, communication, and safety through transparency

Figure 5

Data Filtered Using the Theoretical Foundation and RQs

Step Six: Producing the report. Following the final step of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, a culminating written report of the findings was prepared. This was accomplished by presenting the results in Chapter 4 of the study. The results of the study were presented by supportive theme and associated theme to the research question that they addressed. Findings from all questionnaire responses and interview transcripts

were presented to address the two research questions. A comprehensive analysis of each theme was provided as a component of the narrative. In the discussion of each theme, the initial themes and exemplar quotes are included from the data as evidence of the results. A description of the data analysis procedure is also provided in the results to enhance the transparency and verifiability of the study, using a detailed narrative and visual presentation of each emergent code, initial theme, and theme, to include how codes were clustered to form the overarching themes as recommended by Lester et al. (2020).

Presentation of the study results relies on tables and figures to showcase relevant information (e.g., questionnaire and interview details). In developing a report of the study findings, the researcher considered the purpose of the study, the phenomenon under investigation, the research questions, the theoretical framework composed of the transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate theory, the research methodology and design, and the audience that would read and benefit from the findings. At this step in the investigation, the researcher also put forth a concerted effort to contrast and compare the themes that were developed during the data analysis with previous research presented during the review of literature.

Given the fundamentals of qualitative descriptive research and the ability to explore a phenomenon in its natural state with the purpose of obtaining information relevant to the description of the given phenomenon (Siedlecki, 2020), the focus on participants' descriptions of real-world conditions ensured that the final themes developed were delineated by how participants described their experiences as employees in a federal government organization in the State of Hawaii. To support this stance, the researcher provided a detailed narrative using tables, figures, and exemplar quotes from

the data that supported each initial theme and overarching theme presented in the study. Additionally, a confirmation of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis was supported through the meticulous detail provided in the researcher created electronic codebook (see Appendix F). Finally, the data was substantiated further using the visualizations provided in the tables under each main theme to depict the flow of code to initial theme to theme using prevalence in data to accurately present participant experiences.

Results

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The problem and research questions in the study required a focus on participants' described perceptions of real-world conditions associated with their perception of psychological safety and leader influences on their psychological safety in the workplace. The importance in this focus and investigation framework points back to the literature and the need to understand a personal account of psychological safety by employees in other organizations, such as government organizations, which until now was unknown. Using two data sets, the findings provide a participant real-life account into the phenomenon of supervisor's influence on employee psychological safety in the context of U.S. federal government organizations.

During the execution of this investigation the researcher discovered that participant accounts were generally positive and aligned with previous research, especially in the areas where voice by individuals in an organization is highly dependent

on the climate an organization creates (Chughtai, 2016). However, there were also points of negative emergence, discussed briefly in the reflection on the dissertation process and the recommendations for future research sections in Chapter 5, that should be explored moving forward in the field of psychological safety in organizations. The points of negative emergence surround: 1) organizational culture, 2) leaders as agents of change, and 3) the COVID-19 impacts of isolation in the field of psychological safety.

Additionally, in alignment with previous research, the investigation revealed similar results found in other organizations outside of government and point to the existence of psychological safety resultant on the engagement and influence of leadership in the organization. Such aspects discovered indicate that as previous research suggest, individual behavior, mutual trust and respect, group dynamics, organizational climate, and communication all play an important role in psychological safety in the organization (Kostovich et al., 2020; Stephen et al., 2020).

This section outlines the results that were obtained during the data analysis procedures, exploring how federal government employees describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. Results from the investigation have a direct connection to the study problem and purpose statement and as a result may prove valuable to future studies and practical application in the field of psychological safety as further explained in Chapter 5 of the study. To baseline the foundation of the study and the results, the following research questions were used as a guide to this qualitative descriptive study and led to the development of the prevalent and overarching themes:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

The study's conclusions were developed using codes, initial themes, and themes, which aided in answering the two research questions. Appendix R contains a theory to theme process matrix that details the theories, RQs, codes, initial themes, and themes to provide further evidence and support as to how the researcher arrived at the results presented in this section and the conclusion presented in Chapter 5. A total of six overarching themes emerged from the data: (1) impactful to motivation and quality of work, (2) supportive network that is family like, (3) all-inclusive environment, (4) commitment that affects employee needs, (5) agent of change to organizational barriers, and (6) enabler to personnel engagement. Table 14 depicts the developed themes found prevalent throughout the investigation and data analysis and ties RQ to theme (e.g., T1, T2, T3) to provide a connection of how each theme aided in answering the RQs.

Table 14

Themes by Research Question

Research Questions	Research-Identified Themes by Research Question
	RQ1 - T1: <u>As: Impactful to Motivation and Quality of Work</u> <i>Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of mutual respect to share ideas to enhance personal and professional performance.</i>
<i>RQ1:</i> How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?	RQ1 - T2: <u>A: Supportive Network that is Family Like</u> <i>Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of innovation and respect where people are valued and treated like family.</i>
	RQ1 - T3: <u>An: All-inclusive Environment</u> <i>Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of inclusion and respect with policies and practices that support safety and open communication.</i>
<i>RQ2:</i> How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?	RQ2 - T4: <u>A: Commitment that Affects Employee Needs</u> <i>Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as impactful to the basic human need of feeling safe and the willingness to openly express oneself.</i>
	RQ2 - T5: <u>An: Agent of Change to Organizational Barriers</u> <i>Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as a measure of investment in employee value and worth that impacts employee engagement and collaboration.</i>
	RQ2 - T6: <u>An: Enabler to Personnel Engagement</u> <i>Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as an enabler of personal engagement, communication, and safety through transparency.</i>

To answer the research questions in the study, data was collected using a researcher developed open-ended questionnaire consisting of 46 participants and a researcher developed one-on-one, semi-structured interview consisting of 14 participants.

The descriptions of participants lived experiences regarding the phenomenon under investigation were used to develop the codes, initial themes, and themes relevant to the study problem and purpose. The goal of the research questions was to gain a comprehensive understanding of how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety, specifically as prior research has identified a dearth of information surrounding how leader influence on psychological safety, as a component of organizational culture may impact employee work engagement and productivity (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Page et al., 2019). Therefore, the purpose of exploring the presented research questions in the study was to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon through missing real-life experiences of the participants, federal government employees, and to reveal the aspects that may explain how and why participants described their perception of psychological safety in the workplace in the way that they do.

In the previous section, the researcher described the data analysis steps used to construct a flow of the data to develop prevalent code, initial theme, and theme. In total, six overarching themes and 10 initial themes emerged during the data analysis process. The six overarching themes and the 10 initial themes that were developed surround multiple participant accounts from within the findings to address the two research questions presented in the study. In the next section the researcher will provide a narrative of each overarching theme, describing the context of theme relevancy in answering the research questions in the study. In the concluding section of Chapter 4, the researcher will provide the limitations that impacted the study, followed by a summary of the chapter. Table 15 provides the foundational and linking details of each overarching

theme, their initial themes, and number of codes that were instrumental in developing each theme to answer the research questions posed.

Table 15

Themes, Initial Themes, and Codes

Theme	Initial Themes	Number of Codes
Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of mutual respect to share ideas to enhance personal and professional performance.	Encourages collaboration, resulting in a healthy work environment to enhance personal and professional performance. Share thoughts and feelings in an environment of mutual respect absent of fear.	63
Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of innovation and respect where people are valued and treated like family.	Builds an innovation network where relationships are built on openness and sharing of information. Fosters a family like structure where employees are supportive of each other and build on common bonds.	61
Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of inclusion and respect with policies and practices that support safety and open communication.	Strengthens communication and trust through policies that encourage safety zones and speaking up.	42
Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as impactful to the basic human need of feeling safe and the willingness to openly express oneself.	Supervisor behavior affects how employees feel as humans and determines the impact of feeling safe in the workplace. Supervisor traits and soft skills affect employee behavior and safety in the workplace.	70
Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as a measure of investment in employee value and worth that impacts employee engagement and collaboration.	The level of supervisor connection and commitment strengthens or diminishes the feeling of value and engagement in the workplace.	36
Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as an enabler of personal engagement, communication, and safety through transparency.	Eliminating barriers and being approachable affects employee actions, behaviors, and relationships. Building rapport with employees in work and non-work-related areas builds a bond and relationship that impacts openness and understanding.	68

Presenting the Results

To address the research questions posed in the study, questionnaire and interview data protocols were aligned with the underlying study framework to support the collection of relevant data. With that, seven of the 11 open-ended questionnaire protocol questions and 11 of the 18 semi-structured interview protocol questions provided the data relevant for RQ1: How do Federal Government Employees Describe Psychological Safety in Their Workplace? Five of the 11 open-ended questionnaire protocol questions and nine of the 18 semi-structured interview protocol questions provided the data relevant for RQ2: How do Federal Government Employees Describe Their Supervisors' Influence on Psychological Safety in Their Workplace?

As a result, a total of three themes relevant to RQ1 emerged from the data which included: (1) impactful to motivation and quality of work, (2) supportive network that is family like, and (3) all-inclusive environment. Under themes one through three, a total of five initial themes were relevant to support RQ1. To support RQ2, a total of three themes relevant to the research question emerged from the data which included: (4) commitment that affects employee needs, (5) agent of change to organizational barriers, and (6) enabler to personnel engagement. Under themes four through six, a total of five initial themes were relevant to support RQ2. The themes and initial themes for RQ1 and RQ2 emerged from the prevalent codes and code clusters analyzed and developed from the participant data. As previously mentioned, table 14 contains the research-identified themes as they relate to the research questions posed in the study. The summarized results of research-identified themes to research questions that will be discussed in this section are listed below in table 16.

Table 16

Results: Summarized Research Question to Themes

Research Questions	Themes
<i>RQ1:</i> How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?	RQ1 - T1: <u>As: Impactful to Motivation and Quality of Work</u> RQ1 - T2: <u>A: Supportive Network that is Family Like</u> RQ1 - T3: <u>An: All-inclusive Environment</u>
<i>RQ2:</i> How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?	RQ2 - T4: <u>A: Commitment that Affects Employee Needs</u> RQ2 - T5: <u>An: Agent of Change to Organizational Barriers</u> RQ2 - T6: <u>An: Enabler to Personnel Engagement</u>

Reflexivity Protocol Outcome

From the start of the investigation the researcher sought to avoid bias and preconceptions that could have been detrimental if allowed to exist. To enhance the trustworthiness and mitigate preconceived notions resultant from the researchers own background and experience in a government organization, bracketing and reflexivity were used as discussed in the previous sections and recommended by scholars (Guest et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2017; Lester et al., 2020). In using the techniques of bracketing and reflexivity, the researcher enhanced the avoidance of any unintentional influence during the investigation, analysis, and results. Using the researchers own notes which documented thoughts, notions, and observations throughout the investigation, the researcher was able to continually reflect and check self-bias as the study progressed.

To remain successful throughout the reflexivity and bracketing process, the researcher relied on continuous note taking before, during, and after interviews. The researcher also ensured that during the interview process the questions were delivered to participants with clarity and appropriate follow-up to participant answers. Follow-up to interview responses was conducted by the investigator repeating the words of the

response back to the participant to make sure they were conveying the participants intended message and meaning, especially in cases of new thoughts and concepts.

Additionally, because the investigator has had nearly two decades of experience in working for a federal government organization, the researcher was able to use that experience combined with reflexivity to not only understand the context but also to avoid self-bias during the translation of participants thoughts and meanings. Using reflexivity and bracketing, the researcher was made open and aware to new thought and therefore mitigated personal bias by leveraging the ability to conduct simple flow-based note taking while carefully listening to participant interview responses; open notes highlighting observances and connections that stood out. Following each interview, the researcher expounded on his note taking and added follow-on notes that provided thought, overview, and other important observances of the interview experience. The collection of notes before, during, and after each interview were then used when the respective participants transcripts were analyzed to further expand open thought and provoking concepts.

To enhance the investigative process and to strengthen the foundation of the study, the researcher made every effort to remain closely aligned with the structure and format of the approved interview protocol, which guided the flow and delivery of the interview questions. In parallel, the researcher referred to notes taken in the reflexive journal and compared them to notes across other participant interviews to ensure no detection of bias was being observed. Specifically, the process included identifying words, phrases or thoughts that may be expected and those that may have not been expected to serve as a continuous mitigation strategy in the early detection of self-bias

within the research. The result was an effective strategy that continued to check the researcher self-bias and enabled alarm where necessary if such bias had been detected.

In all, the reflexivity protocol used in the study was effective to help the researcher mitigate and prevent self-bias and preconception. The greatest outcome of the reflexivity protocol was the researcher's ability to remain open and welcoming to new and unexplored thoughts as seen through the eyes of the individuals who participated in the study. Additionally, although the researcher had background and experience within a federal government organization, including a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii, there still emerged new concepts and provoking thought that helped the researcher understand the phenomenon of psychological safety in new ways that may now further be explored.

For example, a notable thought that participants expressed in the study was regarding how psychological safety is perceived at different horizontal levels within their respective government organization. To that point, Joe shared in his questionnaire that:

Upper-level leadership does not view our concerns or ideas the same as direct leadership. On numerous occasions I have been reminded that upper-level leadership doesn't know or care what our office does. I have since refrained from offering up new ideas or concerns.

Additionally, some participants expressed a perception that their federal government organization was psychologically safe yet stressed that even though safe, it lacked a humanistic approach which employees desired more of to maintain and feel psychologically safe. In her questionnaire response regarding safety and trust in the organization, Olivia expressed that "with lower degrees of psychological safety, all areas

of human needs are negatively impacted." James added further with similar thought during his interview stating, "I think the major thing that has helped me evolve and understand that it is safe to speak up and to do things is looking at the human interaction from the upper leadership." In response, my reflection through notes recalled my own experiences and thoughts of the government organization both as a government civilian and military member documenting the following:

I heard responses that clearly explain the military structure and how that may affect psychological safety within the organization. So much of military supporting Federal organizations contain a mix or hybrid construct of military and civilian civil servants especially in the component agencies of the Department of Defense (DoD), which is largely represented in Hawaii. I reflect and remain aware of my closeness to the DoD in particular so as to not let my own background affect my reaction or bias in the research, or in particular the data received.

Therefore, through a reflexivity strategy, the researcher was able to mitigate bias of thought toward the governmental hierarchy and see new perspectives such as the need for a humanist approach by leadership at various levels of the organization. The effect, had I not invoked reflexivity, would have been the overclouding of the mind and ignorance to a particular perspective that I had not previously recognized nor experienced during my own time in government given my own preconception of the government construct.

Finally, even with years of background and personal experience as a public servant in federal government, the researcher was able to gain a greater appreciation for the perspective of how federal government employees feel psychologically in an

organizational construct that is regarded as both bureaucratic and non-profit with a focus on public service. Had the reflexivity protocol not been successful, the researcher may have been unable to separate his own preconceptions from the perspectives of the study participants and missed an opportunity to appreciate and discover new thought from the investigation. Overall, the outcome of reflexivity was a success given the new knowledge and unique perspectives presented in the findings. Supported by reflexivity, data collection and analysis bias were mitigated, and trustworthiness of the study was enhanced. In the following sections, answers to RQ1 supported by themes one through three and answers to RQ2 supported by themes four through six are presented.

Theme 1: Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of mutual respect to share ideas to enhance personal and professional performance (RQ1). A revealing theme that emerged throughout the data analysis process involved employee motivation and the quality of the work within the organization. As a result of the open-ended questionnaires and the individual interviews, participants described that their perception of psychological safety in their workplace impacted their motivation and desire to work. As an outcome, when employees feel safe in the workplace their motivation to contribute and increase their work efforts becomes exponential, especially if they are motivated and enjoy coming to work. This in turn has an impact on their quality of work and desire to do above and beyond the status quo of their defined job. Coded segments used to support this concept included: improves morale, motivation, innovation, and culture of openness.

In comparison to the literature in Chapter 2 and the prevalent codes revealed of this investigation and theme, prior research revealed similar findings suggesting that the

underlying climate of an organization ultimately affects productivity, motivation, and employee satisfaction proportionate to employee performance and efficiency (Hu, Erdogan, et al., 2018; Trinchero et al., 2020). Chapter 5 expounds further on the contrast and comparison of the study results and previous literature found in Chapter 2. In the context of this study, this theme is significant as it supports how federal government employees described their psychological safety and the impact it has on inspirational motivation in the workplace that ultimately contributes to employee output.

Resultant of the questionnaire and interview transcripts, 112 codes were identified from the emergent and initial coding process, permitting the researcher to identity 10 initial themes in total. Of those distinctive codes, 63 single codes and two initial themes were relevant to the impactful to motivation and quality of work and how participants described their psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The initial themes that were categorized under impactful to motivation and quality of work included: importance of psychological safety and aspects of psychological safety. Each of these initial themes were cultivated using multiple codes, including improves morale, mental health, systems thinking, no fear, safe to speak up, and solve problems. Table 17 offers detailed insight into how the researcher developed and defined theme one, linking codes discovered in the data to the theme. In addition to the theme and theme definition, also provided in table 17 is supporting initial themes, their definitions, and the emergent codes that were supportive to developing the overarching theme of impactful to motivation and quality of work. As evidence, table 18 provides exemplar quotes from questionnaires and interviews used to develop theme one

and to describe the initial themes, importance of psychological safety and aspects of psychological safety.

Table 17

Theme 1: Impactful to Motivation and Quality of Work

Theme	Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of mutual respect to share ideas to enhance personal and professional performance.		
Theme Defined	A discussion of the motivational impacts of a positive psychologically safe environment and the quality of the organizational output.		
Initial Theme	Encourages collaboration, resulting in a healthy work environment to enhance personal and professional performance.	Share thoughts and feelings in an environment of mutual respect absent of fear.	
Initial Theme Defined	Discussion of the aspects of psychological safety that employees find the most impactful in the workplace.		Description of the importance of positive psychological safety in the workplace.
Code	be heard, be myself, care for people, communication policy, COVID effects, culture of openness, deal with stressors, employee well-being, equality, express feelings, feel valued, human needs, improves morale, inclusive, innovation, isolated, mental health, mutual respect, no fear, organizational change, psychological safety impact, retribution, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, sharing ideas, solve problems, trust		
	accessibility, autonomy, collaboration, collaborative teams, comfortable mindset, communication policy, creativity, culture of openness, deal with stressors, efficiency, employee well-being, engagement, human needs, improves morale, innovation, isolated, learning organization, listening behavior, mental health, motivation, personal performance, problem solving, quality of life, safe space to work, safe to speak up, systems thinking, voice		

Table 18

Questionnaire and Interview Examples for Theme 1: Impactful to Motivation and Quality of Work

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
Encourages collaboration, resulting in a healthy work environment to enhance personal and professional performance.	Camila (Questionnaire)	"Psychological safety is important to me because I want to feel safe when I come to work. I want to be heard and listened to and I want to know that I can say something if I am concerned or worried about a process or even another coworker."
Share thoughts and feelings in an environment of mutual respect absent of fear.	Liam (Questionnaire)	"There hasn't been a whole lot done in the last two years to promote a safer psychological environment, however, they continue to emphasize, you know, that people should be willing to speak up willing to share thoughts and everything, so I don't think it's degraded any in effort, but it certainly hasn't increased much either."
	Daniel (Questionnaire)	"Psychological safety is important in the workplace because it provides an environment for employee engagement. When employees feel safe at work, it's more open to engage. This includes working on projects together, solving problems, collaboration and working with other stakeholders external to the organization."
	Oliver (Interview)	"So yeah, productivity motivation work ethic all increases, especially when my personal psychological well-being is on the positive note, and then on the negative it does decrease your productivity."

Importance of psychological safety and aspects of psychological safety were identified as initial themes that assisted in developing theme one: impactful to motivation and quality of work. Relevant assertions made by participants to help develop this theme, included those such as when questionnaire participant Sophia said, "Establishing the safe well-being for me is most important." Additionally, when discussing his experience with psychological safety in the workplace, interview participant Mateo shared, "In my opinion, if you have a sense that your company will listen to you, values your opinion, and values your work, then you want to come to work; if you get the sense they do not then you come to work because you have to not because you want to." Furthermore,

questionnaire participant Camila expressed that “Psychological safety is important to me because I want to feel safe when I come to work. I want to be heard and listened to and I want to know that I can say something if I am concerned or worried about a process or even another coworker” as she reflected and described psychological safety in her workplace. Further elaborating on his own perception of psychological safety in the workplace, questionnaire participant Joe shared, “Psychological safety in an organization is key to innovation and higher morale. When employees feel safe, they also feel comfortable bringing up new or opposing ideas to the table, allowing for more creativity and comradery.”

Many participants also disclosed areas within their organization where motivational aspects and human needs are desired more and how that may directly be an outcome or impact of psychological safety on employees. While reflecting on his own quality of output to the organization, interview participant Ethan shared “If you don't as somebody that is outputting work if you don't think your input is valid, you're not going to try on it, there are tons of tons of times that happened.” In her questionnaire response, Olivia discussed the human needs that employees desire and the perceived relationship she identifies with increased levels of psychological safety in the workplace. She stated:

It is said that there are 6 human needs: certainty, variety, significance, love/connection, growth, contribution. My personal experience is that, with higher degrees of psychological safety, I can maintain high functionality and performance even if the environment lacks certainty and variety. With lower degrees of psychological safety, however, all areas of human needs are negatively impacted.

Lastly, interview respondent Abigail reflected on encouragement and motivational aspects from the supervisor influence that support her willingness to increase output and quality of work. To that point, Abigail commented:

I think I would encourage people to do their best and to do things in excellence, because we have that security to...that if we are unsure about something or if we have a concern about something that you know that we can approach our supervisor. So that would encourage us, because we have the support from her and there's...and I believe we would be able to support other people in the organization with excellent service and to do our best in providing excellent service to other commands because we have the support you know from our supervisor.

Participant's descriptions of the influence and aspects of psychological safety that motivate employees to produce quality output within federal government organizations provided a substantive discussion on each of the initial themes, which encapsulates a firsthand description of participant perceptions of psychological safety in the workplace. The exemplar quotes presented in this section provide a logical explanation of how the raw data validated each initial theme under the main theme, impactful to motivation and quality of work.

Importance of Psychological Safety. A significant area revealed in participant questionnaire and interview responses was that many respondents considered psychological safety as a foundational aspect important to a multitude of organizational layers, including motivation, thus defining the importance of psychological safety as high within their respective organizations. Importance of psychological safety is defined as the

employee description of the importance of positive psychological safety within the workplace. Per the collected data, the importance of psychological safety as described by participants centers around the belief that layers of the organizational construct are directly impacted by explicit commitment towards psychological safety within the workplace. This finding is congruent with previous literature suggesting that when an organization provides active commitment and engagement to a psychologically safe workplace, employees feel trust and well-being is prioritized (Liu et al., 2020). To aid in the results, emergent codes that validated this initial theme included: culture of openness, engagement, listening behavior, and personal performance.

When reviewing participant's commentary on the importance of psychological safety, what constituted as direct impacts resultant of psychological safety, began to unfold to the researcher as the participant's used descriptors such as "collaborative teams," "culture of openness," "learning organization," "motivation," "quality of life," and "safe to speak up," all of which are codes that were grouped to develop this initial theme. A minority of participants described their federal government organization as having a limited understanding of psychological safety in true context and therefore indicated a lack of understanding regarding the actual term psychological safety and implementation of psychological safety in the workplace. For example, when speaking about her organizational policies and practices that support psychological safety in the workplace, Charlotte shared:

I think, maybe using the word psychological safety, they do not. But they do try to say that you know if you have a concern speak up if you have any kind of like process improvement speak up, so I think on paper, all the processes are there.

Questionnaire and interview participant Jack shared a similar but more direct and raw perception about his organization's disconnect with the true meaning of psychological safety, commenting with:

Hypocrisy okay, they talk the talk, but they surely don't walk the walk. Actions don't...actions don't align with the words most of the time okay, only when it's convenient. Well, I you know I like to come to work to be allowed to do the best I can do, every day, but it doesn't seem like that I'm allowed to do the best I can do every day it's only it's what they allow me to do.

In her questionnaire response, participant Gianna suggested there was a disconnect in leadership commitment to psychological safety by describing a lack of explicit and visible support via action. Through perception of her own leadership, she shared "It is borderline. While he does frequently say mental health is important and supports needs randomly, his actions do not always convey that it really is important." Those who shared similar encounters suggested that although their organization and leadership understand the underlying importance and premise of psychological safety, perception does not always match reality, especially in the context of written policies and processes which could show a greater sense of explicit commitment. The lack of understanding and support for psychological safety revealed may have a direct impact on the inspirational motivation that employees need to conduct day to day tasks.

For example, when recounting his experience as an employee within a federal government organization, participant Jacob discussed within his interview his perception of his organization's commitment to psychological safety specifically in the context of policy and procedure. Jacob stated:

Again, I think it's very, very vague, I do have the perception that my organization has policies that are in place to address these things because they're required to, but I don't feel that...I feel like on a basic day to day business practice level they're ineffective.

While a minority of the research participants expressed concern with their organizations understanding of psychological safety and the explicit commitment to the importance, the overarching premise revolved around a lack of explicit policy and actions as depicted in the provided quotes. Overwhelmingly most participants expressed that their organization did maintain a commitment through displayed actions and policy supporting the importance that participants feel is needed towards psychological safety and motivation.

In similar responses surrounding the importance of psychological safety and policy, Mateo, Levi, Liam, Alexander, Gianna, and Charlotte expressed consensus that organizational written policies and processes devoted to psychological safety have a significant role in fostering a safe environment and show explicit commitment and encouragement to overall psychological safety in the workplace. When discussing policies and importance of psychologically safety in government organizations, participant Liam best described the underlying support and culture of psychological safety through his statement:

You know, certainly us being a federal organization we certainly are reminded at all levels that people are certainly allowed to express their personal beliefs opinions and comments in whatever forum you know just as long as it's done respectfully. You know and it's done within the bounds of just proper decorum in the workplace. I believe that culture is promoted right -- if you got something to

say it, you know as long as you do it respectfully it'll be okay. You know, we do all the federally mandated trainings that tell people that they can't be discriminated against or retaliated upon. We do all those trainings it's reinforced during annually or semiannually by our leadership we'll talk about that we also have some core I believe we have like four core tenets that govern our behaviors.

Based on the data analysis, the importance of psychological safety has emerged as a seemingly explicit need within the organization that may not always be captured properly to reinforce the perception versus reality as seen from the employee perspective.

Furthermore, within each of their respective federal government organizations, participants described similarities in the lack of explicit guidelines which can be confusing and vague to the employee on the organization's commitment to their overall psychological safety and ultimately affect inspirational motivation. This employee view is resultant of unclear written policy and a lack of understanding in the true context of psychological safety as per the defined meaning of the belief. Resultant of the participant data, it appears that how employees in a federal government organization perceived organizational commitment to the importance of psychological safety is contingent on how well the organization provides explicit support through training and policy to effectively message the importance of psychological safety and further strengthen employee motivation.

Aspects of Psychological Safety. The second initial theme in support of the theme impactful to motivation and quality of work outlines how participants describe the aspects of psychological safety that are most impactful and motivating within the workplace. Per participants meaningful narratives, aspects of psychological safety were

defined as the psychological safety aspects that employees find most impactful within the workplace. Several emergent codes were collapsed and combined to validate this initial theme, which included: communication policy, culture of openness, safe space to work, and trust. Eleven of the 46 questionnaire respondents felt their organizations and leadership were explicitly committed to a safe space to work which provided a culture of openness and sharing that motivated employees to learn and openly share ideas without fear of retribution. Questionnaire participant Joe shared, “My supervisors created a safe environment for myself and other teammates.” Questionnaire respondent Camila shared:

My observation has been that my supervisor provides a safe space in the office and allows everyone to express their concern or voice an opinion respectfully.

My supervisor treats everyone with equal respect and also allows us to come to her office anytime if we have a question or problem. So, I think her commitment is good to a psychological safe office.

In addition, questionnaire respondents, Benjamin, Emily, and Sophia all described that their organizations and leadership instilled aspects of trust and safety within the workplace that allowed employees to speak up and share thoughts regarding both work and personal issues. In his questionnaire response, participant Lucas described that he had no concerns about his psychological safety while at work, going on further to say “I have no issues talking with my co-workers. I feel free to discuss both personal and work-related concerns, ideas, and thoughts.”

While most participants expressed feeling the direct support for a safe space to work, two respondents described a different perspective based on somewhat negative experiences regarding speaking up and support for a safe space by top level leadership.

For example, questionnaire respondent Noah shared that, “it brings a sinking feeling inside that makes me want to back down from bringing up items that could be a concern or even cause harm or death.” Furthermore, Noah emphasized how such an environment “is bad for safety and for personnel health.” Additionally, in discussion on a safe space to work, questionnaire participant Jacob stated, “at this point I keep my head down about most issues requiring senior leadership attention or work through my direct supervisors.”

When describing his own experience, interview participant Alexander corroborated the majority of the participant’s feelings that their organizations supported a safe space to work, which in turn was both motivating and impactful on the quality of work output. Alexander stated:

My quality of work has steadily improved. I think so...background on this right, I just got hired three years ago I’ve only been three years which is very new compared to a lot of other civilians and military members, that are within our organization. That being said, coming on and trying to provide quality work versus what is considered actual quality work...yeah absolutely my psychological safety has directly and positively impacted my quality of work as a direct and positive relationship again.

When discussing other aspects of psychological safety that were impactful to motivation and quality, participants indicated that areas such as communication and openness instilled a sense of value and further supported inspirational motivation in sometimes complex governmental organizations. Furthermore, participants shared that the ability to collaborate and work towards solutions is foundationally built upon trust and the open communication aspects of psychological safety. For instance, when referring to

communication policy and the ability to freely communicate across multiple times zones and barriers in a complex governmental organization, Abigail stated:

If I need to talk to my supervisor that I can call anytime so I think that's just the way that we work I don't have a supervisor in office, unlike many individuals and we're just in that unique position where we're spread across you know the globe, if you will so it makes it a little bit more challenging but at the same time, absolutely you know able to connect with, we might not get the responses that you would expect in a normal office environment, but when you're spread across several time zones it presents its challenges, and so you have to learn the best time to talk to your boss. But you can do it, you could set up invites and get on his calendar, and so you just have to work around it.

Likewise, Gianna, Lucas, and James all emphasized the importance they found in a safe space with the motivation to openly communicate and innovate. For instance, questionnaire and interview participant James expounded on how communication aspects enabled the ability to safely share ideas and step outside the box, simply stating there is “openness” and “safety to be wrong.” Further emphasizing, James stated:

I look around and other people are able to provide things that in sometimes other settings are not really allowed so to see that to see the ability for people to be open, honest and just you know throw ideas out there allowed me to realize that that is acceptable and actually has become encouraged in the organization I'm in and that allows you to let your mind run wild sometimes with some of the problems that we come up against and that we need to solve.

The overarching narrative of participants regarding the aspects of psychological safety, especially in the areas of communication, openness, safe space to work, and trust can best be summarized in the response that questionnaire and interview participant Daniel shared. Daniel stated:

When employees feel safe at work, it's more open to engage. This includes working on projects together, solving problems, collaboration and working with other stakeholders external to the organization.

Overall, most participants described the aspects of psychological safety as an important influence on their motivation and willingness to contribute and provide quality output to their respective organizations. Based on the participant data, the researcher found that aspects of psychologically safety, specifically communication, openness, safe space to work, and trust provided the most impact on employees and further defined the foundation supportive to quality input and output resultant from employee desire and motivation to contribute to the workplace.

Conclusion. In summary, a revelation in the participant data indicated that quality of work resulted from the direct motivational influence that an environment of psychological safety and aspects of psychological safety instill upon employees in federal government organizations. According to most participants their respective federal government organizations and leadership maintained a positive commitment to psychological safety through perceived actions and policies which provided support to psychological safety and thus fostered motivation and employee quality outcomes within the organization. The data suggest that when employees feel psychologically safe in the workplace a resultant inspirational motivation ensues and thus influence on the work

efforts and quality of work increases exponentially, especially when employees enjoy coming to work. This finding is important as it supports previous findings describing the importance of motivational impact on psychological safety, which up until now had only been observed in for-profit organizations outside of the United States (Javed et al., 2019; Page et al., 2019; Yulita et al., 2020). Additionally, this finding goes beyond just how the participants described psychological safety in the workplace and confirmed prior research suggesting that existence of psychological safety in the workplace results in innovation and quality output (Kahn, 1990; Kahn & Heaphy, 2013; Newman et al., 2017).

Lastly, participants discussed how specific aspects of psychological safety, namely communication, openness, safe space to work and trust contributed to their desire and motivation to come to work and contribute to work and quality output. It was evident by the shared participant narratives that aspects of psychological safety contribute in many ways to the motivational impacts that psychological safety has on work and quality of work. While a small minority of participants had expressed negative experiences in their organization's support of aspects of psychological safety, the overall narrative from participants was that federal government organizations are supportive in the important aspects of psychological safety in a rather implicit design, with much more desire for organizations to be explicit in design.

Theme 2: Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of innovation and respect where people are valued and treated like family (RQ1). Further findings from the data suggest that employees in federal government organizations valued the coworker interaction and support that they experienced in a psychologically safe workplace. While “family like” was not directly

referenced in previous research findings, inference of the social family construct relates closely to previous findings that suggest that organizations that possess safe and interpersonal relationships, foster teamwork and engagement overall (Chaudhary, 2019). Chapter 5 expounds further on the contrast and comparison of the study results and previous literature found in Chapter 2. In the context of this study, supportive network that is family like included an explanation of how a “family like” construct supported by psychological safety helps develop a support network where employees can interact and share experiences more freely.

Out of the 112 codes and 10 initial themes that were identified from the data analysis, 61 emergent codes and two initial themes were pertinent to how supportive network that is family like was supported by a psychologically safe environment. The initial themes that were categorized under supportive network that is family like included: coworker interaction and support and interpersonal coworker relationships. Each of these initial themes were developed using multiple codes, including family, mutual respect, receptive, supportive, understanding, and we can relate. Table 19 offers detailed insight into how the researcher developed and defined theme two, linking codes discovered in the data to the theme. In addition to the theme and theme definition, also provided in table 19 are supporting initial themes, their definitions, and the emergent codes that were supportive to developing the overarching theme. As evidence, table 20 provides exemplar quotes from questionnaires and interviews used to develop theme two and to describe the initial themes of coworker interaction and support and interpersonal coworker relationships.

Table 19

Theme 2: Supportive Network that is Family Like

Theme	Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of innovation and respect where people are valued and treated like family.	
Theme Defined	How the ideal psychologically safe construct in the workplace is described by employees as "family like" in design.	
Initial Theme	Builds an innovation network where relationships are built on openness and sharing of information.	Fosters a family like structure where employees are supportive of each other and build on common bonds.
Initial Theme Defined	How employees describe the ideal interaction and support network with their coworkers that is fostered by a psychologically safe environment.	How employees describe their interpersonal relationships that support good human connection and effective information flow in the workplace.
Code	collaboration, collaborative, collaborative teams, comfortable mindset, common bond, communication policy, culture of openness, encouraging, engagement, equality, family, feedback process, innovation, interpersonal relationships, listening behavior, mutual respect, no fear, receptive, share information, supervisor encouragement, supervisor influence, supportive, transparency, understanding, we can relate	information flow in the workplace. anonymity, approachability, attentive, autonomy, care for people, collaboration tools and space, communication policy, employee recognition, equality, face-to-face, family, feel valued, group discussions, human interaction, interpersonal relationships, leadership traits, listening behavior, makes time for others, open door policy, receptive, safe space to work, share information, socialize, stove pipes, sup method of interact, supportive, systems thinking, understanding

Table 20

Questionnaire and Interview Examples for Theme 2: Supportive Network that is Family-Like

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
Builds an innovation network where relationships are built on openness and sharing of information.	Harper (Questionnaire)	"All my coworkers are open and listen. Some more than others but I've never had any bad interaction in discussing things. We share a lot of work ideas and talk sometimes about personal things but mostly work."
	Lucas (Interview)	"I don't feel any personal push backs it doesn't matter if it's a small project or a large project. I think we can have those conversations and no fear or no reprisal."
Fosters a family like structure where employees are supportive of each other and build on common bonds.	Sophia (Questionnaire)	"My coworkers are like family and we are comfortable speaking with each other openly about usually anything."
	James (Interview)	"It is a very open place of business that allows people to use their imagination, sometimes without that fear of you know, looking bad or you know being ridiculed so it very much is an inclusive organization that allows you to speak what you think."

Coworker interaction and support and interpersonal coworker relationships were identified as initial themes that assisted in developing theme two: supportive network that is family like. Relevant narratives shared by participants to help develop this theme, included those such as when questionnaire participant Harper stated:

All my coworkers are open and listen. Some more than others but I've never had any bad interaction in discussing things. We share a lot of work ideas and talk sometimes about personal things but mostly work.

Furthermore, Camila highlighted how her experiences in the workplace were positive and included supportive family like interactions with her coworkers, stating, "my coworkers are all open to listening and also like to talk story. We share ideas and talk about random things because it just feels good. I feel like my work family is really tight and I could talk with them about most anything." Questionnaire respondent Sophia echoed the same

sentiment when discussing the family like structure she experienced and stated that her workplace was “like family or ohana is what we like to say.” When discussing the interpersonal relationships with coworkers that psychological safety had fostered, questionnaire participant Emily shared, “the tone and speaking is respectfully, helpful and informative which encourages me to be better and do better in an office that is relaxed and family like.” Each participant equally expressed that the psychological safety within their workplace had helped to foster a more personal and intimate relationship that was based on a family structure of learning together and growing together. The exemplar quotes presented in this section provide a logical explanation of how the raw data validated the initial themes of coworker interaction and support and interpersonal coworker relationships under the second main theme, supportive network that is family like.

Coworker Interaction and Support. In the context of this study, the evidence of positive psychological safety in most participants federal organizations revealed an underlying coworker support network both fostered and perpetuating to the continued sustainment of a positive workplace environment. Most participants experienced a positive support network that resulted from a positive psychological safety climate. Likewise, the family like coworker support network showed signs of continuing the support towards positivity in the workplace by strengthening bonds between coworkers that enabled a safe space to share work and personal issues. For instance, in her interview response, Abigail discussed the interaction with coworkers that consist of both ups and downs in much the same way a family experiences these struggles. She stated, “we’re comfortable with each other, it’s like a family, you have your you know your ups and

your downs but we're a family, we just have to learn how to you know, work with each other, like how a normal family would have to you know." Similarly, the notion of how the coworker support network can continue to drive a positive psychological safety climate was evident in the interview response that Lucas shared when discussing the respect and communication contained within the coworker support structure, stating, "you have those open lines of communication and you know, goes back and forth both ways right I talk to you with respect and you talk back to me with respect so respecting one another."

Highlighting the need for coworker interaction, respondents also shared that during the COVID-19 pandemic they suffered a downturn in coworker support and interaction due to necessary isolation and social distancing. During the pandemic many participants appeared to suffer from the limited ability to continue an open dialogue and to socially interact. Questionnaire respondent Henry commented:

Command events help. Before COVID we used to have annual picnics, family day, Saturdays at the college football game and other fun events. I learned a lot about my peers and felt more comfortable talking with them at work. Not so much now and especially since COVID and since many transferred or still telework.

In his interview response, participant Oliver shared a similar experience describing the struggles of interacting with his coworkers based on the barriers of the pandemic and stated, "we just never had the opportunity to link up at that time, so COVID definitely did play as a barrier to an extent and kind of split us up to having to either try to seek different avenues." In a further justification of the benefit that psychological safety fosters towards coworker interaction and the revolving support that coworker interaction

continues to provide back to psychological safety in the workplace, Lucas commented on his enjoyment in coming to work and interacting with his coworkers, stating in his interview:

If there's one thing I enjoy about coming to work is coming to work to see you know the people that I work with on a daily basis, like we have military and we have civilians, you know going on several years now and I always enjoy it.

Likewise, when discussing the common bonds that psychological safety help to create through coworker interaction, participant Ava stated, "My coworkers usually have the same concerns as I since our work is pretty much the same but different situations."

Participant Charlotte supported this view in her questionnaire response, stating, "When my non-supervisor coworkers are in agreement with my concerns or ideas it makes me feel safe in voicing them because I know there is strength in numbers."

Based on the data analysis of participant responses, increased coworker interaction and support were identified as a beneficial outcome of a psychologically safe workplace. Additionally, the supportive feedback loop that coworker interaction creates helps to continually perpetuate a positive psychologically safe environment by creating bonds, openness, and freedom to share thoughts and ideas with a supportive "family like" network within the workplace. Participants experienced an overwhelming feel of connectivity built upon a psychologically safe environment and also experienced the downsides that isolation of that network can bring during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, participants acknowledged the need and benefits of building connections and having workplace support that reacts in much the same way that a family does. By talking through issues, solving problems together, and experiencing the ups and downs that work

often brings, participants were able to rely on the bonds with coworker's resultant of a positive psychological safety climate.

Interpersonal Coworker Relationships. The second initial theme in support of the theme supportive network that is family like outlines how participants describe the interaction and human connection within the workplace. Per participants meaningful narratives interpersonal coworker relationships was defined as the interpersonal relationships that support good human connection and effective information flow in the workplace. Several emergent codes were collapsed and combined to validate this initial theme, which included: face-to-face, human interaction, mutual respect, and method of interaction. An overwhelming majority of respondents shared the importance of interpersonal relationships in the workplace which pointed to a supportive level of openness and care for one another. When discussing the support and freedom to openly share ideas, questionnaire participant Zoey stated, "Nothing but encouragement and we have never had a situation where I or any of my coworkers have been accused of pushing a "bad" idea." Questionnaire respondent Elijah shared:

My coworkers listen. Most of us are like a family. We get together outside of work, our kids go to school together, and we know each other's family well.

Some of us went to the same schools as kids so we have a good family relationship and can talk inside and outside of work about most anything.

In addition, interview respondent Oliver highlighted the need and benefit of interpersonal relationships describing how those relationships extend outside of the workplace as well in an effort to find common bonds. Oliver stated:

So, building that relationship, with our peers, of course, the interpersonal relationship, you know we share phone numbers talk story keep work we have between some of my coworkers, we talked about you know we'll talk about non-work-related stuff sports politics family things going on with the family, video games, you know hobbies and stuff like that we'll talk about all of those things.

Additionally, Jacob described his own experiences and the benefits that were similar in a sense that coworker interpersonal relationships help one to grow and learn. Jacob stated:

I think they're great that you know the people that are whose cubicles are next to mine who's offices are next to mine I have friends and mentors and people that are older than I am and much wiser than I am that have been very helpful with you know me growing as a human as a professional in my organization as a father, you know they've been fantastic, it's been a great learning experience being where I'm at from my coworkers for sure, I am very grateful.

Likewise, Abigail, Elijah, and Jacob equally acknowledge the benefits of interpersonal relationships and how they result from an open and psychologically safe environment.

For instance, participant Abigail expressed her satisfaction with the openness and respectful nature of her workplace as a result of positive psychological safety and described the interaction she has with all her coworkers by simply stating that her coworkers are “always engaged and offer solution.” Further emphasizing, Jacob stated that, “Most coworkers acknowledge thoughts and ideas with professionalism and provide constructive feedback.” This supports what most participants feel results from an open and mutually respectful workplace resultant of positive psychological safety.

Overall, the majority of participants described coworker interpersonal relationships as a positive outcome of a psychologically safe workplace. Furthermore, the notion that psychological safety enables interpersonal relationships, which in turn reinforces psychological safety was also observed. Based on the participant data, the researcher found that, specifically, coworker interpersonal relationships promote positivity in the workplace by strengthening bonds between coworkers and enabling a safe space to share both work and personal issues.

Conclusion. In summary, the provided participant narratives indicated that when positive psychological safety is established in the workplace the means to socially interact is strengthened. According to a majority of participants, feeling psychologically safe allows for development of supporting networks within the office where coworkers unite and bond towards common goals. In fact, participants described this unique construct as “family like” and shared that this experience encounters much of the same ups and downs that a real blood-related family might experience. Furthermore, when describing the underlying elements of the family like social construct in the workplace, participants described that not only does psychological safety help build this construct, but in turn the interpersonal relationships and coworker interaction help to continue the growth of a psychologically safe environment through feedback and support. In contrast participants also described what it is like to have such a construct and then lose it when describing the barriers that the COVID-19 pandemic imposed on their social connectivity.

Lastly, participants discussed how being socially connected helps to transcend outside of the workplace and encompasses support, respect, and open lines of

communication. From the participant responses it was evident that aspects of psychological safety support the development and encouragement of the social family construct within the workplace. It was also evident that once established this social family construct can help to perpetuate and maintain psychological safety within the workplace for years to come. Overall, the narrative from participants was that a socially connected workplace provides an ability to share thoughts and ideas within the context of a positive psychologically safety workplace and reinforces the support of a safe space to work.

Theme 3: Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of inclusion and respect with policies and practices that support safety and open communication (RQ1). Findings from the data suggests that supportive and all-inclusive environments fostered within federal government organizations help to encourage aspects of psychological safety such as safety in speaking up, innovation, and sharing of information. In similar results, prior research suggested that psychological safety ensues when the organization strives for full inclusion of employees in the decision-making process through methods such as openness, feedback, and voice (Ghani & Hyder, 2020; Tu et al., 2019). Therefore, the findings from this study in alignment with previous research reinforce the need in governmental organizations for employees to be a part of the decision-making process, which given the known bureaucracy and structure may be a challenge. In Chapter 5, the investigator expounds further on the contrast and comparison of the theme findings and the previous literature found in Chapter 2. In the context of this study, the all-inclusive

environment includes descriptions of policies and practices that were in place or should be in place to encourage a more inclusive space where everyone is allowed to speak up.

Resultant from the 112 emergent codes and 10 initial themes revealed during the analysis of the raw data, 42 emergent codes and one initial theme became relevant to how all-inclusive environment impacted participants personal experiences as an employee in a federal government organization. Although only one initial theme was addressed under this theme, the participant's responses are crucial in terms of fully understanding how employees in a federal government organization described their perception of psychological safety. Table 21 offers detailed insight into how the researcher developed and defined theme three, linking codes discovered in the data to the theme. In addition to the theme and theme definition, also provided in table 21 are supporting initial themes, their definitions, and the emergent codes that were supportive to developing the overarching theme. As evidence, table 22 provides exemplar quotes from questionnaires and interviews used to develop theme three and to describe the initial theme of workplace policies encouraging safe speak.

Table 21

Theme 3: All-inclusive Environment

Theme	Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of inclusion and respect with policies and practices that support safety and open communication.
Theme Defined	The supportive and all-inclusive environment that the organization fosters within a safe workplace.
Initial Theme	Strengthens communication and trust through policies that encourage safety zones and speaking up.
Initial Theme Defined	A discussion surrounding the policies and processes in place to allow and encourage safety in speaking up.
Code	accessibility, anonymity, approachability, ask for input, collaborative teams, comfortable mindset, command events, communication policy, confidentiality, COVID effects, culture of openness, email, employee recognition, encouraging, face-to-face, fail and learn, family, feedback process, feel valued, follow through, human interaction, ice breakers, inclusive, in-person, interpersonal relationships, leadership traits, listening behavior, mentor, mutual respect, no fear, positive reinforcement, receptive, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, show action, socialize, supervisor encouragement, supportive, transparency, trust, virtual meetings

Table 22

Questionnaire and Interview Examples for Theme 3: All-inclusive Environment

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
Strengthens communication and trust through policies that encourage safety zones and speaking up.	Evelyn (Questionnaire)	"My office is very open and we respect each other as equals and teammates. Weekly office meetings, training and problem solving together have helps us build and learn to work together and respect each other."
	Liam (Interview)	"My door is always open you got something for me come talk to me, you know you can talk to me, you can talk to your boss, we just want you to know like if you see something you got something to say come talk to us like open door policy right."

The initial theme that fell under theme three: all-inclusive environment, was workplace policies encouraging safe speak. Within the initial theme, there were several codes grouped together, including but not limited to: ask for input, feedback process, and supervisor encouragement. The codes that were combined to develop this theme indicated

that participants described their organization as a positive psychological safety climate supported by policies and processes that foster employee inclusion and safety to speak up. Additionally, participant narratives highlight the encouragement that federal government employees feel when the policies and practices from leadership encourage them to speak up, signaling an underlying inclusive environment.

In the response by participant Henry who shared an experience where his supervisor encouraged speaking up and inclusion, Henry stated, “He listens first then provides feedback after which allows me to get my point across before he critiques the ideas. This way allows me to say what I have to say, and I feel heard rather than brushed off.” Interview respondent Ethan also shared a positive experience that encouraged inclusion and stated, “what this organization does well, is that they truly value, you know they value feedback and solicit input from like from everybody regardless of rank or time in service.” When discussing inclusion in the workplace, interview participant Lucas shared, “when people feel like they're a part of the organization, then the organization will, without a doubt, be a better place,” suggesting that inclusion helps promote a positive psychologically safe workplace where everyone feels valued. Within each narrative each participant expressed their own unique experience of inclusion and speaking up in the workplace that highlighted the importance that psychological safety brings to these aspects in the workplace. The exemplar quotes above provide a summary of how the collected data validated the initial theme workplace policies encouraging safe speak and the third theme, all-inclusive environment.

Workplace Policies Encouraging Safe Speak. In the context of this study, workplace policies encouraging safe speak, directly relates to how the organization and

supervisors develop and implement policies and practices that encourage safe speak and therefore inclusion by all. Findings from the data suggest that workplace policies encouraging safe speak within federal government organizations help to encourage aspects of psychological safety such as safety in speaking up. Emergent codes that validated this initial theme included: feel valued, positive reinforcement, safe to speak up, and supervisor encouragement.

When reviewing participant narratives on workplace policies encouraging safe speak, a revelation within the data began to emerge as the participant's used descriptors such as "inclusive," "receptive," "safe to speak up," "share information," "supervisor encouragement," and "supportive," all of which are codes that were grouped to develop this initial theme. Participants described their federal government organizations as having an average approach to providing inclusion and encouraging speaking up. Narratives from participants also indicated a desire for a proactive approach to implementing the element of inclusion, which participants deemed important in a psychologically safe workplace. For example, when speaking about her organizations support for speaking up and overall inclusion in the workplace, interview participant Charlotte shared:

I think that they can...maybe ask for feedback more often if they actually asked for it, then I feel like after a while of everybody saying, oh no I don't have anything I don't have anything eventually somebody might speak up and say something or you know directly go to people, one on one and ask like hey you've been here 17 years, what do you think would help make your job easier, you know if they directly went to everybody and asked, I feel like that would be a lot...you're more willing to tell them.

Questionnaire and interview participant James shared a similar perception about his organization's approach towards inclusion when speaking of their push for employee feedback, commenting with:

I think that leadership has, some of them realize that and I can see that trait in them where they genuinely want that feedback, that honest discussion, not just the yes, I agree with that, yes, I agree with that kind of thing.

In his questionnaire response, questionnaire participant Leo simply stated a need for, "A workplace that actively seeks input from others." Likewise, when discussing the need for encouragement towards feedback and the importance of feeling safe to provide feedback, questionnaire participant Joe stated:

Ways that encourage me to feel safe and speak up at work mostly stem from if my leadership shows genuine care and concern for me and those around me. Asking for our opinion on a topic even if we have no real say in the matter also adds to my sense of safety in the workplace. Lastly, taking the time to mentor and further mold the team for future jobs will always help me feel safe to speak up.

In addition, questionnaire respondent Luke suggested that what is needed by his organization and leadership is additional processes or ways to bring people in and therefore develop an inclusive environment to strengthen psychological safety in the workplace. Luke stated:

Make it more interactive and offer more fun ways to communicate and build an active community to share and feel relaxed and laid back to do so. Don't criticize any idea or say that is not valid without providing feedback to help me understand where my thought process is wrong.

While most participants shared positive experiences regarding inclusion and the ability to safely speak up, there were noticeable highlights in the data that indicated much more could be done, especially around supervisor encouragement and organizational policies. For example, participant Oliver stated, “sometimes it's just the same old approach there's nothing new, no different approach to what could improve these policies or the approach for the psychological wellness.” In the same regard, participant James discussed his need for supervisor encouragement that would make him feel valued and heard which would then reinforce the organizations projection that his input was valued and that his efforts were not just a waste of time. James stated:

Feeling like a contributing member to the command and the organization in being able to give that and knowing that it's not just wasted time or thoughts that I have, but that the command and the other people in the meeting are actually going to seriously take that information and potentially use it to make a decision whether we're making it all together or it's a leadership decision based on the information that I'm presenting.

Overall, study participants described the workplace policies encouraging safe speak as an important influence on the psychological safety within their workplace. Based on the participant data, the researcher found that workplace policies encouraging safe speak were viewed as important to employees, specifically when it comes to supervisor encouragement, feeling a sense of value, and having a supportive organization that enables methods of inclusion and safe speak. While respondents acknowledge that workplace policies and processes encouraging safe speak within federal government organizations were existent in the workplace, indications from the data suggest that more

is needed by federal government organizations to provide inclusion that would encourage aspects of psychological safety such as safety in speaking up.

Conclusion. In summary, findings provided in the participant narratives indicated that when organizations strive for inclusion and safety to speak up, aspects of psychological safety are strengthened. Based on participants descriptions, while the majority of federal government organizations had a sense of an inclusive culture that encouraged safe speak, much more can be done. Participants highlighted the need for additional ways to interact and speak up to provide opportunities where inclusion can be more readily available. Likewise, participants acknowledged that supervisor encouragement was instrumental to increasing their input and feedback using proper policy and technique that enable organizations to become better.

Finally, when participants discussed inclusion, they indicated how inclusion supports a feeling of being valued. However, it was not just a general sense of value that emerged in the narratives, but a specific feeling that what an employee provides through feedback is actually going to be listened to and considered. Herein reveals an assumption by participants that it is important to clearly convey that all input is valued to avoid the perception of negative feelings such as employees feeling they have wasted time in providing their input. By doing so, organizations can effectively demonstrate genuine encouragement and value towards the input and inclusion of all employees in the workplace. Overall, participants described a desire to see strengthening of the inclusion aspects within their respective organizations. By strengthening inclusion, organizations can further support psychological safety and provide a strong organizational construct that is considered safe for all to speak up.

Theme 4: Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as impactful to the basic human need of feeling safe and the willingness to openly express oneself (RQ2). Based on the evidence found within the participant narratives, another revealing theme that emerged was the desire for sincere human connectivity within the organization. Although the consensus within the data is that employees in federal government organizations in Hawaii perceive their organization as a psychologically safe workplace, much remains to be desired around the humanistic and personal connections. To this respect, in the narratives provided via questionnaires and interviews, participants described a greater need for support that include a concentrated leadership effort supportive of the human side found within the employee.

Based on participant responses, commitment that affects employee needs was described as the free flowing and flexible commitment by leadership that acknowledges people and not just “the employee.” Coded segments used to support this concept included: approachability, committed, considerate, and interpersonal relationships. In the context of this study, this theme is significant as it reveals how federal government employees described their organizational and leadership approach towards the employee and how the employee felt that leadership could strengthen that approach towards the humanistic side through skills and a commitment supportive of a psychologically safe workplace. The results and evidence that emerged from theme four coincide with previous research suggesting that engagement by leaders on a personal level determines the extent of how the employee feels safe in the workplace (Frazier et al., 2017; Yi et al., 2017). To expound further on the relationship to the literature review in Chapter 2, a

discussion around the results and previous research will be provided in more detail in Chapter 5. This theme is one of three themes that were instrumental in answering RQ2 of this study.

Revealed in the questionnaire and interview transcripts, were 112 emergent codes resultant of the initial coding process and convergence of codes. From the emergent codes the researcher developed 10 initial themes relevant to the research investigation. Of those emerging codes, 70 single codes and two initial themes became relevant to the theme commitment that affects employee needs which was revealed from the participants description of their psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace. The initial themes that were categorized under commitment that affects employee needs included: supervisor commitment to employee needs and supervisor soft skills. Each of these initial themes were developed using multiple codes, including emotional intelligence, good communicator, interpersonal relationships, leadership traits, open door policy, and sup comm skills.

Table 23 offers detailed insight into how the researcher developed and defined theme four, linking codes discovered in the data to the theme. In addition to the theme and theme definition, also provided in table 23 are supporting initial themes, their definitions, and the emergent codes that were supportive to developing the overarching theme of commitment that affects employee needs. As evidence, table 24 provides exemplar quotes from questionnaires and interviews used to develop theme four and to describe the initial themes, supervisor commitment to employee needs and supervisor soft skills.

Table 23

Theme 4: Commitment that Affects Employee Needs

Theme	Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as impactful to the basic human need of feeling safe and the willingness to openly express oneself.		
Theme Defined	<p>The free flowing and flexible commitment by leadership that acknowledges people and not just “the employee.”</p> <p>Supervisor behavior affects how employees feel as humans and determines the impact of feeling safe in the workplace.</p> <p>The feeling and desire that employees seek from their supervisor to support their basic human needs in the workplace.</p>		
Initial Theme		Supervisor traits and soft skills affect employee behavior and safety in the workplace.	
Initial Theme Defined		The description of necessary soft skill traits such as communication, collaboration, and encouragement to strengthen the personal connections in the workplace.	
Code	<p>approachability, autonomy, care for people, collaboration, collaborative teams, comfortable mindset, committed, considerate, culture of openness, difference of opinions, encouraging, equality, feedback process, feel valued, good communicator, hypocrisy, inclusive, innovation, interpersonal relationships, leadership traits, listening behavior, makes time for others, mutual respect, no fear, open door policy, perception vs reality, problem solving, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, supervisor encouragement, supportive, understanding</p> <p>attentive, avoid contact, care for people, clear and concise, collaboration, communication policy, COVID effects, culture of openness, emotional intelligence, encouraging, equality, feedback process, feel valued, good communicator, helpful, human interaction, in sync, interpersonal relationships, leadership traits, listening behavior, mutual respect, no focus, no follow through, open door policy, perception vs reality, problem solving, retribution, safe space to work, share information, show action, sup comm skills, supervisor encouragement, supervisor influence, supportive, telework challenges, waste of time</p>		

Table 24

Questionnaire and Interview Examples for Theme 4: Commitment that Affects Employee Needs

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
Supervisor behavior affects how employees feel as humans and determines the impact of feeling safe in the workplace.	William (Questionnaire)	"My supervisor is committed, easy going and understanding most of the time. Of course, we have disagreements but overall, my supervisor makes me feel comfortable by listening and giving proper attention to me and my fellow coworkers."
	James (Interview)	"It's not a one off it's an everyday thought and conscious effort by leadership to throw out there, those questions and ask that and not be not be a dictator, but be looking for people to come up with answers to problems, instead of just the management, making a decision in a vacuum, they are they're looking for the people that it's going to affect or have that information to give good advice."
Supervisor traits and soft skills affect employee behavior and safety in the workplace.	Camila (Questionnaire)	"I trust her more than I have most supervisors in the past. She loves to talk story and we laugh, and things are not so stressful. I can also go to her with an issue and know she will listen and do her best."
	Oliver (Interview)	"As I mentioned before they can identify and see the red flags early on, when a person might be having a difficult time and either engage with them early and engage with them early and then get them either the support or help that they may need or be able to mitigate what comes out of those."

Supervisor commitment to employee needs and supervisor soft skills were identified as initial themes that assisted in developing theme four: commitment that affects employee needs. Supportive narratives shared by participants to help develop this theme, included those such as when questionnaire participant Harper said, "Yeah, I trust him, but I avoid him because conversation wise, he's work talk only. Lacks personality but I do trust him just not much for engaging with him unless he wants to talk work."

Additionally, when discussing his experience in interacting with his supervisor, questionnaire participant James shared that his supervisor is, "Sometimes distracted and jumps between subjects." Furthermore, questionnaire participant Michael expressed that his supervisor was, "Not so good because he likes to be the center of attention or the

know it all in the room.” Overall the consensus was a positive one shared by most participants in that their leadership possess aspects of good leadership and corresponding soft skills, yet much more could be improved to show genuine care, concern, and approachability. Further elaborating on her own perception of the leadership approach to the human side of employees in her organization, questionnaire participant Nora shared, “I think she tries to compromise with people and is understanding when people are confused or unable to come in for work, as an example. However, it seems like she doesn't do much to accommodate for my medical condition, which causes me the most frustration with her.”

Overall, participants' descriptions of the increased desire for humanistic connections within federal government organizations contributed substantially to the discussion of each initial theme. These descriptions offer firsthand accounts of participants' perceptions of leadership's commitment to the human side of the employee. The exemplar quotes presented in this section provide a logical explanation of how the raw data validated each initial theme under the primary theme, commitment that affects employee needs.

Supervisor Commitment to Employee Needs. Immersed within the overarching theme of commitment that affects employee needs was the underlying initial theme surrounding supervisor commitment to employee's needs. Supervisor commitment to employee needs, as defined through the participant narratives, is the feeling and desire that employees seek from their supervisor to support their basic human needs in the workplace. Per the participant narratives, the importance of supervisor support for employee needs comes primarily from the immediate supervisors who employees have

the most routine and opportunistic interaction with during the context of work. Emergent codes that validated this initial theme included: difference of opinions, listening behavior, makes times for others, and open-door policy.

When reviewing participant's narratives on the supervisor commitment to employee needs, various aspects of supervisor behavior began to unfold as the participant's used descriptors such as "approachability," "considerate," "mutual respect," "perception vs reality," "safe space to work," and "understanding," all of which are codes that were grouped to develop this initial theme. Most participants described their federal government organization as having a safe working environment consistent with psychological safety. However, some participants also shared that their supervisors lacked the necessary skills and processes to genuinely care for people. In fact, many participants felt supervisors often viewed things through the lens of work, leaving personal issues at the door. For example, when speaking about his supervisor, Lucas shared that his supervisor "is trying to defend his position as the lead and nothing more."

When explaining what is lacking in his organization, participant Benjamin stated that he would like for his organization to become more of an organization "where even managers listen to my opinion," suggesting that everyone may not be treated or seen as equals within the organization. In another detailed experience of employee to supervisor interaction, participant Charlotte stated:

I complained about another coworkers' comments made to me. Instead of hearing my complaint and taking action to remedy the issue she made excuses for the other individual which made me feel that my psychological safety did not matter to her.

Charlotte's perception was one that Jack also shared in that they both felt that their personal needs were ignored over others or work-related issues. For example, Jack stated that his supervisor was, "socially awkward. Four days in and the command finally got ahold of me and asked me what I needed oh excuse me my code supervisors, there's psychological safety for you."

On the other hand, some participants described a tactic of self-blame from the employee perspective and in a sense created a compromise to their human connection needs that enabled their supervisor to quasi-meet their needs and expectations and thus divorced supervisors of any blame. In the interview response by participant Liam, he stated, "Once again, as long as I convey my thought in a respectful manner that person will listen, and we can have a discussion about it right," and interview participant Olivia stated:

I'm not going to tell them Hey I think this is...these are the things that we need to do but you know just expressing my general like here's what I think and I'll put something in writing and send it to him, and you know, he does not do anything with it and that's fine but at the same time he's still listening he's still receiving.

In a good synopsis, interview participant Jack provided his perception of what he feels is lacking in his organizations supervisory support for human needs. Jack stated:

You know...there's gotta be some congruence that people who are talking are actually you know, you see it in their body language, this is what they feel. Not some friggin talking point, okay, or an optic, okay, this is what you feel. And you know I'm good at doing that trying to pick that out. That person that I'm talking that's exactly who that person...and that person will carry that essence into the

supervisory role not you know not trying to you know feed me the Kool aid.

Cause that's what it is.

From a different perspective, some participants offered suggestions through their lived experiences and how supervisors can better support their needs. Participant Abigail expounded on this and provided a specific experience where she felt leadership took something rather trivial to most and showed care and concern to address a need, which ultimately affected many. Abigail stated:

They would hear feedback from people how it affects us as workers, you know, having like a lot of reserved stalls and no stalls available for us and how it affects us and our work and our stress level and whatnot. But through that through the survey they made an improvement in that they did something about it and they got rid of you know a lot of the reserved stalls that probably wasn't being used, so they came up with a solution, and they got rid of a lot of the reserve stalls and now it's kind of like a kind of like a first come, first serve basis now but um...that you know something like that, they take it to heart and they'll find ways that will make things easier for us as employees.

Another consistent voice in the participant data was the overwhelming benefit and need for an open-door policy where employees felt welcome to share their concerns and needs, whether it be work or personal related. For instance, interview participant Levi shared, "So, from a personal standpoint if there's ever been any doubt in regard to anything safety related there's always been some sort of open-door policy and that's not necessarily with the overall person in charge that's anybody who's senior to me." Participant Abigail also echoed this stance of an open-door policy and stated:

Because she's always, her door is always open, so to speak, for me to go into her office to talk about things and I like that, because she has like a, like an open-door policy where we can just go to her office and just you know talk to her about anything.

This same view was also shared by questionnaire participant Daniel who stated:

My supervisor always has an open mind and open door. I can go to him anytime and talk about anything. He makes me feel welcome and when we talk, he listens, puts away distractions and really seems to care. It's the caring attitude and way he listens that makes me most comfortable.

Based on the data analysis, the supervisor commitment to employee needs has emerged as a fundamental element of psychological safety and leadership commitment to the psychological safety that not only encourages feedback, but also addresses the needs and concerns of employees in their work and personal life. Furthermore, policies such as the open-door policy have come through in the participant descriptions as a mechanism used by supervisors to show a commitment to employee needs and further strengthens the ties that employees desire from their supervisor in a safe workplace environment.

As a result of the participant narratives, the data showed a strong sense of desire from employees on the commitment needed to show care and concern for employee's basic needs such as listening, understanding, and making oneself available. The assumption based on the data is that employees desire their supervisors support towards the basic human needs in the workplace. The exemplar quotes above provide a summary of how the collected data revealed a strong desire for supervisor commitment and support

of human needs through mechanisms as simple as making oneself available and through policies and actions.

Supervisor Soft Skills. Participants described that their perception of soft skills within their organization was an area that was instrumental in providing strength to personal connections and encouragement to the human connection between supervisor and employee. Per the narratives provided by participants, supervisor soft skills were defined as traits such as communication, collaboration, and encouragement to strengthen the personal connections in the workplace. While traits supportive of communication, collaboration, and encouragement were present in most organizations, the importance of soft skills in current and future supervisors was elevated by the descriptions that participants provided. Some participants disclosed that absence of soft skills was detrimental to their interaction with their supervisor and resultantly affected their perception of a psychological safety commitment by the supervisor. In his interview response, Ethan shared:

Nobody wants to feel ever that they're like being...I'm going to say humiliate but that's a strong word like but you know humiliated like at a meeting or in a professional setting and so you know by if you end up thinking you know the answer, or something and like maybe it's best to ask that person and then let them come to the conclusion, independently rather than being told but it only works if it doesn't work with everybody right like some people you just need to like come down hard on so maybe situational yeah I mean and I guess that comes back to some of those soft skills that people have raised being able to like know what you're dealing with and read a room.

Similarly, during his interview Jacob described the aspect of approachability that is an important soft skill for supervisors and highlighted how it can be empowering to the employee and create good relationships. To that point Jacob shared:

I learned some amazing things from the people that worked for me by being approachable and so you know, letting them know being approachable and empowering the people that are working for you would be what I would consider like a healthy relationship with a supervisor and a good model to kind of take after.

Participant James described how engagement skills helps to further create bonds and described a situation where a little bit of engagement from supervisor to employee can go a long way to build human connections. With that James shared:

I've talked about the overarching many of the supervisors many of leadership have that personal engagement when they come to a meeting, whether it be a one-on-one meeting I mean it could be stopping in the hallway and talking to somebody but that personal engagement.

Liam further described in his interview an important factor that building human connections provides in that it allows supervisors to better understand things from the employee perspective and avoids an immediate rush to judgement based on false assumptions. To that extent Liam shared the following resultant from his own personal experience:

I think we're reminded that so if someone does say something, and it comes across weird it comes across off it comes across argumentatively that the person hearing it is supposed to always consider that hey that was made with noble intent, even

though it was it came across weird. And I think that is one of the things. A constant reminder that says hey we want people to be able to express themselves, and even if it comes across weird consider that that person did intend it to come across with noble intent and don't take negative reaction to it don't take a negative stance to it.

Other participants shared that when soft skills are lacking the outcome results in hostile interactions and a loss of trust. For example, Jacob shared the following in his interview response citing lack of transparency which underscores the importance of trust. To that Jacob shared:

When I discussed it with my supervisor about being more transparent, that conversation didn't really it wasn't very well received, granted I'm not 100% privy to everything that my supervisor was but it was hostile, it went from me, bringing what I thought would be a good idea to this person and it turned kind of hostile in a very subtle way I definitely went into shut up and smile.

In the same respect, participant Jack shared that when soft skills are absent the end result is detrimental to a psychologically safe workplace and erodes the sense of trust that employees desire. Jack shared:

The people in positions of authority had no business being in a position of authority very incompetent and maybe good down as a little low level, but they have no leadership component, the skillset to...they lost that trust and I firmly believe that, and I've always believed that there are certain people in positions of leadership that just you have no business being there.

Similarly, interview participant Oliver shared how mistrust ensues given a supervisor's action or lack thereof especially to be approachable and provide open access to connect and communicate. With that, Oliver stated:

I have definitely noticed that if there's a supervisor that closes his door doesn't engage with us as often or seek to get to know us to some level and build that trust and rapport there is a lot of mistrust within that organization.

Additionally, participant Lucas described how an ideal supervisor connects appropriately and builds trust through engagement that can be viewed respectfully and therefore give employees freedom to maneuver in their own particular lanes. Lucas shared:

I think that's excelled like that's to me is I never ... that reflection that role that I have with my supervisor you know the level of work that I do, I think you know...sure absolutely does he ask me questions absolutely but because of the immense amount of work that we have within our department, he doesn't need to you know.

In all, participants described approachability, engagement, and communication as necessary soft skills that help build human connection and promote trust between employee and supervisor. Based on the participant narrative, the soft skills of leadership show commitment to the humanistic side of the employee and influences psychological safety and psychological health in the workplace. In essence a simple proactive gesture towards the human side of employees initiates a conduit for connectivity between people that participant Lucas suggest in his statement starts with everyone being approachable and engaging. Lucas stated, "that people approach me for conversation or ask me to review documents electronically just a couple of ways I can speak up."

Overall, the provided narratives support the notion that participants felt that their psychological safety was positive but hinged on the need for supervisors to extend a more humanist approach to each employee. The results of the data suggests that through engagement, and a proactive approach, supervisors both promote and influence the workplace psychological safety through explicit commitment towards the humanist side of the employee. This may mean that participants experience or perceive a lower level of psychological safety simply because their supervisor lacks basic soft skills to provide the underlying motivation and stimulation within the workplace.

Conclusion. In summary, findings provided through exemplar quotes taken from the data reveal a need for further investment by federal government organizations into the soft skills of supervisors given the influence and perception experienced by employees. Although the overall participant descriptions provide a picture of positive psychological safety within the workplace, a lack of human interaction and supervisor commitment remains evident. Through the experiences and perceptions of participants, providing a conduit of free-flowing interaction and flexible commitment that further helps to build trust and interpersonal relationships within organizations that promote, and value psychological safety is warranted. By building connections, strengthening commitment, and refining supervisor soft skills, organizations can continue to increase the psychological safety within the workplace and provide a trusting and safe environment for all.

Theme 5: Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as a measure of investment in employee value and worth that impacts employee engagement and collaboration (RQ2). In

other findings from the data, participant narratives suggest leadership, especially upper leadership, are considered unreachable or out of touch from the general employee in a federal government organization. This revelation from the data surrounding out of touch leadership exposes an area within federal government organizational hierarchies that employees perceived to be a perception versus reality approach when it comes to leadership commitment to psychological safety. As suggested by Kahn (1990), management style adopted for the organization determines the level of employee engagement and thus influences the organizational performance.

Subhakaran and Dyaram (2018) asserted that various constructs of the organization and differing hierarchies exert varying levels of psychological safety within an organization based on those differences. This revelation in the data and details in prior research indicate that management style is an area of importance that affects how an organization is structured and how its hierarchy is positioned to support psychological safety. Further discussion on these findings in relationship to the literature is explained in detail in the conclusions found in Chapter 5. In the context of this study, agent of change to organizational barriers was defined by participants as an attempt to change the rigid structure in an organization by breaking down barriers and expanding the organizational engagement from the top down.

Out of the 112 codes and 10 initial themes that were identified from the data analysis, 36 emergent codes and one initial theme were relevant to how agent of change to organizational barriers presented itself based on participants personal experiences as an employee within a federal government organization. While this main theme was supported by only one initial theme, the associated explanations and lived experiences

revealed in participant responses under this initial theme were relevant in the understanding of how employees in a federal government organization described their perception of psychological safety in the workplace. Table 25 offers detailed insight into how the researcher developed and defined theme five, linking codes discovered in the data to the theme. In addition to the theme and theme definition, also provided in table 25 is supporting initial themes, their definitions, and the emergent codes that were supportive to developing the overarching theme. As evidence, table 26 provides exemplar quotes from questionnaires and interviews used to develop theme five and the initial theme of senior leadership commitment.

Table 25

Theme 5: Agent of Change to Organizational Barriers

Theme	Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as a measure of investment in employee value and worth that impacts employee engagement and collaboration.
Theme Defined	An attempt to change the rigid structure in an organization by breaking down barriers and expanding the organizational engagement.
Initial Theme	The level of supervisor connection and commitment strengthens or diminishes the feeling of value and engagement in the workplace.
Initial Theme Defined	A description of the investment and connection that employees seek from leadership in the organization.
Code	acknowledge problems, approachability, attentive, barriers, care for people, collaborative teams, comfortable mindset, considerate, COVID effects, culture of openness, distant, employee recognition, engagement, equality, feedback process, group discussions, human interaction, interpersonal relationships, lack of transparency, listening behavior, no fear, no follow through, not interested in personal things, open door policy, out of touch, perception vs reality, receptive, safe space to work, share information, show action, supervisor encouragement, supportive, takes notes, unavailable, understanding, work related

Table 26

Questionnaire and Interview Examples for Theme 5: Agent of Change to Organizational Barriers

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
The level of supervisor connection and commitment strengthens or diminishes the feeling of value and engagement in the workplace.	Mason (Questionnaire)	"My supervisor take in consideration of my views and opinion. As well as gives encouragement in areas, that can or may need focus in also."
	James (Interview)	"I think the major thing that has helped me evolve and understand that it is safe to speak up and to do things is looking at the human interaction from the upper leadership during meetings, whether it be you know one on one meetings or in a group setting just that instead of the institutional regimental meeting structure that I have unfortunately been used to it, it's seeing that leader as a human being."

The initial theme that fell under theme five: agent of change to organizational barriers, was senior leadership commitment. Within the initial theme, there were several codes grouped together, including but not limited to: acknowledge problems, care for people, and lack of transparency. The codes that were combined to develop this theme indicated that although participants described their organization as a positive psychological safety climate, it remained that senior leadership investment and connection with employees was lacking or completely missing. Additionally, participant narratives highlight a sense of hypocrisy and perception versus reality that employees feel when it comes to the outward projection of a psychologically safe workplace. Therefore, the results suggest that leadership may be out of touch and lack genuine commitment to the psychological safety of employees within the confines of the workplace.

In the response by participant Aiden who shared his perception of senior leadership, Aiden stated, "Upper-level management is unapproachable and distant. I have never spoken to them about anything and avoid them where I can because they just seem out of touch and don't care." Interview respondent Emma replied that all senior

leadership needs to do is just, “see the problem,” which they often times ignore on purpose or unintentionally. Participant Joe also shared a negative perception of senior leaderships’ commitment and stated, “Upper-level leadership does not view our concerns or ideas the same as direct leadership. On numerous occasions I have been reminded that upper-level leadership doesn't know or care what our office does. I have since refrained from offering up new ideas or concerns.” When discussing leadership support to psychological safety, questionnaire participant William shared, “I don't interact with upper-level management much, but I think this is mostly because they feel out of touch to me. Maybe if management socialized with everyone more equally it would be different and break the barriers of separation or the perception of that separation,” suggesting that commitment requires a proactive approach from senior leaders in the form of socializing or getting to know your people.

Within each narrative participants expressed that senior leadership was either out of touch or lacked the willingness to engage and interact with employees at all levels of the organization. By failure to engage or move past the rigid structure of an organizational hierarchy, senior leaders are overlooking the elements of a psychologically safe and open environment where sharing and communication is of the essence. The exemplar quotes above provide a summary of how the collected data validated the initial theme senior leadership commitment and the fifth theme, agent of change to organizational barriers.

Senior Leadership Commitment. In the context of this study, senior leadership commitment directly relates to how participants described the investment and connection that employees seek from leadership in the organization. In a sense, the underlying

participant narratives support the notion that the organizational hierarchy within a federal government organization is one that is rigid with boundaries, rank, and structure and therefore creates barriers to the implementation and perception of psychological safety in the workplace. Findings from the data suggest that senior leadership commitment within federal government organizations helps to foster psychological safety through influence that transcends the perception versus reality argument and thus communicates value of all equally through inclusion. Emergent codes that validated this initial theme included: acknowledge problems, distant, lack of transparency, no follow through, and share information.

When reviewing participant narratives on senior leadership commitment, a revelation within the data began to emerge as the participant's used descriptors such as "human interaction," "open door policy," "out of touch," "show action," "supervisor encouragement," and "understanding," all of which are codes that were grouped to develop this initial theme. For the most part, participants described their federal government organizations as having senior leaders that were either out of touch or too busy to acknowledge problems at all levels within the organization. This perception of senior leadership commitment deeply influenced the perception of psychological safety within the participants respective organizations.

Narratives from participants also indicated a desire for more opportunities to interact with senior leadership which could strengthen transparency across all levels and improve information sharing holistically. For example, when speaking about his organization's senior leadership, questionnaire participant Henry shared, "I think they listen, but I don't get to have much interaction with them in the so called "big castle" so I

think it could be better if I actually received feedback on ideas or got to talk more face to face.” In the same respect regarding her senior leadership reaction to employee thoughts and concerns, questionnaire participant Zoey shared:

They seem less open to them. Maybe out of touch since they don't wander down much from their offices. There is a status-quo, operationally and less room for organizational change. Our ideas are sometimes met with...distrust? So often my team and I have to do a lot of work to gain that trust and just be heard. Maybe we are considered lower and therefore with less ability to generate good ideas.

In his questionnaire response, participant Noah referred to a situation with a senior leader and described the interaction as somewhat dismissive stating, “I think it sometimes just passes through and gives an appearance of listening but is he really taking actions to address concerns?” Likewise, when participant Aiden discussed his perception of senior leadership, he stated that he felt trust within his immediate supervisor but indicated a sense of fear and retaliation from the top saying “The distance from any kind of management who might care about anything I have to say insulates me from any retaliation. Upper management might be unpleasant and exploitative, but I trust my immediate supervisor.”

In an offer of suggestions, several participants described what they feel works or could work if senior leadership put forth an effort and committed to the psychological safety of employees. For example, participant Olivia stated:

I appreciate spot-checks. How are things going? I appreciate candid conversations, pass down of information from command leadership, and

discussion of how we are aligned, how we can better align and what can we do to increase the value of individuals and teams.

Likewise, interview participant James shared the following when asked how his senior leadership supports psychological safety aspects within the workplace providing some simple ways that his senior leader connects and promotes value in all employees. James shared:

He genuinely cares about people first and we'll worry about all the other stuff afterwards, you know the 30 seconds, it takes me to answer that and then he says, you know what do you got to report to me, and then I...it costs, very little amount of time, but it shows that as a person he's already realized that there are things beyond this command that matter more than just a report of some broken piece of equipment.

Participant Mateo also offered up suggestions for leadership commitment and stated the following:

I think that the most important thing when you talk about this subject that you're looking at and you're actually looking at a very, very interesting subject, is that the one the best thing the supervisor can ever do is one show integrity and two show caring for his people.

Overall, study participants described a lack of engagement and true commitment by senior leadership on the aspects of psychological safety within their workplace. Based on the participant data, the researcher found that senior leadership commitment ranked low among participants when it came to psychological safety aspects such as transparency, sharing of information, and interpersonal relationships. Specifically, employees felt

senior leadership expressed a disconnect in the perception and reality of how they supported the psychological safety construct in the workplace. Say one thing and do another, or as participant Lucas stated. “I hear one thing but see another thing.”

Often employees referred to senior leadership commitment in the sense of being out of touch and therefore lacked trust in their leadership. While respondents acknowledged that perceived senior leadership commitment towards psychological safety was lacking, simple suggestions on how leadership can engage were shared in hopes that future leaders will take notice and break the rigid organizational structure that bound many leaders to what participant Henry expressed to as their “big castle.” From the data, participants revealed that through interaction with senior leadership more information is shared in a transparent and trustworthy sense. Based on the data, senior leaders have a unique opportunity to connect and support the organization holistically through meaningful actions that show employees a genuine commitment towards their well-being and therefore directly supports employee psychological safety.

Conclusion. In summary, findings provided in the participant narratives indicated that when senior leaders express a genuine commitment towards engagement and the underlying aspects of psychological safety, trust is built throughout the organization. Based on participants descriptions, the organizational hierarchy present in a federal government organization is one that oftentimes consists of barriers to interaction and engagement that can easily be overcome through senior leadership commitment to disrupting this rigid hierarchy. While engagement at all levels seems relatively easy, senior leaders must take the first step to analyze and approach the concept of removing the barriers from the top down or suffer the consequence of diminished trust from

employees at the lowest of levels. Overall, participants highlighted the need for more senior leadership engagement and interaction supportive of transparency and information flow within the workplace to better support their psychological safety. Likewise, participants suggested that through senior leadership commitment and disruption of the organizational hierarchy, more problems may be solved since they are also being openly acknowledged.

Theme 6: Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as an enabler of personal engagement, communication, and safety through transparency (RQ2). As a result of the individual questionnaire and interview responses, participants ascertained that perception of psychological safety in their workplace was largely influenced and dependent upon the engagement, interpersonal relationship, and mutual trust between employee and supervisor. Thus, the sixth overarching theme developed from the data was enabler to personnel engagement. As revealed in previous research, psychological safety is contingent on the organization's ability to develop trust and interpersonal relationships that foster a freedom of expression where fear and rejection are minimized and innovation and ideas are maximized (Boylan & Turner, 2017). While the alignment with previous research and the findings in this study both suggest that interpersonal relationships are important, one could surmise that government employees often feel that it is a one-way street where they feel lack of engagement from leadership at various levels throughout the organization. This is an area that government leadership should focus on and improve given the evidence from this investigation. In the context of this study, enabler to personnel engagement was defined by participants as the bi-directional

efforts between supervisor and employee that strengthen personnel engagement across all facets of the organization.

Revealed in the questionnaire and interview transcripts, were 112 emergent codes resultant of the initial coding process and convergence of codes. From the emergent codes, 68 exclusive codes and two initial themes were relevant to the overarching theme of enabler to personnel engagement. Table 27 offers detailed insight into how the researcher developed and defined theme six, linking codes discovered in the data to the theme. In addition to the theme and theme definition, also provided in table 27 is supporting initial themes, their definitions, and the emergent codes that were supportive to developing the overarching theme. As evidence, table 28 provides exemplar quotes from questionnaires and interviews used to develop theme six and the initial themes supervisor engagement and trust and interpersonal supervisor relationships.

Table 27

Theme 6: Enabler to Personnel Engagement

Theme	Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as an enabler of personal engagement, communication, and safety through transparency.	
Theme Defined	Describing the bi-directional efforts that strengthen personnel engagement across all facets of the organization.	
Initial Theme	Eliminating barriers and being approachable affects employee actions, behaviors, and relationships.	Building rapport with employees in work and non-work-related areas builds a bond and relationship that impacts openness and understanding.
Initial Theme Defined	Describing the ability for supervisors to eliminate barriers to approachability that further enable trust and engagement.	How employees describe the relationship with their supervisor in both work and non-work related areas that helps to build quality rapport and human connection.
Code	approachability, avoid contact, care for people, comfortable mindset, communication policy, culture of openness, difference of opinions, engagement, equality, feedback process, follow through, hypocrisy, in sync, interpersonal relationships, confidentiality, leadership traits, listening behavior, makes time for others, mentor, mutual respect, no fear, open door policy, receptive, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, show action, supportive, trust, understanding, waste of time, we can relate	anonymity, approachability, attentive, care for people, comfortable mindset, communication policy, culture of openness, difference of opinions, empowers, encouraging, equality, feedback process, feel valued, group discussions, helpful, hesitation, human interaction, inclusive, interpersonal relationships, confidentiality, listening behavior, makes time for others, mentor, mentoring, motivation, mutual respect, retribution, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, show action, singled out, supervisor encouragement, supportive, transparency, understanding

Table 28

Questionnaire and Interview Examples for Theme 6: Enabler to Personnel Engagement

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
Eliminating barriers and being approachable affects employee actions, behaviors, and relationships.	Sebastian (Questionnaire) James (Interview)	"High level of trust since he listens takes safety serious and is open to feedback." "What they do well, is you know I've talked about the overarching many of the supervisors many of leadership have that personal engagement when they come to a meeting, whether it be a one-on-one meeting I mean it could be stopping in the hallway and talking to somebody but that that personal engagement."
Building rapport with employees in work and non-work-related areas builds a bond and relationship that impacts openness and understanding.	Emily (Questionnaire) Mateo (Interview)	"Open two-way communications and treating issues carefully and treating me and my fellow workers equally to show support and understanding." "My immediate supervisor, I'm with him every day. We talk more we talk about things, whether it's work related or non-work related we spend a lot of time discussing you know families that type stuff so it's a it's not you don't feel like you can only talk about work and because of that it makes the work portion much easier to deal with."

Supervisor engagement and trust and interpersonal supervisor relationships were identified as initial themes that assisted in developing theme six: enabler to personnel engagement. Of note, key responses made by participants to help develop this theme, included revelations made when participant Emily replied, "When treated with respect, kindness and open-minded behavior I feel more able to speak and interact with anyone in my office, my coworkers or supervisor." Additionally, when discussing her experience with supervisor engagement and support, questionnaire participant Gianna shared, "Positive re-enforcement that I will be backed up in decisions made. Knowing that confidentiality will not be breached. Recognition for a job well done or that your ideas are relevant. Someone listening to concerns and working with you to address them vice discounting them."

Furthermore, questionnaire participant Henry expressed that “having conversations about something other than work is an ice breaker that often leads to other conversations regarding work. So, it helps to talk about non work things,” as he reflected on the engagement and interpersonal relationship with his supervisor. To further support the feeling of positive contributive to psychological safety through supervisor engagement and support, Oliver shared:

All supervisors provide the same options and are available to us 24/7. In addition, we have courses that encourage these positive support pathways. We are also offered Chaplain Services, and Department of Navy CEAP.

In essence, what was revealed from the data was that employees thrive on engagement when it flows in both directions; supervisor-to-employee and vice versa. An interpersonal relationship where supervisors and employees engage mutually is supportive to psychological safety and indicated in the participant narratives which described a fundamental aspect of psychological safety, trust. While reflecting on his own personal experiences and relationship with his supervisor, questionnaire respondent Aiden described his level of engagement and trust as good saying that:

Level of engagement and trust with supervisor is good. She doesn't micro-manage but gives us space to work independently within the confines of rules and regs. When unsure about something, she is always there to help, suggest, and point us in the right direction.

Aiden went on further to say, “I like my supervisor as a person, and trust them to treat everyone in the shop fairly and honestly,” indicating that when supervisors engage and put forth efforts to engage, the outcome in the workplace is a positive one built on trust.

Participants' descriptions of their supervisors' efforts to engage and connect within federal government organizations contributed significantly to the discussion of each initial theme. These descriptions provided firsthand accounts of how these efforts influenced perceptions of psychological safety in the workplace. The exemplar quotes presented in this section provide a logical explanation of how the raw data validated each initial theme under the main theme, enabler to personnel engagement.

Supervisor Engagement and Trust. A significant area revealed in participant questionnaire and interview responses was that many respondents considered the proactive efforts that supervisors put forth as a guiding principle to establishing a foundation of psychological safety as it relates to engagement, openness, and trust. The efforts of engagement exerted by supervisors is equally important to the efforts by employees to engage and through direct influence strengthens the bonds contained within the construct of psychological safety. In the context of this study, the initial theme supervisor engagement and trust were defined through participant narratives as the ability for supervisors to eliminate barriers to approachability that further enable trust and engagement. Per the collected data, the importance of supervisor engagement and trust as described by participants centers around the belief supervisors possess the power to break down barriers to engagement and can do so preemptively. Emergent codes that validated this initial theme included: care for people, comfortable mindset, engagement, mutual respect, and open-door policy.

When reviewing participant's commentary on supervisor engagement and trust, what constituted as a direct influence on psychological safety, began to unfold to the researcher as the participant's used descriptors such as "culture of openness," "equality,"

“confidentiality,” “mentor,” “safe space to work,” and “trust,” all of which are codes that were grouped to develop this initial theme. A minority of participants described their supervisors in a federal government organization as being limited in approach and viewed supervisors as lacking the preemptive ability to engage first before being engaged. For example, when speaking about her supervisor engagement, which affected her trust, Charlotte shared:

There is very little engagement or trust with my supervisor. She does not engage with me or others on my team often and because of this and other reasons there is very little trust in her.

When discussing engagement and frequency of engagement, participant Alexander shared:

Due to the nature and volume of work in our department, engagements are sometimes limited to operational requirements or scheduled meetings; however, I know when I need something he always makes himself available.

In his response, participant Liam described a level of engagement that was adequate but signaled that he had to seek out time to engage with his supervisor rather than her initiating the engagement. Liam stated, “I feel my level of engagement is adequate. I do not request a lot of time with my supervisor, but she is readily available. I have a fair level of trust with my supervisor.” As a result, Liam’s level of trust with his supervisor was described as fair.

Further descriptions of engagement and trust from participants indicate positive actions and methods to initiate engagement and therefore build trust. For example, participant Sophia shared techniques used by her supervisor to bring the office together,

saying that her supervisor, “brings us all to the table or a lunch setting outside of work where we feel appreciated, listened to.” In the same respect, participant Joe shared, “I believe we have a high level of engagement and trust. We interact on a daily basis on numerous different topics from work and our personal lives,” when talking about the relationship and daily discussions he and his supervisor have regarding many different topics. Likewise, participant Luke described techniques his supervisor had instituted in the workplace to increase engagement and therefore bring everyone together sharing that:

We have biweekly 1:1s where we can discuss anything and that is always open and respectful. We also have sync meetings weekly with everyone in our office and again my supervisor is always respectful, listens, and repeatedly asks for our input or questions to find ways to help us be better.

In another unique technique to initiate engagement, participant Mia shared that her supervisor brings employees together through lunch events that build bonds and strengthen trust. Mia shared, “We have monthly potluck lunches which helps talk things out or stay in touch with each other more personally.” Participant Ella likewise mentioned something similar saying, “Potluck lunch is something we are really good at in my office and my supervisor is the biggest supporter of this to bring us together,” and expounded further saying, “Fun things always make me open up so the potlucks or command picnics help me get to know my coworkers even those who I don’t directly work with since we are a big federal employer on the island.” This revealed that simple techniques, such as social engagements initiated by supervisors, can go a long way to bring people together and proactively build strong bonds and relationships between all within the organization.

As a result of the data analysis, it became evident that while employees are able to engage with their supervisors, it's the proactive techniques and approach that supervisors take onboard which starts the engagement to further build trust and foster a psychologically safe workplace. Furthermore, within their respective federal government organizations, participants described that often they need to schedule time with supervisors or approach their supervisor first which revealed that the direction of engagement is most often employee initiated first and foremost; not bi-directional or supervisor initiated. Based on the data, it appears that employees in federal government organizations thrive off engagements, especially when initiated by supervisors which in turn builds trust and psychological safety. Indications are that when supervisors put forth an effort to initiate engagement more, get out the office more, and bring employees together more, then engagement and trust grow.

Interpersonal Supervisor Relationships. The second initial theme in support of the theme enabler to personnel engagement outlines how participants described the interaction and personal relationships with their supervisors. Per participants meaningful narratives, the initial theme interpersonal supervisor relationships were defined as the relationship that employees have with their supervisor in both work and non-work-related areas that helps to build quality rapport and human connections. Several emergent codes were collapsed and combined to validate this initial theme, which included: approachability, feedback process, group discussions, mentoring, and motivation. An overwhelming majority of the participants shared that the positive interpersonal relationships with their supervisor in the workplace instills openness and trust, and further expresses care for one another. All the prementioned aspects support employee's

positive psychological safety according to the shared experiences in the participant narratives. For example, when discussing the openness and level of trust with her supervisor, questionnaire participant Emily stated:

The feeling is that I can talk comfortably and feel that help is provided like a friend or family member would provide. As for trust I have no reservation about approach to my supervisor regarding a work issue or even if appropriate a personal issue that is bothering my work.

In the response by participant Mia regarding her supervisor, she shared:

She is a good talker and a good listener. Actually, she feels more like a friend or just another coworker rather than the boss because of how she treats me and talks to me. It's not like I'm the boss and you do as I say.

Mia added further that, "My supervisor believes in respect and cares deeply about me and my coworkers. She treats everyone as an equal and that brings us closer together as a team." Participant Oliver further added with his response on the relationship with his supervisor saying, "My supervisor asks regularly on how I am doing both in personal and professional aspects. He provides life experiences, listens, and offers assistance to helping." In his response, interview participant Ethan captured the feeling that most participants expressed regarding the importance of interpersonal relationships with their supervisor and stated:

I mean about building that you know interpersonal, I feel like a broken record but building that interpersonal relationship and like you know looking for opportunities to do things outside of work, and you know get to know them get to know somebody as a person so that you know that when you have to do, like the

hard things as the supervisor like discipline or give feedback, you know there's those there's that connective tissue on a different level that you know might not damage the psychological safety.

Likewise, Camila, Emily, and Henry acknowledged that good interpersonal relationships with their supervisor helped to establish an open environment where everyone was allowed to speak up and share their voice. For instance, participant Emily expressed from her experience that the outcome of a positive interpersonal relationship with her supervisor resulted through supervisor behavior based on respect and kindness saying, "When treated with respect, kindness and open-minded behavior I feel more able to speak and interact with anyone in my office, my coworkers or supervisor." Further emphasizing positive behavior associated with supervisor interpersonal relationships, participant Charlotte stated that, "My supervisor takes the time to listen to our complaints." In all, this supports what most participants feel as a result of good supervisor relationships built on mutual respect and trust.

Overall, most participants described supervisor interpersonal relationships as a positive influence on psychological safety and an overall healthy workplace. Furthermore, the notion that supervisor behavior and interpersonal relationships help to reinforce psychological safety also became evident based on participants responses. Fundamentally, the evidence revealed in the participant data showed that supervisor interpersonal relationships, specifically support towards mutual respect and trust in the workplace, strengthened the bonds between employee and supervisor and contributed to a feeling of safety in the workplace.

Conclusion

In summary, the provided participant narratives indicated that when preemptive supervisor engagement is at the forefront, mutual respect and trust ensue. Data also supported the findings that in supervisor interpersonal relationships, positive psychological safety is established in the workplace through levels of trust and openness. According to a majority of participants, engagement initiated and established by their supervisors contributes highly to their comfort and care and fosters a climate of psychological safety. Furthermore, when describing the underlying elements of interpersonal relationships with their supervisors, participants described that not only does psychological safety increase, but through the positive connections much more is able to be accomplished in personal and work life. In contrast participants described that a lack of engagement and positive interpersonal relationships steered them away from supervisors and in many ways silenced their input, which had a negative effect on their human interaction in the workplace and ultimately their psychological safety.

Limitations

In Chapter 1, the researcher identified and discussed the anticipated limitations of the study, given what was known at the start of the investigation. The researcher also introduced mitigating efforts to thwart the anticipated limitations and provided validity and a statement of acceptance of those limitations at that time. As the study progressed, new limitations were later discovered. Using the same approach as introduced during the anticipated limitations, newly discovered limitations that may have had impact were identified, mitigated, and accepted to the best extent possible providing the topic of

discussion for this section. In Chapter 5, the researcher expounded on the limitations discovered through a discussion on the implications for future research.

Limitations are the constraints on generalizability and utility of findings that are the result of how a researcher chooses to design the study and the method used to establish internal and external validity (Christensen & Johnson, 2014; Ioannidis, 2007). Furthermore, limitations reflect those characteristics of design or methodology that impact or influence the application or interpretation of the results of a study (Ioannidis, 2007). This section details the limitations that the researcher documented during the data collection and data analysis phase of the study. As such, in addition to the five anticipated limitations discussed in Chapter 1, four additional limitations were identified. The follow sections provide the additional limitations the researcher experienced during the process of the investigation and details the methods taken to address each limitation.

Limitation One. In the research, the first noticeable limitation was the potential impact of participant reach resulting from the limited recruitment method of participants. The researcher implemented a recruitment method that relied on a LinkedIn private group as the primary means of recruitment. While the decision to use LinkedIn as the primary recruitment method was a deliberate approach based on the COVID-19 pandemic and limiting of the face-to-face exposure, the researcher could not exert full control of the LinkedIn platform nor actively monitor views or reach and thus had limited use of the platform. Therefore, the researcher could not fully control how LinkedIn may have impacted the reach of the recruitment flyer, which ultimately has influence on knowledge, results, and participant attrition.

To address this limitation, the researcher developed a secondary and tertiary recruitment plan, which required the researcher to use purposive snowball sampling (secondary) and posting of the recruitment flyer on his own LinkedIn profile page (tertiary). While true that the primary and secondary recruitment plans were fully invoked and needed, having achieved positive results in the recruitment goals of the study, the tertiary recruitment plan was never needed nor invoked. However, even with reaching recruitment goals, the researcher still lacked the ability to further control the reach and therefore quality of the participants recruited from LinkedIn. Because the researcher deliberately prepared upfront and received IRB approval for alternate recruiting plans, no additional changes were required to support recruitment and study participation, although reach of participants continued to remain limited to a degree.

Through invoking the secondary recruitment plan in support of the primary recruitment plan, the researcher surpassed the necessary goal to recruit a minimum of 40 participants to conduct the open-ended questionnaires and 10 questionnaire respondents to conduct the interviews. As a result, the researcher was able to successfully reach data saturation for the study, particularly because the researcher met the baseline requirements for the questionnaire and interview sample size and had alternate plans of recruitment. Thus, this limitation did not directly impact the transferability or applicability of the results and was unrelated to anticipated limitations identified and accepted in Chapter 1.

Limitation Two. The next limitation in this qualitative descriptive study was the researcher's background and experiences as a federal government employee. Although mitigating efforts were taken to thwart this limitation, the mere existence posed a threat which could have introduced self-bias and prejudice during data collection, data analysis,

and interpretation of the results. Based on the researcher's background as a federal government employee, reflexivity and bracketing were absolutely necessary before, during, and after every interview to remain mindful of any preconceived notions that could have transpired as a result of the participants verbal and non-verbal communications. Given the deliberate use of bracketing and reflexivity, transferability was enhanced in the study to allow the application of the research in other settings and context. While not directly related to an anticipated limitation identified in Chapter 1, previous mitigation efforts that acknowledged the researchers background as federal government employee were instrumental in identifying and addressing this limitation.

Limitation Three. The third limitation in the study was the restrictions the researcher imposed through the selection of the target location. This limitation was similar and expanded on the anticipated limitation of the target population previously discussed in Chapter 1. In all, geographical location was a limitation of the study because the researcher made a deliberate decision to explore the experiences of employees in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii. Based on feasibility, ability to execute the study, and the existing COVID-19 pandemic, restraints to achieving a greater sample size were experienced.

The researcher deemed it to be safe and feasible, given the pandemic, to carry out the research isolated to federal government organizations in Hawaii which was a subset unexplored in psychological safety. Additionally, due to the diverse workforce in Hawaii where the Asian and Pacific-Islander population is more dominant within the workplace (Chou, 2010; Okamura, 1980), the researcher felt this limitation was acceptable given the unique global benefits that the microcosm found in Hawaii represents. This same

rationale was presented and accepted in the similar anticipated limitation of target population mentioned in Chapter 1.

To mitigate this limitation further, the researcher provided in-depth details in the selection of the methodology, research design, recruitment strategy, and data collection and analysis procedures for enhanced transferability and applicability. With that, the researcher recognized that the findings of the study may only be applicable to federal government employees in Hawaii and therefore may not be transferable to other regions of the United States or within non-governmental organizations. However, given the limited research on psychological safety influence in government, especially at the United States Federal level and within Hawaii, this limitation was accepted.

Limitation Four. The final limitation in the study was the researcher's lack of experience in qualitative research and study design. Education in qualitative research and implementation of the fundamentals of descriptive design requires developing the requisite skillset to effectively execute a study plan that can recruit participants and collect data for research analysis. No matter what type of research one pursues, the process of research familiarization and technique takes time and dedication over many years, which the researcher had little benefit of at the time of this study. Likewise, the practice of interviewing and familiarity with the research tools SurveyMonkey, Zoom, and MAXQDA software, which were instrumental to the success of the study, were limited.

To mitigate the identified limitation of research experience, the researcher leveraged an expert panel of scholars to review the researcher developed data sources, which included the open-ended questionnaire and the semi-structured interview

protocols. In addition, the researcher instituted a field test using the expert panel reviewed protocols to provide familiarity with the data sources and protocols and to practice the art of data collection and research. Implementing the aforementioned details and approach in the research enhanced the transferability of the study by providing in-depth details of the steps taken to ensure there was trustworthiness and adequate rigor throughout the study. Although this was obvious, as the researcher in the study was a novice, it was not previously recognized or discussed in the anticipated limitations in Chapter 1. The lack of experience required for scholarly research was a naïve perspective that could have been detrimental to the outcome of the study had the researcher failed to acknowledge and mitigate once identified.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. In Chapter 4 an overview of the study with the results of the qualitative investigation were provided. Additionally, a detailed description of the data analysis procedures and the limitations present in the study were discussed. Finally, results from the study on the phenomenon of psychological safety were presented using evidence and descriptive and visual representations supportive of the findings.

Psychological safety, a belief by which individuals in an organization feel empowered to contribute to organizational change (Edmondson & Lei, 2014), was limited in understanding in various organization constructs, more specifically in the context of how government employees described their real-life accounts of the

phenomenon in the beginning stage of this investigation. Although previous research in the field of psychological safety had been largely explored using quantitative methods, as revealed in the review of literature, the fact remained that lived accounts of psychological safety in U.S. federal government organizations were left unexplored. Additionally, resultant from the review of literature in Chapter 2 and scholar recommendations, a framework supportive of the investigation into the personal accounts of psychological safety as impacted by leadership in various organizational settings such as government were considered (Frazier & Tupper; Maximo et al., 2019; Page et al., 2019).

Using a descriptive design and supporting framework to explore the real-life accounts of the phenomenon of supervisor influence on psychological safety from the government employee perspective was deemed the best approach given the lack of such personal accounts which are best described through a qualitative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019; Neergaard et al., 2009; Sandelowski, 2010; Siedlecki, 2020). The results of this investigation into the psychological safety phenomenon in U.S. federal government organizations, in response to the prior gap in knowledge, provides future researchers and practitioners key focus areas to improve on as a result of the lived accounts of government employees.

The phenomenon investigated was how government employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety. Using a qualitative descriptive research design, the researcher collected the lived experiences of psychological safety in the government workplace, focusing on the need to explore from a participant account rather than an abstract theoretical process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019; Sandelowski, 2010; Yin, 2017). To aid in the investigation of real-world accounts

of the explored phenomenon, the researcher utilized a researcher-developed, open-ended questionnaire and researcher developed semi-structured interview protocol based on recommendations from existing research and the constructed theoretical foundation of this study. The researcher-developed protocols were crafted in alignment with the intent and purpose of the study and validated by a panel of three scholarly experts.

To ensure effective development of research protocols, the review of literature, the subsequent gap in research identified, and the recommendation for individual accounts of the phenomenon were both important and necessary in the design of the protocols. Given that previous research largely explored psychological safety in for-profit organizations, the study instruments focused in on individualized levels of a non-profit organization, putting the governmental construct and the individual components of the organization such as supervisor influence, leadership behavior, and organizational policy at the forefront of the investigation based on scholar recommendations (Edmondson, 2018; Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Javed et al., 2019; Maximo et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017).

Therefore, given the review of literature detailed in Chapter 2 and the recommendations of prior research detailed in the background section of Chapter 1, the purpose, research questions, and investigative protocols used to conduct this study helped to not only advance the knowledge of psychological safety in non-profit organizations, but also filled a gap in the existing literature of how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in federal government organizations. To guide the investigation, the following research questions were posed in this qualitative descriptive study:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

The research questions ultimately provided the roadmap for data collection, analysis, and development of the overarching themes, which in turn addressed the research problem of the study. Notably, in the findings, the study participants shared that their psychological safety in the workplace received influence resultant from a level of humanistic connections developed based on good interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, participants addressed the role supervisors, coworkers, policies, and procedures play in fostering a workplace environment that is free of repercuSSION and institutionally a psychologically safe space; thus, forcing them to reflect and institute behavior and processes that support psychological safety.

In general, participants described their organizations as good proponents of psychological safety, describing that for the most part all are respected and encouraged to speak up. However, there were concerns by participants that not enough understanding of psychological safety overall was evident in their organization, suggesting that training in psychological safety may be required. In addition, a condition of perception versus reality by upper-level leadership was described by participants, as they found their federal organization leadership lacked the necessary soft skills of approachability, transparency, and connection with employees at all levels in the organization. Participants described that beyond their immediate supervisor, the level of engagement diminishes working up to and at the highest levels of the organization, who were described as out of touch. This

was in addition to the leadership ability of supervisors within the organization and area that participants were keenly concerned and associated with.

As it turns out, results indicate that transformational leadership is essential to a culture of cohesiveness, inclusion, and inspirational motivation that fosters psychological safety and speaking up in federal government organizations. This is in congruence with previous research suggesting that the transformational leadership construct helps motivate and compel others through a leader's charismatic efforts to guide individuals toward a goal (Al-edenat, 2018; Anderson, 2017). Findings from the study suggest that much more investing in the cultivation of cultures of psychological safety in federal government organizations, especially in written policy and procedure is needed. This outcome presents that psychological safety in federal government organizations is beneficial to both organizational leaders and employees of the target population to further their well-being and productivity.

In conclusion, Chapter 4 presented the data analysis procedures, based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidance using the six-step thematic analysis process. Findings for the study were collected using a researcher-developed open-ended questionnaire consisting of 46 participants and a researcher-developed semi-structured one-on-one interview consisting of 14 participants. Overall, the study produced a total of 58.5 single-spaced 12pt. Times New Roman questionnaire responses and 16 hours and 28 minutes of audio with 278 single-spaced 12pt. Times New Roman transcript pages from the one-on-one semi-structured interviews. From the cyclical review of the collected data, the researcher developed a combined 112 emerging codes upon observance of clusters and through the implementation of pattern coding, resulting in 10 initial themes, and six

overarching themes. In this chapter the researcher explained how the six overarching themes were developed from the raw data, providing documentary evidence to support the themes and research questions in the study. The findings and results of the study were then presented and summarized in a logical and descriptive manner.

The themes developed in this research included: impactful to motivation and quality of work, supportive network that is family like, all-inclusive environment, commitment that affects employee needs, agent of change to organizational barriers, and enabler to personnel engagement. Impactful to motivation and quality of work, included the initial themes: importance of psychological safety and aspects of psychological safety. The theme was relevant to RQ1 and focused on the motivational impacts of a positive psychologically safe environment and the quality of the organizational output. The second theme, supportive network that is family like, included the initial themes coworker interaction and support and interpersonal coworker relationships. The theme was relevant to RQ1 and focused on how the ideal psychologically safe construct in the workplace is described by employees as "family like" in design. The third theme, all-inclusive environment, was relevant to RQ1 and focused on the supportive and all-inclusive environment that the organization fosters within a safe workplace and consisted of the initial theme: workplace policies encouraging safe speak.

The fourth theme, commitment that affects employee needs, was relevant to RQ2 and focused on the free flowing and flexible commitment by leadership that acknowledges people and not just "the employee." The initial themes for the fourth theme included: supervisor commitment to employee needs and supervisor soft skills. The fifth theme, agent of change to organizational barriers, was relevant to RQ2 and focused on an

attempt to change the rigid structure in an organization by breaking down barriers and expanding the organizational engagement and consisted of the initial theme: senior leadership commitment. The sixth and final theme, enabler to personnel engagement, included the initial themes: supervisor engagement and trust and interpersonal supervisor relationships. The theme was relevant to RQ2 and focused on how participants described the bi-directional efforts that strengthen personnel engagement across all facets of the organization.

Finally, the study limitations and their impact were explained within this chapter. The noticeable limitations that had impact in the study included: the selected recruitment strategy, the self-bias and prejudice, geographical restraints, and the researcher's novice experience in conducting research. In Chapter 5 a detailed discussion surrounding the prior research using contrast and comparison to the study findings is presented, to include both the practical and future implications of the research, the recommendations for future research, an overall reflection of the problem space, and a holistic reflection of the dissertation process from the perspective of the researcher.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction and Summary of Study

This qualitative descriptive study investigated the phenomenon of psychological safety in federal government organizations. The phenomenon was explored by investigating various accounts of individuals who had a first-hand experience of the problem space, which was supervisor influence on individual perceptions of psychological safety, as described in detail in Chapters 1 and 2 of the study. Significant perspectives explored in this phenomenon include how individuals perceived psychological safety within their organization, the commitment of the organization to psychological safety, and supervisor influence on psychological safety. In Chapter 5, a summary of the study findings delves into how the developed themes in Chapter 4 addressed the research questions. The study findings were observed through a theoretical lens comprised of transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and psychosocial safety climate theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010), and focused on addressing the problem space and purpose through two defined research questions discussed throughout the entirety of this study.

To effectively conduct the study of this phenomenon, two data instruments based on recommendations from existing research and the constructed theoretical foundation were developed. The data instruments developed by the researcher consisted of an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview protocol evaluated and validated by a panel of three scholars. Once the protocols were developed and validated as detailed in Chapter 3, approvals to commence the study were undertaken and IRB approval was obtained. Following IRB approval, the researcher moved forward to initiate the study and

began the process of recruitment and data collection as detailed extensively in Chapters 3 and 4. Following data collection, the process of cleaning and preparing the data were conducted to then initiate the data analysis phase, also detailed extensively in Chapters 3 and 4.

To conduct the data analysis phase of this study, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis procedures were followed. First, the researcher became familiar with the collected data by listening to recorded audio and by reading and re-reading interview transcripts and questionnaire responses, avoiding any opinions or self-bias that could lead to preconceived patterns, codes, themes, or categories. Following several intensive reads that paid particular attention to points of analytical significance, the researcher then began the inductive open-coding descriptive process to hand-code the data that involved searching for emergent codes, based on patterns, words, and phrases revealed through in vivo and participant choice of words revealed from within the data.

Next, the researcher began the process of identifying themes within the data, by grouping repetitive patterns to establish potential initial themes, which leveraged the process of pattern coding, or piecing together code clusters, emerging from natural participant descriptions (Saldaña, 2021). Finally, in the remaining steps, four, five, and six, the researcher analyzed and defined the emergent themes through comparison and contrast, named and defined the themes to clarify their significance as answers to the research questions, and produced a detailed written narrative of the findings in Chapter 4 that produced a depiction and interpretation of the data through supporting evidence (e.g., codes, frequencies of codes, quotations). The thematic analysis of the data also detailed extensively in Chapter 3 and 4, yielded six major themes related to the phenomenon of

psychological safety in federal government organizations, including: impactful to motivation and quality of work, supportive network that is family like, all-inclusive environment, commitment that affects employee needs, agent of change to organizational barriers, and enabler to personnel engagement. The overarching and prevalent themes then helped to answer the research questions posed in the study to provide results and new knowledge in the field of psychological safety as detailed in Chapter 4. Through a synthesis of the findings, Chapter 5 expounds further on the results and prevalent themes to discuss and explain the lived phenomenon of psychological safety in federal government organizations.

To further emphasize the importance of the study and to piece together the findings and conclusions in Chapter 5, it is crucial to remember that the phenomenon that is psychological safety, is a belief by which individuals in an organization feel empowered to contribute to organizational change (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). An understanding of this belief was largely an unknown in governmental settings during the onset of this investigation, specifically in the context of how government employees described the lived phenomenon. In a review and critical analysis of existing empirical research, detailed in Chapter 2, the researcher uncovered a dearth of information in leader influence on psychological safety and personal accounts of the phenomenon within federal government organizations. Those findings sparked the discovery of a gap in knowledge and therefore the need for this investigation into psychological safety.

The need to explore the psychological safety phenomenon resulted from a lack of qualitative empirical data on the influence of leaders on psychological safety in the context of non-profit organizations (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Page

et al., 2019). To date there had been little investigation of leader influence on psychological safety, as a component of organizational culture, to determine its impact on employee work engagement and productivity (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Page et al., 2019). The research findings presented in Chapter 4 and further discussed in Chapter 5 are critical to the field of psychological safety, as it advances the collective understanding of supervisor influence on employee perceptions of psychological safety, especially in the context of federal government organizations (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019). The findings from this study provide insight into how supervisors and leadership in government organizations can foster psychological safety in the workplace through policies, practices, and meaningful employee relationships. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisor's influence on psychological safety in the workplace.

For the remainder of Chapter 5, the researcher provides a detailed summary of the findings and conclusions that were developed and detailed in Chapter 4, including a comprehensive reflection of the dissertation process. Building upon the findings presented in Chapter 4, the sections in this chapter expand further and provide a detailed description of the phenomena in a synthesized format as told through the eyes of individuals that lived them and as translated through a meticulous thematic analysis of those accounts. Also presented in this chapter, is the discussion on the theoretical, practical, and future implications for the study. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a report of the strengths and weaknesses of the study and discusses the recommendations for future practice and research, including a holistic reflection of the identified problem space.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Overall Organization

This section of Chapter 5 outlines the findings and conclusions from the research study in the field of psychological safety and is organized and presented by theme in relationship to the research question each theme addressed. The research questions in this study guided the investigation of how federal government employees described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The combination of the transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and the psychosocial safety climate theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) provided guidance for the research questions and the development of data collection protocols to address the research problem of the study. Transformational leadership theory provided a lens for the interaction and influence of leaders, and psychosocial safety climate theory provided a guide into the exploration of employees' perceived leader influences on psychological safety. In all, this qualitative descriptive study had two research questions that it sought to answer:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

Using the research questions as a guide and the theoretical framework as a lens to look at and explore the problem, prevalent themes were identified to successfully aid in answering the research questions. Through a thematic analysis of the data and synthesis of emergent codes from participant accounts, six overarching themes were identified and

developed. The six themes identified included: impactful to motivation and quality of work, supportive network that is family like, all-inclusive environment, commitment that affects employee needs, agent of change to organizational barriers, and enabler to personnel engagement. The six themes were then used to directly address the two research questions. The following section identifies the relationship of theme to research question (RQ), which was previously discussed in Chapter 4.

Themes that supported RQ1 included: impactful to motivation and quality of work, supportive network that is family like, and all-inclusive environment. Themes that supported RQ2 included: commitment that affects employee needs, agent of change to organizational barriers, and enabler to personnel engagement. A summary of the prevalent themes and how each theme related to the literature and study methodology discussed in Chapters 1 through 3 of this study, as well as how each theme related to the research questions is discussed further in this chapter. Finally, a discussion on the advancement of knowledge and significance of the study is detailed with a presentation of the conclusions.

In the following sections, a summary of findings and conclusions from the research are organized and presented. Following the same outline delivered in the results section of Chapter 4, the discussion is organized by theme and associated RQ that each theme addressed. With that, RQ1 supported by themes one through three and RQ2 supported by themes four through six are presented.

Theme 1: Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of mutual respect to share ideas to enhance personal and professional performance (RQ1). The results of the study revealed that

participant's perception of psychological safety impact their desire and motivation to come to work and contribute to work and therefore affected the quality of output. The initial themes that were grouped together to develop this theme included: importance of psychological safety and aspects of psychological safety, which aided in answering the first research question of how federal government employees described the psychological safety in their workplace. The findings from this study align with the review of the literature in Chapter 2 supportive of a trusting and respectful workplace environment that supports psychological safety, which previous research has shown (Kim et al., 2020). In prior studies, researchers found a similar link and suggested that for employees to feel free in communicating and idea-sharing they must feel that aspects of psychological safety are implemented and enforced in the workplace to provide satisfaction, trust, and respect (Edmondson, 2018; Geiger et al., 2020; Rogers & Ashforth, 2017).

Thus, through an organization's acknowledgement of psychological safety and focus on the underlying aspects of psychological safety, employees feel motivated to support goals and a shared vision that encourages employees to respond in ways that will contribute to the adapting needs of the organization (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). This suggests that the supportive nature of psychological safety in the organization has a direct impact on the motivation and ultimately the quality of employee output. Therefore, the findings revealed are critical to the first theme given that the descriptors provided within the initial themes revealed that participants quality of work and willingness to put forth a concerted effort towards work was influenced by their organizations commitment towards psychological safety.

Importance of Psychological Safety. Questionnaire and interview participants of the study frequently expressed that psychological safety was a foundational aspect important to a multitude of organizational layers, including motivation to contribute, thus describing the importance of psychological safety as high within their respective organizations. Prior research discussed in Chapter 2, identified that psychological safety of the organization promotes the continuous and active seeking of information when employees feel safe and valued, which in turn increases the willingness by employees to share ideas that improve organizational adaptation (Dhanesh, 2020; Geiger et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020). The findings of this study, as they relate to employee's perception of psychological safety and its impact, were consistent with prior research, as most participants expressed that the importance of psychological safety centers around the belief that layers of the organizational construct directly impacted their ability to do the best work possible. For example, Jack shared in his narrative that the importance of psychological safety and the impact it had on his own motivation affected his ability to contribute and restricted his efforts towards work quality due to a lack of actions in his organization, stating that:

Actions don't...actions don't align with the words most of the time okay, only when it's convenient. Well, I you know I like to come to work to be allowed to do the best I can do, every day, but it doesn't seem like that I'm allowed to do the best I can do every day it's only it's what they allow me to do.

When describing his experience, interview participant Alexander corroborated the overall feeling that federal government organizations supported a safe space to work, which in turn was both motivating and impactful on the quality of work output. With that

Alexander stated, “my quality of work has steadily improved.” Alexander went further to state, “yeah absolutely my psychological safety has directly and positively impacted my quality of work as a direct and positive relationship.”

To expound, one need only look at the previous work of Kahn (1990) who not only asserted that increased engagement enables employee desire and responsibility to the organization, but that engagement itself is influenced by the psychological aspects of the organization. The importance in the contrast that both Jack and Alexander shared is that when organizations raise the level of importance of psychological safety, a direct impact on employee work and quality of work through influence of engagement is observed.

The overarching narrative the researcher observed by participants regarding the importance of psychological safety was that when employees feel safe at work, they are more open to engage. This includes working on projects, solving problems, being collaborative and working with stakeholders external to their own organization. Therefore, as prior research has suggested, when organizations build a supportive and psychologically safe workplace, employees believe their well-being is at the forefront and therefore trust and engagement in the organization is obtained (Liu et al., 2020). In turn employees will contribute and put forth their best effort to support the organization overall.

Aspects of Psychological Safety. Prior research found that organizational climate affects productivity, motivation, and employee satisfaction and is proportionate to employee performance and efficiency (Hu, Erdogan, et al., 2018; Trinchero et al., 2020). As a result of participant descriptors, the researcher of this study found that while federal

government organizations did provide a safe space to work, they lacked an explicit emphasis towards their efforts to increase aspects of psychological safety, such as open communication and collaborative space. Through lack of these efforts of open communication and support for collaborative space, federal government organizations signaled a lack of value and inclusion within their employees that prior research deemed to be supportive of the high team spirit significant to quality and productivity (Kahn, 1990; Kahn & Heaphy, 2013). Overall participants expressed concern regarding aspects of communication, engagement, collaboration, problem solving, and safe space to work that are indicative of psychological safety. For example, Daniel shared:

When employees feel safe at work, it's more open to engage. This includes working on projects together, solving problems, collaboration and working with other stakeholders external to the organization.

In essence the researcher found that the participant descriptions regarding aspects of psychological safety were congruent with prior research which suggested that openness and effective communications contribute to psychological safety and therefore build employee contributions through creativity (Hu, Erdogan, et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2017). Furthermore, the researcher discovered that participant's feeling of the aspect of value towards their input was in alignment with prior research which suggested that a psychologically safe workplace results in innovation that produces quality output of the organization (Kahn, 1990; Kahn & Heaphy, 2013; Newman et al., 2017).

Theme 2: Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of innovation and respect where people are valued and treated like family (RQ1). The findings from the research study also revealed that

employees in federal government organizations valued and thrived from the coworker interaction they experience within their workplace. Under the first research question, the study explored how federal government employees described the psychological safety in their workplace. In an underlying component of this research question, the researcher sought to understand how influence from others affected the ability to feel psychologically safe. The initial themes nested under theme two included: coworker interaction and support and interpersonal coworker relationships. Multiple codes, including family, mutual respect, receptive, supportive, understanding, and we can relate assisted with the development of the initial themes within this overarching theme.

Coworker Interaction and Support. Resultant from the data, evidence that a positive environment of psychological safety in federal organizations does exist continued to emerge. An underlying revelation of psychological safety by participants were the narratives describing the coworker support network that employees felt fostered and perpetuated their positive and safe connectivity in the workplace. In prior research, Stephen et al. (2020) discovered that through psychological safety individuals feel safe to express feelings, accept mistakes, and interact without worry of embarrassment from their peers. Prior research as well as the findings in this study indicate that a healthy environment where employees support each other in psychological safety has a positive effect, especially when a supportive peer-to-peer network is established.

For most participants the perception of a healthy coworker support network was a result of their positive psychological safety climate. Some participants, including Camila and Sophia shared an experience that was almost family like in design, offering what they described as the same intimate support experienced by their own blood-related family

members. For example, Camila shared that her coworkers were, “all open to listening and also like to talk story. We share ideas and talk about random things because it just feels good. I feel like my work family is really tight and I could talk with them about most anything.” Sophia in a similar response shared that her coworkers were, “like family or ohana is what we like to say.” Abigail also shared the same sentiment when discussing the ups and downs that real families endure saying, “we’re comfortable with each other, it’s like a family, you have your you know your ups and your downs but we’re a family, we just have to learn how to you know, work with each other, like how a normal family would have to you know.” She went on further to say, “it just makes me feel good that you can voice your opinion, you can be heard, and you can be part of the solution...they encourage you to do that so yeah it would be more like you’re part of the team you’re part of a family that cares about you as a person because they’re actually listening.”

The results of this revelation in the data aligned with prior research suggesting that psychological safety supports the social norms that build trust and interpersonal relationships and therefore allows freedom of expression where fear and rejection are minimized (Boylan & Turner, 2017). Research by Kahn and Heaphy (2013) also aligned with this discovery highlighting that both engagement and disengagement of employees is directly related to psychological safety built through relationships and norms within the organization. Finally, according to Chaudhary (2019) an organization with open and safe interpersonal relationships places employees in a good position that fosters teamwork through engagement. Contained within the results of this study was the participant observance that psychological safety enables relationships where individuals are better

positioned to work together and support each other through social connections considered “family like” within the workplace.

Interpersonal Coworker Relationships. Through a second initial theme, further support of the theme supportive network that is family like outlined how participants observed the interaction and human connections from coworkers as supportive to their psychologically safe workplace. In prior research by Kolbe et al. (2020), when individuals are supportive of psychological safety with each other, positive outcomes in daily work and daily performance increased. Through the meaningful participant descriptions, coworker interpersonal relationships were considered the mechanism by which good human connection and effective information flow begins to occur, an element needed in a psychologically safe working team (Kim et al., 2020).

While previous studies discerned the influence and aspects of supervisor interpersonal relationships with employees in teams, little was revealed in the context of employee-to-employee interpersonal relationships. Other than suggestions that a relationship between individual behavior and influence on psychological safety exist (Frazier et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2020; Roussin et al., 2018), contributions of individual behavior and the influence introduced on the concept of psychological safety in work outcomes was largely left open and recommended for future research. Additionally, while Kahn and Heaphy (2013) suggested that the engagement of employees is directly related to psychological safety through interpersonal relationships, they failed to clearly distinguish between the areas of supervisor versus coworker interpersonal relationships. Likewise, Kahn (1990) and Shuck et al. (2011) asserted that the level of engagement depends on the employee interpersonal relationships, especially with the leaders of the

company or the organization, leaving the distinction of the employee-to-employee interpersonal relationships vague in their results.

What the researcher discovered from this study was that starting from the coworker level, interpersonal relationship appeared to significantly impact the positive feelings that employees experienced in the workplace. For example, Zoey shared the following when discussing the freedom she felt in the workplace to openly share her thoughts and ideas stating, “nothing but encouragement and we have never had a situation where I or any of my coworkers have been accused of pushing a "bad" idea.” Additionally, Oliver highlighted his satisfaction in the influence coworker interpersonal relationships had on him describing how those relationships build bonds both in and out of the workplace, stating:

Building that relationship, with our peers, of course, the interpersonal relationship, you know we share phone numbers talk story keep work we have between some of my coworkers, we talked about you know we'll talk about non-work-related stuff sports politics family things going on with the family, video games, you know hobbies and stuff like that we'll talk about all of those things.

What this reveals, based on participant responses, is that coworker relationships in addition to supervisor relationships are important to building bonds that increase engagement and productivity in a workplace that is psychologically safe. This outcome points back to the studies of Kahn (1990) and affirms that individual engagement in the workplace can be directly influenced based on the state of psychological safety.

In the same context the results of this study suggest that at the coworker level of the organizational hierarchy, interpersonal relationships are just as important, or more

important, than those higher up the organizational structure. As Subhakaran and Dyaram (2018) suggest, different organizational hierarchies have different levels of psychological safety within an organization. These management hierarchies also have a great influence on the level at which an employee is engaged, which the research suggest could start with coworkers and their influence on psychological safety.

Theme 3: Federal government employees describe psychological safety in the workplace as an environment of inclusion and respect with policies and practices that support safety and open communication (RQ1). In the third overall theme, and last in support of research question one, which explored how federal government employees described the psychological safety in their workplace, the findings revealed that a supportive and all-inclusive environment was crucial to establishing the fundamentals of psychological safety such as safety in speaking up, innovation, and sharing of information. To that regard, Kang and Min (2019) suggested that for a leader to create a stable workforce in a non-profit organization, leaders must first create a psychologically safe workplace.

Expounding further, prior research suggests that in non-profit organizations, such as government, a psychologically safe environment means that leaders need to focus on promoting a friendly working environment that allows employees to become involved in the decision-making process through openness and voice (Ghani & Hyder, 2020; Tu et al., 2019). Additionally, according to Webb (2018), organizations in the non-profit sector perform better when they make employees feel ownership in the organization. Likewise, the findings of this study suggest that an inclusive environment is relevant and important for government organizations where employee monetary gains are less than that of a for-

profit organization.

In the data gathered through this qualitative study, the researcher discovered that organizational policies and practices played an instrumental role in how a federal government workplace was perceived as inclusive and free for all to speak up. Within each narrative, participants expressed their unique experience of inclusion and speaking up in the workplace that highlighted the importance that psychological safety brings to these aspects in the workplace. Resultant of participant narratives, the emergence of the initial theme workplace policies encouraging safe speak became evident as participants shared their perception of policy and practices carried out by their organization to encourage employees to freely speak up.

Workplace Policies Encouraging Safe Speak. Resulting from the data an important initial theme surrounding workplace policies revealed that organizations build psychological safety by encouraging safe speaking space for all employees. This practice by management directly relates to how the organization and supervisors develop and implement policy and practices that encourage speaking up and ultimately inclusion by all. In all, findings from the data suggest that workplace policies encouraging safe speak within federal government organizations help to encourage the important aspect of psychological safety, the ability to safely speak up. As perceived by study participants, the encouragement and opportunity that organizations provide on their ability to safely speak up regarding issues and concerns is an important aspect of overall psychological safety in the workplace, providing the much-needed feeling of inclusion and being heard.

For instance, Henry shared the tone of encouragement that his supervisor expressed, saying, “He listens first then provides feedback after which allows me to get

my point across before he critiques the ideas. This way allows me to say what I have to say, and I feel heard rather than brushed off.” Ethan added that what his organization does well is provide encouragement that signals inclusion stating, “what this organization does well, is that they truly value, you know they value feedback and solicit input from like from everybody regardless of rank or time in service.” In a direct tie to previous psychological safety research regarding encouragement and inclusion in psychological safety, Roussin et al. (2018) described the link between increased employee voice and psychological safety asserting that individual perception of management focus on a psychologically safe and empathetic environment results in employees speaking up.

Additionally, as Tu et al. (2019) stated, an organization that is both supportive and free is indicative of a psychologically safe environment since employee voice is both representative and equal to that of management's voice. Therefore, inclusive organizations provide both a sense of mutual respect and equality in the workforce supportive to a psychologically safe working environment. In the results from this research the observation was that federal government organizations provide encouragement and inclusion through management practices that encourage employees to speak up.

Theme 4: Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as impactful to the basic human need of feeling safe and the willingness to openly express oneself (RQ2). In the fourth overall theme and first of three themes supportive of research question two, which explored how federal government employees describe their supervisor's influence on psychological safety in their workplace, the data revealed a keen desire for sincere human connectivity within the organization. Based on the data, participants described

commitment that affects employee needs as the free flowing and flexible commitment by leadership that acknowledges people and not just “the employee.”

While most participants expressed the perception that their federal government organization was a psychologically safe workplace, much emerged in the data surrounding the need for a humanistic approach by leaders. It is the approach by leaders that previous research has asserted is influential to the outcome of how employees experience psychological safety. Based on previous studies by Frazier et al. (2017) and Yi et al. (2017), the process of leadership engagement can ultimately determine the team members’ extent of feeling safe. Additionally, when referring to leadership behavior, Chughtai (2016) asserts that leadership within an organization has a direct effect on the psychological safety climate an organization creates through employee inspiration and voice. Therefore, how employees perceive engagement by leadership is important, especially if it appeals to the human side of the employee.

The initial themes under theme four included: supervisor commitment to employee needs and supervisor soft skills. Emerging codes used to support this theme included: approachability, committed, considerate, and interpersonal relationships. In the context of the study, this theme is significant as it reveals how federal government employees described their leaderships approach towards the employee and how the employee felt that leadership could strengthen that approach towards the humanistic side, providing support towards a psychologically safety workplace.

Supervisor Commitment to Employee Needs. Within the data the researcher noted that under the overarching theme of commitment that affects employee needs there emerged an underlying initial theme surrounding supervisor commitment to employee’s

needs. Supervisor commitment to employee needs, as defined through the participant narratives, is the feeling and desire that employees seek from their supervisor to support their basic human needs in the workplace. Significant codes that validated this initial theme included: difference of opinions, listening behavior, makes times for others, and open-door policy.

Revealed in the participant narratives, supervisor support for employee needs comes primarily from the immediate supervisors who employees have the most routine and opportunistic interaction with at work. This revelation suggests that as employees interact with leadership above their supervisor, the commitment to their need's declines. The detriment to this decline in leadership commitment is the overwhelming impact it has downstream as supervisors and employees develop conclusions on overall commitment to efforts such as psychological safety. As Frazier et al. (2017) indicated, employees become attuned to their leader's behaviors, drawing specific information from the leader's actions about what remains accepted and what is to be expected in the workplace.

For the most part participants shared that their supervisors often lacked the necessary skills and processes to genuinely care for people. In fact, many participants felt supervisors viewed things through the lens of work more often than not, leaving personal issues at the door. For example, when speaking about his supervisor, Benjamin stated that he would like for his organization to become more of an organization “where even managers listen to my opinion,” suggesting that everyone may not be treated or seen as equals to enable a feeling of value. According to previous research by Liu et al. (2018), leaders have a positive influence on psychological safety when they promote feedback,

approachability, and transparency. Therefore, when an employees feel discarded or that their voice is unheard, then they begin to decline in their willingness to approach leadership with ideas and feedback.

On the other hand, when supervisors are approachable and trustworthy, the end result is leadership influence on the perceived commitment to establish a safe and psychologically safe workplace. In fact, Liu et al. (2018) suggest leaders are uniquely positioned to exert influence on the insight their juniors have in concerning areas such as psychological safety in the workplace. Through discussion and open dialogue that is open, free flowing, and appealing to the humanistic side of people, leadership commitment to psychological safety is reinforced. For example, when Abigail talked of her supervisor's commitment, she mentioned the freedom to talk about anything stating, "she's always, her door is always open...for me to go into her office to talk about things and I like that, because she has an open-door policy where we can just go to her office and just you know talk to her about anything." Abigail's perception of her supervisor was one that described listening, openness, and commitment to her needs and safety in a human sense. In previous research, Javed et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of leadership commitment to employees, concluding that leadership actions and behaviors stimulate open communication, which is likely to have an optimistic effect on the application of psychological safety.

Supervisor Soft Skills. In addition to supervisor commitment overall, participants also described their description of the necessary supervisor soft skills such as communication and collaboration needed to sustain their psychological safety. According to participants, the area of supervisor soft skills was instrumental in providing strength to

personal connections and encouragement of the human connection between supervisor and employee. For example, in his response, James shared:

I've talked about the overarching many of the supervisors many of leadership have that personal engagement when they come to a meeting, whether it be a one-on-one meeting I mean it could be stopping in the hallway and talking to somebody but that personal engagement.

The feeling that James described supports what previous research showed in that skills of engagement, encouragement, and active participation, enable leaders to further create bonds between supervisor and employee to build human connections and safety in the workplace that enable individuals to achieve success at task and teamwork (Kim et al., 2020). As Iqbal et al. (2020) asserted, leaders depend on the employees for production while employees depend on the leaders to create a psychologically safe environment.

Overall, the data from this study supported the notion that participants felt that their psychological safety was positive but hinged on the need for supervisors to extend a more humanist approach to each employee. The results of the data suggests that through engagement, communication, and a proactive approach, supervisors promote and influence the workplace psychological safety through explicit commitment towards the humanist side of the employee. Through a humanistic approach, supervisors open a door into a work zone that previous researchers deemed psychologically safe through fundamental skills and commitment that builds therapeutic communication and underlying trust (Kahn, 1990; Turner & Harder, 2018; Vandekerckhof et al., 2018).

Theme 5: Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as a measure of investment in employee

value and worth that impacts employee engagement and collaboration (RQ2). In theme five, which was supportive of research question two, participant narratives suggest leadership, especially upper leadership, are considered out of touch with employees and the general perception of psychological safety in their workplace. This revelation in the data surrounding an out of touch perception of leadership exposes an issue within federal government organizational hierarchies that employees perceived to be influential on the organization's commitment to psychological safety. Within theme five, there were several emergent codes grouped together, including but not limited to: acknowledge problems, care for people, and lack of transparency.

In research conducted by Kahn (1990), management style adopted for the organization determines the level of employee engagement and thus influences the organizational performance. Based on Kahn's prior research and the participant revelations that the employee-leader relationships are distant and out of touch, effects on individual employee engagement can ultimately lead to a decline in psychological safety. For example, Aiden shared that his perception of senior leadership was that "management is unapproachable and distant. I have never spoken to them about anything and avoid them where I can because they just seem out of touch and don't care." Emma replied that all senior leadership needs to do is just, "see the problem," which she shared often seems ignored on purpose or unintentionally. What this revealed to the researcher is that a difference in how employees perceived psychological safety in contrast to senior leaders in a government organization may be present. Additionally, the unique government organizational construct and overall impact on psychological safety is not surprising given that according to Subhakaran and Dyaram (2018), different organizational

hierarchies have different levels of psychological safety within an organization. Therefore, perceptions of the organizations psychological safety may appear different throughout a government organization, especially at the senior leader level, given the rigid and often barrier ridden hierarchy.

Senior Leadership Commitment. Resultant of the participant narratives, one initial theme was enveloped under this theme that further revealed a need for improvement in the way employees view senior leadership commitment. In essence, the underlying participant narratives supported the notion that the organizational hierarchy within a federal government organization is one that is rigid with boundaries, rank, and structure and therefore creates barriers to the implementation and perception of psychological safety in the workplace. For example, when speaking about his organization's senior leadership, Henry shared, "I think they listen, but I don't get to have much interaction with them in the so called "big castle" so I think it could be better if I actually received feedback on ideas or got to talk more face to face."

In another participant response, Aiden discussed his perception of senior leadership, and expressed trust only at his immediate supervisor level indicating a different perception of his top leadership saying, "The distance from any kind of management who might care about anything I have to say insulates me from any retaliation. Upper management might be unpleasant and exploitative, but I trust my immediate supervisor." According to prior research, organizational safety is built upon a sense of combined interaction of not only human and social aspects, but also consists of environmental and management factors (Hasan et al., 2019). Expounding further, Hasan et al. explained that any shift in the interaction of human behavior and social structure in

the organization can result in a compromise of safety and lead to instances of mishap and injury within the organization.

Often, when employees referred to senior leadership commitment being out of touch, they emphasized the lack of trust that ultimately emerged. For instance, Jack shared that he felt, “people in positions of authority had no business being in a position of authority very incompetent and maybe good down as a little low level, but they have no leadership component, the skillset to...they lost that trust and I firmly believe that.” In alignment with previous research, trust instills a belief that an organization is safe for employees to share ideas without rejection and creates the foundation that is psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999; Newman et al., 2017). Establishing a foundation of psychological safety initiates the interpersonal context that informs safety in teams and through the organization as posited by Stephen et al. (2020), which starts with a commitment from the leadership that will then directly influence psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the descriptions from participants response in this study align with previous research stating that a link between leadership and psychological safety has shown that supervisors possess power through leadership practices and maintain influence over policies and procedures that have an emphasis on inclusive leader behavior (Appelbaum et al., 2016; Guchait et al., 2019; Hu, Zhu, et al., 2018). To break down the barriers in the organizational hierarchy, Mateo offered a suggestion towards a shift in leadership behavior stating, “I think that the most important thing when you talk about this subject that you're looking at...the best thing the supervisor can ever do is one show integrity and two show caring for his people.”

Resultant from the experiences and perceptions of participants, the organizational hierarchy present in a federal government organization is one that often times consists of barriers to interaction and engagement that can easily be overcome through senior leadership commitment to disrupting this rigid hierarchy. By building connections and breaking down the barriers to transparency, senior leaders commit to the employee and to the organization a sense of trust that provides a psychologically safe environment for all. As Henry stated, “it could be better if I actually received feedback on ideas or got to talk more face to face,” suggesting that senior leaders should get out more, get to know their people and engage at all levels to break the barriers of a rigid organizational structure where employee to leadership relationships are perceived as segmented in design.

Theme 6: Federal government employees describe their supervisors influence on psychological safety in the workplace as an enabler of personal engagement, communication, and safety through transparency (RQ2). The final overarching theme in this study revealed that perception of psychological safety in federal government organizations was largely influenced and dependent upon the engagement, interpersonal relationship, and mutual trust between employee and supervisor. As a result, participants shared the perception that bi-directional efforts between supervisors and employees is required to strengthen personnel engagement across all facets of the organization. The emergence from the data suggests that although management does offer opportunities for employees to engage through policies such as the “open door” policy, an equal amount of effort by leaders to proactively engage with employees first is a necessity. Likewise, in the emergence from the data, the researcher noted that participants expressed an explicit desire for supervisor engagement, trust, and interpersonal relationships to strengthen their

feeling of psychological safety. The results in the participants shared narratives was therefore congruent with previous research suggesting that psychological safety is contingent on the organizations ability to develop trust and interpersonal relationships that foster a freedom of expression where fear and rejection are minimized and innovation and ideas are maximized (Boylan & Turner, 2017). Of note in emergence from this study, Emily shared, “When treated with respect, kindness and open-minded behavior I feel more able to speak and interact with anyone in my office, my coworkers or supervisor.”

Supervisor Engagement and Trust. A significant area revealed in participant questionnaire and interview responses was that many respondents considered the proactive efforts that supervisors put forth as a guiding principle necessary to establishing a foundation of psychological safety as it relates to engagement, openness, and trust. With that, the observation was that most participants felt the appropriate level of engagement and trust was missing from their supervisors such as in the instance where Charlotte shared:

There is very little engagement or trust with my supervisor. She does not engage with me or others on my team often and because of this and other reasons there is very little trust in her.

To further support this revelation of the need for more supervisor engagement and frequency of engagement, Alexander shared, “engagements are sometimes limited to operational requirements or scheduled meetings; however, I know when I need something he always makes himself available.” This revealed to the researcher that while some

engagement is present, often in government organizations the overloading demand of the mission negates the ability to effectively engage.

Interpersonal Supervisor Relationships. In a second initial theme in support of the theme enabler to personnel engagement, participants described the interaction and personal relationships with their supervisors. Per participants meaningful narratives, interpersonal supervisor relationships are defined as the relationship that employees have with their supervisor in both work and non-work-related areas that helps to build quality rapport and human connections. Significant emergent codes to validate this initial theme included: approachability, feedback process, group discussions, mentoring, and motivation.

In all, an overwhelming majority of the participants shared that the positive interpersonal relationships with their supervisor in the workplace instills openness and trust that further expresses care for one another. For instance, Mia shared that her, “supervisor believes in respect and cares deeply about me and my coworkers. She treats everyone as an equal and that brings us closer together as a team.” Oliver further added through his response on his supervisor interpersonal relationship that his, “supervisor asks regularly on how I am doing both in personal and professional aspects. He provides life experiences, listens, and offers assistance to helping.” The underlying perspectives by participants connected back to previous research suggesting that when a leader embraces the transparent and proactive sharing of relevant information with their followers, they depict personal feelings and emotions that allows for approachability, and feedback (Yi et al. (2017). Therefore, as the results of this study suggest, a leader can positively influence psychological safety through proactive engagement that builds trust and transparency,

leading to innovation and bi-directional engagement from employee to supervisor and vice versa.

While the revelation of a lack of appropriate supervisor engagement in interpersonal relationships was not specifically noted in previous research, May et al. (2004) asserts that employee engagement involves a process of bridging the divide between the organizational sphere and the individual sphere through an exploration and challenge of the human spirit, suggesting that proactive personal connections be instituted by leaders. Furthermore, in previous research by Ghani and Hyder (2020) and Tu et al. (2019), an environment rich in support and freedom results in a psychological safe environment where employees deliver innovation, change, and suggestion through a voice equal to a manager or a leaders' voice. Therefore, bridging the divide in the engagement tactics across all facets of the organization is crucial for leadership to recognize.

Advancing Scientific Knowledge and Significance of the Study. This study expanded on the existing body of research outlined in the background of the study and the identification of the problem space in Chapter 1 by exploring and summarizing how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. As discussed in Chapter 2, the findings of this study in psychological safety are relevant in organizations and society at large to further understand the impact on individual confidence and employee engagement through a better understanding of the disciplines in organizational leadership and organizational development at large (Boylan & Turner, 2017; Carmeli et al., 2014; Chaudhary, 2019; Kolbe et al., 2020). Limitations and future recommendations from

previous studies on psychological safety outlined in Chapter 2, consisted of gaps in the literature among studies conducted using qualitative methodology within for-profit organizations, leaving a gap in understanding, and therefore ambiguity, in areas of supervisor influence and the connection to employee perceptions of psychological safety influence in government organizations (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017; Page et al., 2019).

Prior research had indicated that supervisors influence employees' development through factors of intrinsic motivation and psychological safety (Javed et al., 2019), which leads to improvement in employees' psychological safety through trust and dignity from supervisors (Page et al., 2019). Dollard and Bakker (2010) expounded on supervisor influence highlighting that management commitment, a component of supervisor influence, provides support in the organization for stress prevention as evidenced by supervisor involvement in, and commitment to, achieving that goal. To that point using a multi-theoretical lens, the researcher framed the investigation of this study using both transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate theory perspectives. The research questions, including all supplementary questions in both data sources, were designed using both theories as the foundation and validated by expert scholars in the field. The researcher used transformational leadership theory as a basis of the theoretical foundation to provide a lens for the interaction and influence of leaders. The psychosocial safety climate theory added to the theoretical framework providing a focused look into how organizations and leaders are enabled to foster psychological safety in the workplace.

Psychosocial safety climate theory was used to explore precursors in organizational psychological safety, based on policy development, practice, and management commitment, which is conducive to a stress-free and uninhibited work environment (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). The researcher found that over 90% of empirical research on psychological safety in the span of 25 years utilized quantitative methodology, thus studies that explored an in-depth understanding of psychological safety in their natural settings were particularly limited (Newman et al., 2017). Additionally, existing literature revealed few attempts to study psychological safety in non-profit organizations such as that of government (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al. (2019); Page et al., 2019). This study aids in advancing the existing research in psychological safety through a qualitative exploration of psychological safety in the context of a non-profit government organization. In addition, the instruments used to collect the data were descriptively designed to ask questions and gain insight on how employees describe their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in federal government organizations.

Although supervisor perceptions, leadership models, and antecedents of psychological safety are included in previous studies throughout the field of psychological safety, many of those studies have failed to consider transformational leadership and employee perception of leader influences on psychological safety (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019). Furthermore, prior research synthesized in Chapter 2 showed that when psychological safety was explored, these studies were predominantly in countries other than the United States (Hu, Erdogan, et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2020; Maximo et al., 2019), reflecting a disparity in a diverse population with

multi-ethnic roots. Therefore, the results of this study are essential to advancing the findings of previous research because the findings consist solely of federal government employees in Hawaii and recount their first-person descriptions of psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.

The researcher found that federal government employees who participated in this study shared that their organizational constructs operate on hardline policies that are often slow to change due to rigid organizational hierarchies. This discovery revealed that many government organizations are bound to institutional guidelines that shape leadership behavior and resist evolution which leaves elements of transformation, openness, and psychological safety hard to change. Many participants indicated that leadership feedback and response time to problems was a critical component to psychological safety, suggesting their organizations have failed to provide an appropriate level of venues to speak up and adequate safe spaces to learn and share new ideas. Thus, participants indicated the apprehension to workplace engagement and commitment, considering only the fundamentals of minimal efforts of their work to get by from day to day. The findings of this study are useful to leaders and individuals in U.S. federal government organizations and beyond, providing information that can best foster psychological safety and overcome psychological distress in the workplace. The results of this study may also assist with an understanding in areas of influence on psychological safety in other organizations and society at large, given the impact on individual confidence and engagement that is so important within the organization (Kolbe et al., 2020).

Conclusion. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their

supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The phenomenon of psychological safety in the workplace was explored by investigating accounts of individuals with first-hand experience of the problem space, which was supervisor influence on individual perceptions of psychological safety. The findings from this study were observed using a theoretical lens comprised of the transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and the psychosocial safety climate theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Two research questions posed in the investigation were guided by the theoretical framework and helped in the investigation to answer the overall problem of how federal government employees describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The following were the research questions used in the study:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

The basis of the study relied on gaps in previous psychological safety research and synthesized recommendations by scholars to explore the undocumented real-life accounts of employees in federal government organizations. Frazier and Tupper (2018), Anderson (2017), and Al-edenaat (2018) called for future qualitative research in psychological safety to expand upon employee perception of leader influences. Additionally, Maximo et al. (2019) suggested that further studies in psychological safety be conducted through the lens of leadership constructs other than authentic leadership and recommended that further studies in psychological safety should utilize a qualitative methodology. Likewise,

empirical studies conducted in psychological safety over the span of 25 years indicated that 74 out 78 studies were of the quantitative design (Newman et al., 2017), suggesting that qualitative research and lived accounts were lacking in the field of psychological safety.

Anderson (2017) and Al-edenat (2018) further supported exploration of psychological safety using the transformational leadership construct, concluding that transformational leadership behavior motivates and compels others through leadership efforts to guide individuals toward a goal, a conclusion also revealed in this study. Therefore, a qualitative descriptive design was used in this investigation into psychological safety, as this design allowed for exploration of the phenomenon in its natural state with the purpose of obtaining relevant information to describe the lived accounts of government employees, as recommended by previous scholars (Sandelowski, 2010; Siedlecki, 2020). Thus, the basis and results of this study were possible from the synthesis of the gap, experiences, and recommendations of prior researchers who are knowledgeable in conducting studies that concentrate on described perceptions of real-world conditions, as described in Chapters 1 through 3.

Due to the basis and strong foundational aspects derived from prior research, six overarching themes that answered the research questions were developed. The six themes identified in the findings of this study included impactful to motivation and quality of work, supportive network that is family like, all-inclusive environment, commitment that affects employee needs, agent of change to organizational barriers, and enabler to personnel engagement. The results of the study aligned with the literature in Chapter 2 because current empirical research has discussed at an extent, factors such as supervisor

influence, engagement, interpersonal relationships, trust, and organizational construct and the influence it has on creating a safe workplace to freely express thoughts and ideas. Coincidentally, prior findings are in alignment with the themes and initial themes outlined in this body of research, of which participants openly shared that their organizational constructs and leadership interactions related directly to their feelings of psychological safety in the workplace.

While the outcome of the study aligned with much of the previous research in psychological safety, further research under theme two, supportive network that is family like was lacking in the existing literature. Specifically, there was little research in the context of employee-to-employee interpersonal relationships. This is due to most of the existing literature having addressed the importance of interpersonal relationships yet failing to distinguish the importance of a “family like” structure that may be uniquely congruent with the environment of a multi-ethnic and diverse workforce where the Asian and Pacific-Islander mixed population is more dominant in the workplace (Chou, 2010; Okamura, 1980). Additionally, the sense of “family” and “ohana” may derive from the specific business rules, workplace attire, and etiquette that are thought to be different and more relaxed in Hawaii as compared to the same positions in the federal government workforce in the United States mainland (Say, 2012; Vales, 2014). This could be the underlying foundation of a microcosm with a unique organizational culture and sense of openness and satisfaction that research in the past has yet to explore.

Nonetheless, the study found that employees in federal government organizations in Hawaii described their psychological safety and supervisors influence on psychological safety within their organization as generally positive. These positive

perceptions of psychological safety were a result of participant views of their respective organizations as a culture of openness with supervisor care for people, thus instilling a safe space to work and speak up. These positive interactions often resulted from the governmental requirements of fair and equal treatment conveyed through mandated policies. However, the outcome in some organizations was a disconnect in the perception versus reality in that organizations and leaders do not fully practice what they or the organization may preach. This was especially prevalent when participants described their interpersonal relationships and perceptions of senior leadership within the organization. The findings of this study showcase that the influence of leadership ways heavy on the behavioral outputs of participants, regularly impacting how they interact with their supervisor, coworkers, and organization. It also indicates how behavioral output, resulting from motivation and organization policy, can affect how well employees contribute, express ideas, speak up, and engage in work.

From another perspective, the findings revealed which components of federal government organizations were significant in importance to employees in a federal government organization and highlighted the overall impacts that government organizations exert on employees when simply acknowledging the aspects and importance of psychological safety in the workplace. For instance, a majority of questionnaire and interview participants identified that their organizations explicit support of safety and no fear was just as important as the reality of the two within policy, procedure, and action. Establishing aspects such as inclusion, while eliminating barriers to the hierarchical construct, were equally important as well and considered enablers of engagement, interaction, and overall psychological health. The additional component of

bi-directional efforts towards engagement were an underpinning aspect of this study which should be further explored to understand how combined efforts between the employee and the supervisor can further strengthen psychological safety in a government organizational construct when equal efforts from both sides is displayed. Participants indicated that when bi-directional efforts to engage are evident, specifically when supervisors' efforts to engage and connect are increased, their psychological safety further develops to form positive relationships that enable safety and accomplishment in both professional and personal life.

As previously mentioned, the results of the study have been limited to employees in a federal government organization in the State of Hawaii. Thus, the transferability of the findings may be limited as this may have some impact on the findings' applicability to employees at other federal government organizations outside of this geographic region in the Pacific, which is predominately Asian and Pacific-Islander (Chou, 2010; Okamura, 1980). Additionally, this may impact how federal government organizations and leaders apply the findings in practice at their respective organizations. Therefore, to ensure the findings of this study can be applied in practice to different institutions within different geographical regions, the researcher ensured a thick description of the data collection and analysis was presented. Through the use of multiple data sets, reflexive journaling, and member checking, the researcher enhanced the transferability by ensuring quality through data saturation, which was useful in confirming the conclusions of the findings.

Resultant from the findings and conclusions of this investigation, the following research questions can be answered via participant descriptions of their lived experiences in the phenomenon of psychological safety.

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

Additionally, the study adds new empirical research in the field of psychological safety, with implications for organizational policy and practice, including recommendations to assist leaders in U.S. federal government organizations in exerting influence and transformation that fosters psychological safety. Resultantly, the study may benefit leaders in a variety of organizational constructs and society at large; in turn, this may affect employee job satisfaction, engagement, and productivity within for-profit and non-profit organizations alike, both inside and outside of the United States. In all, the researcher addressed the gap in the literature presented in Chapter 1 of the study through a focused investigation on how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017; Page et al., 2019). Given the basis and results of the study, we now begin to understand how government employees in Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors influence on psychological safety based on their real-life accounts and experiences of the phenomenon of psychological safety in the workplace.

Reflection on the Dissertation Process

The dissertation process has offered valuable opportunities and lessons learned along each step of this journey, to include how to handle the ups and downs of life and stress. Although the dissertation journey began with a field of research and research topic

in mind, the process of discovering a gap and further contributing to the body of knowledge was one that formed over time and through exhaustive reading of existing literature. The focus and topic of the dissertation changed several times, as the researcher perused seminal and empirical works in the field of psychological safety. What resulted was a need for future research on the topic of psychological safety and supervisor influence on employee perception of psychological safety in government organizations as described by the employees within those organizations. The discovery of the gap revealed a lack of understanding in the topic, especially from a qualitative lived account, which started out as overwhelming for an unexperienced researcher.

Prior to the start of the dissertation journey, the researcher had no reference point or experience in this level of research and analysis to properly assess how rigorous and time consuming a dissertation would be to adequately contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of psychological safety. Due to the demanding dissertation process, the researcher quickly learned that both personal and professional sacrifice would be needed to balance out feelings of doubt, loneliness and self-efficacy resulting from a sense of imposter syndrome. Further areas of concern were burnout, devotion to family, writing ability, confidence, and financial support to pursue this journey.

Additionally, the researcher experienced exhaustion and ups and downs throughout the constant demands from the dissertation committee, institution, change in dissertation chair, and process of iteration that eventually became of part of daily life. Therefore, to maintain focus, the researcher developed an open mind on the importance of trust and retained full faith in God first and foremost, family, and then the process and

much needed support of the dissertation committee. It was the faith and overwhelming family support that ensured the journey was a successful one.

At the start of the dissertation journey the researcher had a lack of understanding surrounding the required rigor of data collection and data analysis. In fact, the process of data collection and analysis was a relatively new idea in the mind of the researcher who conducts analysis in various other ways as a part of his full-time work and profession. Therefore, prior to selecting a data analysis process, the researcher explored the fundamentals of qualitative descriptive research, given the need to understand real-life accounts of individuals. Based on the exploration and experience gained, it was realized that establishing a corresponding data analysis process remains key to accurately depicting the findings of the study.

With that, ensuring alignment of the data collection and data analysis process were equally important in relation to the research topic and theoretical foundation of the study. Thus, given all these critical aspects and recommendations from previous studies, the researcher determined that Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis process would be best supportive in this study given the rich data and descriptive natural experiences needed to understand how employees describe their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety. Moving forward, the importance of research alignment throughout the process has become essential in the mind of the researcher when determining how all aspects of research aid in advancing the topic under investigation.

Regarding the topic under investigation, data collected during the dissertation process revealed that federal government employees in Hawaii described their

psychological safety in the workplace as good, a relatively positive outcome based on the federal mandates that government organizations use to address policy and procedure in the workplace; influence from supervisors and organization policy was deemed of high importance, especially when employees were given an opportunity to contribute and provide continuous feedback to the process of developing workplace policy. Thus, recognizing the organization as a system and employees as a fundamental cog in that system allows for engagement and openness that further facilitates a psychologically safe workplace inclusive at all levels of the organization. Prior to conducting the research, the investigator had high expectations that participants would reveal motivational impacts within their respective organization that directly affect their psychological safety, especially given that prior research highlighted that non-profit organizations rely on motivation and collective responsibility (Diegmann & Rosenkranz, 2017), whereas for-profit organizations rely more on monetary rewards (Dhanesh, 2020).

Furthermore, this expectation became more prominent given the assertion that non-profit organizations, such as government organizations, are characterized by unity, purpose, cooperation, and teamwork (Deardorff, 2020), a core component that combined with psychological safety creates characteristics of communication and organizational cooperation (Edmondson, 2018). Therefore, organizational policies that include a psychologically safe and friendly environment is a working environment where leaders motivate and have close relationships with the employees to reassure unity in purpose and that all actions happen as a team (Yin et al., 2019). Although this research yielded similar results in psychological safety within the organizational structure and leadership construct as found in previous research, new results were also revealed.

First and foremost, the research investigation yielded diverse results across the positive and negative spectrum of psychological safety and supervisors' influence on employee perceptions of psychological safety as described by the lived experiences of government employees in Hawaii. While the results from the data were mostly positive in nature, it is the emergent negative revelations that suggest the need for further investigations into the contrast of the positives and negatives. Such an investigation exploring the positives and negatives in psychological safety may help practitioners and leaders to better understand if any unique characteristics exist in the organizational culture found in Hawaii. Specifically, the points of negative emergence that could be explored moving forward in the field of psychological safety in organizations include: 1) organizational culture, 2) leaders as agents of change, and 3) the COVID-19 impacts of isolation in the field of psychological safety.

Starting first with organizational culture, the results suggest that organizational culture may bear a unique recipe found only within Hawaii organizations. As such the majority of participants described a "family like" organizational culture within the Hawaii workplace, highlighting a potential difference that Hawaii may have in relation to the U.S. Mainland organizational culture and construct. For example Mateo described his interaction with mainland counterparts as a culture that seems to value people less than the mission in saying that he was "made to feel regularly that the Hawaii branch of the organization has no value compared to the overall mission."

Second, there was a sense of importance from participants on leadership behavior and the role of leaders as an agent of change. This was found in the data as a potential influencer on psychological safety in both the positive and negative sense dependent on

the level of leadership commitment and promoting of change. For example, Emma provided insight into leaders as an agent of change if they could just “see the problem” as it happens and then act. William also shared a similar concern when discussing leader influence and the ability to be an agent of change by saying, “maybe if management socialized with everyone more equally it would be different and break the barriers of separation or the perception of that separation.” William highlighted an emergence that spoke to the employee desire for leadership commitment and change using simple and proactive forms of socializing and getting to know the people.

Finally, having endured the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the research, many participants shared emerging negative aspects of isolation and the feeling one goes through after losing a good thing. With that, although the study had no foundational goals to explore the COVID-19 effects of isolation on psychological safety, the results in the data and the participant experiences naturally brought this out. Highlighting the need for coworker interaction, many participants shared that during the pandemic they suffered a downturn in coworker support and interaction due to isolation and social distancing. Suffering from the limited ability to continue open dialogue and socially interact, this seemed to have an effect on the positive connection once experienced pre-pandemic. For example, questionnaire respondent Henry stated, “before COVID we used to have annual picnics, family day, Saturdays at the college football game and other fun events. I learned a lot about my peers and felt more comfortable talking with them at work. Not so much now and especially since COVID.” As such, participants expressed an overwhelming loss of required connectivity as a result of the downsides that isolation introduced during COVID-19. Looking back, each of the negative emerging aspects tell an equally

important story in contrast to all the positive aspects and thus deserve exploration in the future.

One thing is for certain, prior to the completion of this study it was unknown how government employees described psychological safety and supervisor influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The findings are significant, especially given their absence prior to this work, and will aid organizations in understanding how employees perceive their psychological safety and their supervisors influence on psychological safety within their respective government organizations. Additionally, the findings provide a foundation for government and non-profit organizations to reevaluate their values, mission, leadership training, policies, and procedures to better foster a psychologically safe and inclusive environment that can prioritize organizational performance.

Furthermore, the findings of the study suggest that due to personal experiences of employees in a federal government organization, psychological safety is at the core of acceptance within the organization and provides motivation and unity of effort. Therefore, this dissertation journey, although tedious and extremely stressful, provided an opportunity for employees in a federal government organization to advocate and speak up on their organizational culture and climate, paving the way to a more inclusive and psychologically safe workplace environment in government and beyond. I will forever be grateful for the dissertation process, the advisors, and the learning and growth it has instilled deep within me regarding research and the qualitative descriptors of others, specifically in the field of psychological safety. Thanks be to God almighty for providing me with the strength and ability to accomplish this monumental feat.

Implications

Included in the study are theoretical, practical, and future implications that result from the findings within this study on how employees of federal government organizations in the State of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety. This section will discuss the implications associated with the theories that supported the study, transformational and psychosocial safety climate theory, practical implications, and future implications. Lastly, this section of the study will discuss the strengths and weaknesses identified within the study.

Theoretical Implications

Two foundational theories contributed to the body of research and were used in the development of the research questions, data instruments, and the implementation of the purpose of this study. The theoretical foundations that supported the study were transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate theory. The basis of the transformational theory and its use in the theoretical framework is that through transformational leadership, leaders foster a climate where individuals are encouraged to grow and experience interpersonal risk in an environment deemed engaging and psychologically safe (Carmeli et al., 2014). Dollard and Bakker's (2010) psychosocial safety climate theory and its use in the theoretical framework was instrumental in exploring the problem through the lens of policies, practices, and procedures developed within an organization.

The results from the investigation revealed that elements of both theories were evident in how participants viewed psychological safety within their organizations. For

instance, participants experience in psychological safety repeatedly revealed that influence, inspirational motivation, policy implementation, worker well-being, and intellectual stimulation were necessary in a psychologically safe workplace. The revelations of the study directly point back to supporting theories of transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate theory as supportive views by which leadership can foster psychological safety.

Overall, the theories used in the investigation were aligned given the results and theoretical support of the findings. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers continue to explore psychological safety using both foundational theories contained in this study of psychological safety. In the following sections, the researcher will discuss how other studies have used transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate theory and will compare and contrast those findings with the current study.

Transformational Leadership Theory. The transformational leadership theory guided this research on employee perceptions of their supervisors' influence on psychological safety by addressing how the exchange, collaboration and interaction by supervisors resultantly influenced the psychological safety of employees. The findings of the study coincide with Anderson's (2017) assertion that leaders who adhere to higher values and expectations from their followers help to shape the values and utilize their charismatic methodologies to pull individuals towards a set of principles. For instance, the findings of this study revealed that supervisors who promoted speaking up and inclusion in the workplace instilled a workplace of trust and higher standards by all. In doing so, trust and transparency becomes an institutional component that as Yi et al. (2017) suggest, facilitates proactive sharing of relevant information and personal feelings

and emotions. With that, the results from this study suggest that employees desire a leader who encourages inclusion through methods of speaking up. Participants discussed that a lack of inclusion or feeling of belonging was detrimental to their purpose and therefore motivation.

Participants in this study illuminate how their personal experiences in a federal government organization in Hawaii were often controlled by leadership motivation and influence on their practices and procedures in the workplace, including the ability to voice opinion and concern and equally converse in thought bi-directionally. Such actions are in congruence to results found in previous studies that clearly identify a link between transformational leadership and psychological safety, given the power through leadership practices and influence over policies and procedures (Appelbaum et al., 2016; Guchait et al., 2019; Hu, Zhu, et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2019). Supervisor behavior expressly described by participants in the study depicts the growing need for inclusive leadership behavior that is both inspiring and productive to enable followers the opportunity to perform to their best. In turn, success through leadership practices encourages a psychologically safe space to perform, resulting in organizational success.

With that, the results obtained in this study align with Burns (1978) theory assertion that a higher moral position is a motivating factor that can influence individuals to follow a leader who promotes such acts. Additionally, as prior research found, leaders' vision must be compelling to the degree that leaders understand what they want from every interaction and therefore provide influence that instills meaning and challenge to followers (Al-edenat, 2018; Khan et al., 2016). Transformational leadership theory in the context of the study results inform government organizations that transformational

leaders communicate their expectations through varied paths, which eventually results in a committed focus on the follower (Liborius, 2017). The current findings of this study are significant to transformational leadership theory because they depict how leaders who use the foundation of transformational leadership provide influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation to encourage a psychologically safe space for innovation.

Next, psychosocial safety climate theory is discussed in the context of the study.

Psychosocial Safety Climate Theory. The findings of the study indicate that as part of their perception as employees in a federal government organization, individuals are directly influenced through policies and procedures developed and promoted by the organization and leadership. Dollard and Bakker (2010) posited that through management policy, practice, and commitment, a conducive stress-free and uninhibited work environment can occur. In an examination of how psychosocial safety climate influenced the physical and psychological injuries in the workplace, Zadow et al. (2017) observed that disjointed efforts by the organization result in erosion of psychological health or emotional exhaustion.

In this study, participants expressed that lack of engagement by leadership on efforts conducive to psychological safety was an area that suffered, especially in written policy. Also noted were participants concern of work outcomes and stress level, when preemptive policy supportive of psychological safety were lacking. Thus, supervisor influence through the psychosocial safety climate aspects of workplace policy can directly affect health, organizational culture, and ultimately the psychological safety of employees both directly and indirectly.

In the context of this study, most participants described the explicit need for organizational policies that show management commitment to their safety and well-being. Therefore, through revelations in the data, participants confirmed what Zadow et al. (2017) previously observed, indicating that their psychological safety was best supported by policies and processes that foster employee inclusion and safety to speak up. Additionally, participants highlighted the encouragement that federal government employees feel when the policies and practices from leadership encourage them to speak up, signaling an underlying inclusive environment as previously recommended by (Edmondson, 1999). Thus, the importance of the psychosocial safety climate theory is relevant in the context of establishing a psychologically safe organization. This revelation is consistent with the research of Lee and Idris (2017) who's findings suggest the importance of the psychosocial safety climate as the precursor to better working conditions that are boosting to employees' engagement, job performance, and productivity.

Conclusion. The findings from the study have implications that relate to transformational and psychosocial safety climate theory as the multi-theoretical perspectives underpinning this research investigation. In the study, six overarching themes were identified and relative to how employees perceive their psychological safety and their supervisors influence on psychological safety within their respective government organizations, including: impactful to motivation and quality of work, supportive network that is family like, all-inclusive environment, commitment that affects employee needs, agent of change to organizational barriers, and enabler to personnel engagement. The findings from the study can be used to validate transformational

leadership theory (Burns, 1978) because participants provided descriptive examples of ways in which their psychological safety increased positively based on leaderships ability to foster a climate where individuals were supported, encouraged to grow, and challenged to take innovative steps of risk to support the organizational missions and goals.

Furthermore, the findings of this study also had implications within the psychosocial safety climate theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) as the findings brought attention to how government employees made meaning of their organizations commitment to a set of policies, practices, and procedures developed and implemented to ensure the protection of workers' psychological safety and personal well-being. This information could allow for future government leaders to explicitly commit to policies and procedures to better the workplace, while also focusing on the aspects of inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation that thrives in a psychologically safe workplace. Therefore, in alignment with the underlying theories used within this study, the support for a leadership approach using motivation and idealized influence as found within the transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and an effective organizational policy making process described through the psychosocial safety climate theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) are clearly a benefit in fostering a working environment where people are valued and barriers of stress are removed.

Practical Implications

The findings from the study provided detailed insights into understanding how employees perceive their psychological safety and their supervisors influence on psychological safety within their respective government organizations. Based on those findings, the study revealed practical implications for federal government organizations

in fostering psychological safety. Participants of the study identified that acknowledgment of the importance of psychological safety helps organizational learning. Additionally, participants revealed that true understanding of psychological safety is foundational for all, given the impact on motivation and inclusion within the workplace. As such, this strengthens adaptability of the organization supported through employee contributions (Kim et al., 2020). In the following section, prior research and associated findings and themes that emerged from the study will be discussed to support practical implications for future use.

In Chapter 1 and 2, potential implications for practical use were discussed given the purpose of this research in psychological safety. Prior studies discussed in Chapter 2, asserted that psychological safety is vital in a complex organizational system and in organizational designs where dangerous occupational activity with severe consequences exist (Duchek, 2020; McLinton et al., 2018). Therefore, practitioners in high risk organizations, such as those found in the government sector (e.g. military, police, fire) would be wise to implement efforts to strengthen the foundation of psychological safety through policies that encourage a safe space and opportunity to speak up. Such action could be the catalyst to lowering stress, reducing accidents, and increasing safe performance during high risk evolutions simply because the organization is inclusive and open to feedback without repercussion.

Furthermore, since many participants in the study indicated that their government organizations failed in the area of stakeholder inclusion, which in turn limited information flow up and down the organizational hierarchy, practitioners have an opportunity to move out with action to break down communication barriers. Creating a

channel for safe dialogue both horizontal and vertical in the organization could be as simple as implementing organizational gatherings, working lunch events, or leadership engagement events where leaders focus on a different department or division in a rotational pattern through face-to-face engagement. The result would be an ice breaker approach to bring the organization together in much the same way as a family gathering. In doing so, practitioners can convey management's commitment to the value and concern of each employee in a way that extends beyond just the job.

Practitioners should also take note of the need for partial or full inclusion in the decision making process and strive to eliminate any barriers that isolate stakeholders in an organization. This finding is a key takeaway that previous research alluded to as instrumental to creating a shared vision, openness, and employee satisfaction (Geiger et al., 2020; Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). Another key takeaway, in a practical sense, is recognition of differences in the organizational structure and hierarchy and how individual differences at each level (i.e. the executive level, the middle-manager level, the worker level) within the organization affects how one may address or perceive psychological safety concerns. Practitioners can achieve success in this area through both a common and tailored training approach that delves into the fundamentals of psychological safety with emphasis on the role that each individual in the organization plays in opening the lines of communication and establishing a safe space to express oneself.

As revealed in theme five, agent of change to organizational barriers, government organizations that find strategic ways to overcome the rigid hierarchical barriers within government can achieve success in connecting with employees and avoiding that out of

touch, or unapproachable perception that many government employees expressed in the study. Agarwal and Farndale (2017) suggested that when every stakeholder has the opportunity of advising managers safely, the organization becomes better adaptive through creative information generated by employees. To put this into practical application, organizations should increase senior leadership commitment to the belief of psychological safety, which enables inclusion and freedom for all to feel valued and provide input. In doing so, employees find ease in sharing information without rejection or barriers, which in turn improves organization success, adaptability, and satisfaction.

As research previously identified in Chapter 2 of this study, employee satisfaction and commitment are contingent on psychological safety in the organization. When employees feel engaged and happy, the organization becomes more adaptable under challenging situations; trust and shared outcomes exist (Kim et al., 2020). Furthermore, research by Kwon et al. (2020) asserted that an environment rooted in positive psychological safety enables employees to become adaptable through innovation and creativity to achieve both personal satisfaction and organizational needs. Thus, as prior research in Chapter 2 of the study suggests, organizations that avoid commitment to psychological safety suffer the fate of creating barriers of access for their most valuable asset, the people, who will not act quickly in terms of information identification and transformation if they have no chance of speaking, sharing ideas, or making decisions for the organization (Boylan & Turner, 2017; Herway, 2017). As a result, employees become afraid, lean towards disengagement, and feel a sense of diminished value.

For this reason, a practical implication is for government organizations and senior leaders to proactively engage with employees upfront to provide affirmation of the

organizational commitment to psychological safety and equally value all regardless of rank, position, or level within the organization. When employees perceive a commitment to psychological safety, they become more willing to share ideas (Obrenovic et al., 2020). To translate into practical use, leaders can host weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly collaborative meetings and programs in neutral spaces that include working lunch sessions or other social activities. Such enablers and activities express a commitment to psychological safety and provide openness for the interaction and shared voice of all in the organization. As the study found, this can be expanded to include a variety of social events, potluck lunches, family days, organizational picnics, peer-to-peer events, and direct visits to employee offices throughout all levels of the organization. In turn, the organization starts the process of breaking down the hierarchical barriers, noted in the study, that create perceptions of the “out of touch” senior leaders that are unwilling to engage with employees from the top-down, bottom-up.

Following this same thought, government organizations can take more initiatives in addressing the problem areas that challenge government employees more directly. Participants of the study discussed experiencing isolated workplace environments, lack of employee social events, inadequate training in psychological safety, full inclusion, and explicit policies towards psychological safety at their respective organizations. To mitigate these experiences, government organizations and leaders can use this information to develop surveys and focus groups on each of these areas, soliciting feedback from government employees on ways to cultivate safer spaces, increase access and inclusion, and implement transformational initiatives. In previous research Mura et al. (2016) suggested that by providing opportunity for feedback and generating ideas,

organizations can learn and grow in ways that affect the entire organization. Such strategies of soliciting feedback, as found in the research, can bring awareness to employee concerns and needs within government organizations, while also providing an expansion to the safe and open workplace. In turn, resources that reduce the negative experiences of psychological safety and increase methods of further promoting openness and organizational success can evolve.

Future Implications

Based on the new insight uncovered in the research investigation, the psychological safety experiences of government employees have been significantly impacted by their respective organizational constructs, policies, and leadership. Participants in the study identified a lack of leadership acknowledgment of the importance of psychological safety and its aspects. The findings of the study are significant given that leadership involvement and influence contributed to both positive and negative outcomes in psychological safety and the workplace culture in government organizations. As prior research reviewed in Chapter 2 indicated, organizational performance is correlated with a sense of strong psychological safety resulting in good performance and quality output in an environment where there is coordination, consideration, and support for all (Edmondson, 2018; Geiger et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2020). In the previous sections, the discussion focused on the theoretical implications of transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate theory supported by the results of the study. Practical implications for government organizations were also discussed with recommendations to government leaders on how best to educate and foster psychological safety. The implications focused on the different perspectives

surrounding the problem space identified earlier in Chapter 2. In the following sections future implications based on the study findings will be discussed to add to the theoretical and practical implications already identified.

As already discussed in the research results and findings, many of the participants in the study described their influences on psychological safety resultant of their organizations and supervisors' knowledge of the underlying belief of psychological safety, or lack thereof. Given the results of the study, identifying proper ways that the organization can improve organizational training to promote the fundamental aspects of psychological safety such as interpersonal relationship building is beneficial for future application. Future qualitative research on the topic should consider a qualitative exploration of what techniques employees feel aid in a better understanding in the workplace regarding the belief of psychological safety. As presented in the practical implications, providing a means to educate an organization on psychological safety brings the belief into focus so change and positivity can be introduced. Additionally, future researchers should explore psychological safety horizontally rather than up and down the ladder in a government organizational hierarchy. This horizontal approach is discussed later in the recommendations for future research section.

Education in psychological safety and exploration horizontally across an organization could reveal benefits and needs to further the level of psychological safety given the understanding and factors of workplace culture. Prior research reviewed in Chapter 2 determined it to be important that researchers explore factors of psychological safety that contribute to adaptability and culture within the organizational setting (Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017). Furthermore, expanding research in the

organizational setting, especially in the psychological safety of teams at the horizontal levels in the organization will help to understand the factors that contribute to psychological safety within an organizational hierarchy. The area of investigation can be both qualitative and quantitative in design and may benefit from a mixed-methods or case study approach. Aside from the design and horizontal approach, another important area for future implication is to understand how psychological safety differs across jobs and occupations.

Just as job occupations differ in applicable policy and procedure for employees, so may the factors of psychological safety and influence. As identified in Chapter 2, researchers pointed to the need to expanded research in psychological safety to not only various organizational settings, but also various occupational job settings (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Subhakaran & Dyaram, 2018). In this study the focus was set on exploration of federal government organizations. There was no intent to home in on specific occupations or comparison of occupations across the federal government, which could reveal significant outcomes and findings. Therefore, a future implication for psychological safety research should consider different occupations within various levels of government ranging from the local, state, and federal levels, to include specific focus on specific occupations such as that of firefighters, active-duty military, or appointed government positions.

For example, the described experiences of firefighters in local government could be studied and analyzed independently than those of emergency managers at the federal or state level of government. The continued scholarship will provide academic benefit, as future examination of the diverse settings and occupations across all levels of government

may expose additional adversities and thus advantages or disadvantages experienced and enacted within governmental organizations. This may benefit both non-profits and governmental agencies at the local and state level, as it may create a foundation to developing better inclusion through specific policies and procedures that foster psychological safety in the workplace. Thus, the results could be a combined recipe for promoting healthy work environments through positive psychological safety that eliminates the feeling of adverse actions and repercussion which often discourage good ideas and general actions toward safety.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

This study on how employees describe their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in federal government organizations in the State of Hawaii offers both strengths and weaknesses that may have impacted and shaped the outcomes of the study. In Chapter 1 the study identified anticipated limitations to the study that were known at the time of inception. Mitigation of the anticipated limitations was subsequently put into place to enhance and strengthen the study results. Later in Chapter 4 additional limitations experienced during the study were presented. The additional limitations identified during the study may have not been fully mitigated given they were not all identified at the study inception and therefore may be weaknesses to the study outcome. As Ioannidis (2007) suggested, limitations in a study can reflect the characteristics of design or methodology that most impact or influence the application or interpretation of the results of a study. Such limitations in the study lead to weaknesses that can influence the findings and conclusions of the investigation (Christensen & Johnson, 2014). Given the anticipated and additional limitations resultant of the study

methodology, design, data analysis, and findings, weaknesses were observed.

Additionally, the study also had its strengths. Those strengths and weaknesses will be further discussed in this section, beginning with the three strengths.

Strength One. The first strength of the study was two-fold and encompassed the use of a qualitative methodology using a descriptive design. Selecting a qualitative descriptive study permitted the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena in a natural setting through perspectives and context of those individuals directly experiencing the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Through a qualitative descriptive design, participants were able to depict their personal experience of psychological safety in the workplace, while also highlighting the affects and influence supervisors have over the establishment of psychological safety. As such, because of the participant's willingness to provide details of their lived experiences, the researcher attained data saturation allowing for the establishment of credible and consistent data.

Strength Two. The second strength of the study was the use of multiple data sources (e.g., open ended questionnaires and semi-structured open-ended interviews) consisting of descriptive participant input. Prior research advocates that the use of multiple data sources enhances confidence in data, interpretation, and data collection methods to strengthen the quality of a study (Connelly, 2016). To increase the confirmability of the results, the research also included reflexive journaling, bracketing, and member checking, which provided neutrality and confirmation to the study findings.

Strength Three. The third strength of this study was the researcher use of a multi-theoretical approach to explore the research phenomenon under investigation. In prior research, transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate theory were

used separately as theoretical frameworks in support of investigations (Al-edenat, 2018; Anderson, 2017; Javed et al., 2019; Lee & Idris, 2017; Page et al., 2019; Yulita et al., 2020). However, in developing this qualitative descriptive study, a multi-theoretical approach was taken to understand how employees describe their lived experiences in government organizations using the lens of organizational leadership and organizational policy development derived from transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate theory. Observance of the phenomenon of psychological safety through the lens of transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate theory provided an overlap of both frameworks that allowed the researcher to explore influence through leadership and influence through organizational precursor activity (e.g., policies and procedure development). In essence the multi-theoretical framework explored supervisor influence, motivation, and perception of psychological safety in organizations.

The researcher also delineated weaknesses within the study. Some of the weaknesses outlined in this section were previously identified as limitations in Chapters 1 and 4. As asserted by Christensen and Johnson (201), researchers identify potential weaknesses in research studies through the limitations section of the research. Weaknesses identified in this study were evaluated to provide suggestions on what could be changed if the research was conducted again. In total, the study identified five weaknesses that future researchers should take note of and build upon if the same or similar study is conducted.

Weakness One. The first weakness of this study was using LinkedIn as a recruitment method. Although LinkedIn was identified as an effective recruitment platform due to the global reach of social media and the current COVID-19 pandemic

(Kaliszewski et al., 2021; Kozłowski et al., 2021; Sibona et al., 2020), the recruitment method lacked the robustness desired for participation and interest in the study. The initial primary plan to post the recruitment flyer was completed with the posting being boosted through repeated repost to the top of the LinkedIn group feed three weeks in a row. This was required due to the low yield of participants early on. Given that, it wasn't until the combination of the repeated posting, or boost, and the invoking of the secondary plan of sharing the recruitment flyer was introduced, that an increase in study participants was achieved.

Weakness Two. The second weakness was the global health crisis, identified as COVID-19, that occurred at the time of this research investigation. The occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed as a weakness to this study and was unfortunately an uncontrollable life event that took place throughout the study. Due to the occurrence of a global pandemic and the health restrictions imposed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the study relied on a virtual means of data collection, which at the time of planning was the most viable due to health and safety concerns. As the research entered the data collection stages, pandemic restrictions began to subside resulting in individuals seeking physical connections rather than virtual ones. Whether it was the burnout from virtual meetings or unwillingness to connect via Zoom, the fact remained that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, isolation, and mental exhaustion resultant from virtual means of human connection for over two years, engagement for the study may have been limited in the recruitment process of seeking participants via virtual means only. Overall, this may have affected the findings of the study, as it limited the researcher's reach of acquiring a

larger and much more diverse sample size that might have been willing to participate through in-person data collection versus virtual means.

Obtaining a larger and more diverse sample size may have had a better impact on the transferability and applicability of the study's findings to a broader population of non-profit and government organizations within the United States. If a researcher were to replicate the study, it would be beneficial to complete the study post COVID-19 for minimal restrictions, especially as the intensity of the global pandemic impacted society's ability to adhere to additional time-consuming projects that added to their stress of balancing the risk within their normal daily interactions and virtual burnout. However, it should be noted that although the study might have yielded different results absent a once in a lifetime global pandemic, the findings of the study still provide focus areas for government organizations and non-profits to improve upon within the phenomenon of psychological safety. Not only do the findings add to the existing body of knowledge, but they also provide an insightful recipe for governmental senior leaders to assist in the development of explicit policies and procedures that positively influence the psychological safety in governmental and non-profit organizations.

Weakness Three. Another weakness of the study is that the participants who volunteered to take part in the study, spanned across generations and all sectors of a federal government organization in Hawaii as the conditions of participants were not restricted to a specific organizational level or occupation within federal government organizations in Hawaii. Additionally, although the requirements for participation in the study were at least 18 years of age, no specific requirement was set to narrow the participant pool to a more restrictive age segment of the population. These aspects

together may have impacted the results of the study as the responses received from participants come from multiple levels within the organization and span across a facet of age ranges, which could have been impacted by the generational divide. Further limiting the scope of the study could have resulted in a different outcome especially given the multi-generational and diversity in occupations sampled in Hawaii. In future studies, aspects such as the generational divide should be considered.

Weakness Four. Another weakness of the study was found in the length of the questionnaire responses, which yielded an average of 1.5 pages per participant. However, since a total recruitment of 46 questionnaire participants was obtained, in addition to 14 interviewees meeting an average audio length of 70 minutes and 20 pages per participant, the impact may have been minimal (see participant details in Appendix N). Although the researcher had full control over the questionnaire protocol and accepted only questionnaires with all open-ended questions answered, the researcher could not control the depth of participants answers and descriptors during the study. While all participants described their experiences in some level of detail, some participants were vague in their responses, while others were more precise.

Even so, all questionnaires and interviews allowed the researcher to collect sufficient data for analysis that resulted in reaching the point of data saturation; meaning the researcher collected relevant and similar data that was extracted from all participant responses (Sohn et al., 2017). Overall, the combined total of all interviews in the study averaged 20 single-spaced pages per individual respondent. Furthermore, in total, the researcher collected 16 hours and 28 minutes of interview data, which averaged roughly 1 hour and 10 minutes across all 14 respondents (see Appendix N). Thus, the findings of

the research yielded relevancy and redundancy in data, and therefore minimized the time required to achieve data saturation.

Weakness Five. Lastly, the findings in the study solely described employee experiences in government organizations in the State of Hawaii, using a relatively small sample size. The sample size rendered was considered small, consisting of only 46 open-ended questionnaire responses and 14 semi-structured interview participants. The researcher recognized that the study could have been more diverse by casting a larger net to retrieve multiple participant perspectives, inclusive of all geographical regions within the United States and thus may have resulted in greater value in participant responses. Therefore, the findings of the study may not be applicable to a broader population in the United States or abroad. Future researchers should consider expanding the research to include other geographical areas or consider a combination of geographical locations, which may reveal a different outcome than this study.

Reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses, an appreciation of how a research investigation can be affected in a positive and negative way was observed. As a result of the study, interest in future research investigations have been instilled. Learning from both the strengths and weaknesses of the study will assist in further refinement of the methodology, design, and analysis that should be changed or continued in the future.

Overall, the study was satisfied through a qualitative descriptive approach given the lack of studies in psychological safety using such a method and design; previous studies were mostly quantitative in nature. The qualitative descriptive design used in the study allowed for the investigation to explore the lived experiences of individuals who have experience psychological safety in the workplace and provided a deeper

understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, what was most satisfying from the study was the learning experience and the ability to openly explore the collected data using a process of analysis that is beneficial for future studies.

Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. The recommendations presented are a direct result of government employee perceptions of their psychological safety and their supervisor's influence on their psychological safety in the workplace. This section includes recommendations for future research and practice founded on the gaps uncovered in the current study, including a comprehensive reflection of the problem space that grounded the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendation One. Future research on the topic of employee psychological safety in non-profit (e.g., government) organizations is recommended. The data from this study originated from employees in U.S. federal government organizations within the State of Hawaii, limiting the transferability of the findings to one geographical region. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers replicate this study, expanding it to different government populations and at all levels of government (e.g., local, state, federal) throughout the United States. This will allow researchers to gain different government employee perspectives, which may divulge new issues or practices within governmental constructs, as contrasting government environments have different policies and commitments to employee inclusion in decision making and policy implementation.

Furthermore, an expansion of the research will continue forging scientific value and knowledge as it will assist leadership and policy writers in government organizations with developing programs and policies that assist employees in coping with psychological distress in the workplace, namely interactions that directly affect employee psychological safety and the ability to freely express oneself within the organization.

Recommendation Two. Future research in trust and transformation precursor efforts is recommended. Participants throughout the study discussed a need for further commitment by senior leaders in the areas supportive of psychological safety. Such a commitment to psychological safety can be perceived as leader behavior in support of change; becoming agents of change. As evident from prior research, explicit commitment by leadership ensures that all become attuned to the commitment of psychological safety and what is accepted and expected in the workplace (Frazier et al., 2017; Yi et al., 2017). Additionally, in this study participants expressed a need for organizations to put forth an explicit commitment towards the aspects of psychological safety, such as engagement, mutual respect, and inclusion.

Although participants detailed the need for increased focus on policies and practices that impact psychological safety in the workplace, little emerged regarding the ways and means by which policies and practices can be tailored in the rigid organizational hierarchy of a government organization. However, as previous research suggests, psychological safety in the workplace is directly mitigated through deliberate focus on policy and process, which is a basic requirement of employee safety (Liu et al., 2020). In turn, Liu et al. suggested that when the organization places focus on psychological safety policy and process, they also build trust through an organization-

employee safety relationship. Thus, another area that is recommended for future research using transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate as the theoretical framework, is a qualitative exploration of precursor actions towards psychological safety as they relate to trust and transformational efforts in organizational policy.

Recommendation Three. The third recommendation for future research is further understanding of the organizational hierarchy in a government organization and how the effects of psychological safety are felt throughout the different levels of the organization. Many participants in the study described their influences on psychological safety different based on their perception of psychological safety at their own respective level within the organization. The results are comparable to prior research suggesting that organizational hierarchies have different levels of psychological safety which is often exerted at varying degrees throughout the organization (Subhakaran & Dyaram, 2018).

Furthermore, in the narratives there were indications based on the occupation and organizational level of each participant that employees may experience psychological safety in different ways and at different levels given their role in the organization. Future research should take a multi-theoretical approach using other theories aside from transformational leadership and psychosocial safety climate theory to explore how different occupations within various levels of government experience and describe psychological safety. Future research of psychological safety at all levels expanding horizontally across the organizational construct could also provide benefit to the body of knowledge, as future examination of the diverse settings and occupations across all levels of government may expose additional adversities and advantages or disadvantages experienced at the different levels in the organizational hierarchy.

Finally, to take it a step further researchers should explore the emergence in isolation that participants alluded to in the study resultant of the COVID-19 pandemic and organizational hierarchy. Whether it be a direct investigation into COVID-19 effects on psychological safety or the underlying isolation impacts from pandemic type events and the organizational ladder, future researchers are recommended to explore isolation and leadership motivation and inspiration. To aid in future research of organizational hierarchy and isolation, transformational leadership theory as a theoretical framework would be useful in exploring the inspirational motivation at the various levels in the organization; whereas psychosocial safety climate theory would be useful in determining the ways in which organizations implement training and policy tailored toward various occupations and levels of government hierarchies. The same theoretical framework could also apply to an investigation of psychological safety and the unforeseen events of a pandemic that have severe impact on organizational climate.

Recommendation Four. Another recommendation for future research is for practitioners to expand their recruitment efforts and methods to further enhance the homogeneity of the sample. As suggested by prior scholars, a homogenous sample can ensure participants share the same characteristics to support research and future transferability (Etikan et al., 2016). Therefore, by expanding in a more direct recruitment strategy, future researchers could further ensure quality and transferability of the study findings (Yin, 2017). Although the researcher collected substantial data via the recruitment methods outlined in the study, the recruitment method could have been more progressive, leading to an increased number of responses had the researcher been able to recruit directly from within a specific government organization or organizations. Again,

while using LinkedIn yielded substantive results for the study, there may have been virtual burnout or concerns with privacy given the use of a social media platform, suggesting that alternative methods should be considered in future research. Additionally, over saturation of information from a particular subset of federal government workers keen on the social media space may have been experienced and unknown.

Furthermore, due to privacy concerns, open comments on the LinkedIn recruitment post were turned off and may have contributed to a lack of responses and further privacy concerns. By turning off comments and restricting open dialogue on LinkedIn, individuals were required to directly message the researcher via LinkedIn private messaging, email, or phone, which may have created barriers or impacted individuals' ability to show interest in the study. Thus, social media platforms may not always yield the best results in the recruitment of government employees, unless the researcher seeks the assistance and permission of a social media platform that is consistent with the desired population, and which allows for greater exposure and prioritization of research efforts. Therefore, it is recommended that future practitioners utilize a different method, such as in-person and direct onsite investigations of a government organization, to recruit government employees and ensure a more private and direct result.

Recommendation Five. Another recommendation for future research is that practitioners explore the training that organizations provide towards psychological safety and the underlying belief of this concept in the workplace. This may provide a process improvement opportunity using the aspects of psychological safety, as there may be a lack of education in this area of knowledge that government organizations can instill

across the workforce to promote change and transformation through openness. While prior research investigated simulation-based training and safe zones using psychological safety (Kang & Min, 2019; Roh et al., 2018; Stephen et al., 2020), other forms of training were largely left unexplored. Therefore, the researcher recommends exploring the psychological safety training topic further using other qualitative methodologies (e.g., case study, phenomenology, grounded theory) to determine ways that education in psychological safety can be implemented across the organization.

Recommendation Six. Lastly, participants reported that their organizations had both negative and positive ramifications on their psychological safety, as their workplaces were perceived to follow institutionalized constructs that avoided full inclusion by all. Based on previous research, organizations become enablers of inclusivity through high levels of psychological safety (Chaudhary, 2019; Ghani & Hyder, 2020; Komljenovic et al., 2017). Therefore, it is recommended that future qualitative investigations explore the influence that government institutionalization has on the psychological safety of individuals and the sense of inclusion in the organizational construct. This can also include an exploration in the underlying culture and institutionalizing aspects that are unique to organizational culture.

For example the practices within the organizational culture of a Hawaii federal organization may differ from that of a U.S. Mainland federal organization. Findings on the policies and practices of government organizations, especially from the organizational culture and foundation, will be beneficial to participants as it will provide a framework to explore government employee perceptions of inclusivity through psychological safety. Furthermore, it will be beneficial for government at all levels by indicating potential

suggestions to enhance the culture and climate at their respective organizations, a measure that could foster psychologically safe environments to encourage and promote ideas and organizational development. Up next are recommendations for future practice in the field of psychological safety.

Recommendations for Future Practice

The full inclusion of all employees must be established as a priority for government organizations given the impact that non-inclusion has on the psychological safety of an organization, which is vital in the hierarchical organizational structure, complex organizational systems, and in situations where error may result in a dangerous consequence (McLinton et al., 2018). The research provided an exploration of how employees described their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety in federal government organizations. By exploring the psychological safety from the employee experience in federal government organizations, leaders within government can reflect on and take action to develop social and professional environments of trust, respect, and psychological safety within their own respective organizations. Leaders, organizational policy writers, human resource officials, industrial psychologist and process improvement practitioners may all benefit from evaluating the findings of the study. Given the results of the study, the researcher identified three recommendations for future practice. The recommendations are presented as follows.

Recommendation One. Enable engagement and psychological safety by establishing a positive workplace climate. Many participants in some way discussed a lack of respect and ability to communicate throughout all levels of their organizations. Research outlined in Chapter 2 specifically indicated that individual behavior, mutual

trust and respect, and communication are important factors in the psychologically safe environment (Kostovich et al., 2020; Stephen et al., 2020). Additionally, Hu, Erdogan, et al. (2018) asserted that to have an organizational climate based on openness and psychological safety, effective communication must be employed to allow employee creativity and strengthen the connection between perception and reality. Therefore, it is recommended that for future practice, process improvement professionals overseeing organizational level resources (e.g., leadership, policy, procedures, communication) for government employees should strive to develop a strategy and vision to improve the workplace climate and bring awareness to practices that foster a positive psychologically safe environment.

For instance, organizations should focus on identifying and instituting processes of communication where no employee is left behind or discouraged from sharing ideas or thoughts meaningful to the organizational development and progress. In doing so, employees feel a guarantee of psychological safety that enables them to share ideas and solve organizational issues (Obrenovic et al., 2020). In turn, this may lead to a growth in cross-organizational engagement while also promoting inclusive projects and problem solving through encouragement of valued input by all. As found in previous research, creating an atmosphere where engagement is valued further increases the motivation to work and engage as a team resulting in high team spirit and increased productivity (Kahn, 1990; Kahn & Heaphy, 2013). Additionally, since many participants discussed creating or finding their own means of communication to express their feelings and thoughts, it may be beneficial that leaders in government allocate funding and resources whereby

employees can collaborate and build upon ideas of others who are enabled to freely share thoughts and feedback to emerging problems in the workplace.

Recommendation Two. Openly committed to psychological safety and employee well-being. The results from the study reported that participants felt that leadership, policies, and procedures in government have a direct influence on their psychological safety within the workplace. Thus, government organizations and leadership should devote resources and prioritize their commitment to employee well-being in the workplace by ensuring the appropriate practices are in place to provide employees with a psychologically safe environment free of the fears of rejection, punishment, or retribution. Therefore, a recommendation for future practice is that organizations make ongoing efforts to include employees in the decision-making process, through enablement of idea sharing, communication, and policy feedback. Commitment to psychological safety builds trust and avoids fear.

Recommendation Three. Create awareness and understanding of psychological safety through training and inclusion. In prior research it was suggested that a true psychologically safe environment exist when the working environment allows employees to become involved in the decision-making process through openness and voice, a fundamental pillar of psychological safety (Ghani & Hyder, 2020; Tu et al., 2019). Given that the findings of the study indicate government employees are both affected and concerned by experiences in psychological safety in the workplace, it may also be beneficial to directly include all employees in organizational training on psychological safety as increased awareness of the phenomenon may further reveal issues and unique experiences within the organization. This will be useful in increasing the visibility of

employee psychological safety and constructing methods to address newfound areas of concern. Furthermore, the inclusion of psychological safety training in the workplace will be impactful in strengthening the open communication and interpersonal relationships across all levels of the organization.

Holistic Reflection on the Problem Space

Prior to the investigation little was known surrounding psychological safety in federal government organizations, specifically in the context of how government employees described the phenomenon in their workplace. Through an exhaustive review of the literature, a gap emerged surrounding the real-life accounts of how employees in federal government organizations in the State of Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety. Although the researcher identified prior research through quantitative and qualitative studies on psychological safety in for-profit and non-profit organizations, these investigations centered largely on for-profit organizations outside of the United States, antecedents and effects of psychological safety, and the organizational level through a supervisor's perspective (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Javed et al., 2019; Page et al., 2019; Yulita et al., 2020). Therefore, prior to this study, minimal to no qualitative or quantitative investigations could be found on how federal government employees in Hawaii described psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. Thus, the researcher identified and synthesized the gap of the study, as part of the recommendations identified in prior literature discussed in Chapter 2 and four distinct empirical research studies.

As a collective, prior research and the four distinct studies identified a need for future qualitative research that focused on the experiences of employee's psychological safety in a non-profit organizational construct, such as that of a federal government organization (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017; Page et al., 2019). Furthermore, since previous research identified that much of the investigation on psychological safety, including at the organizational and supervisor level, had existed predominately in settings outside of the United States, this study aimed to add a new and diverse regional perspective found throughout Hawaii as a component of the synthesized gap in literature (Chou, 2010; Maximo et al., 2019; Okamura, 1980; Page et al., 2019; Say, 2012; Vales, 2014). Following this logic, the researcher determined that a qualitative descriptive study would offer the appropriate methodology and design for filling the gap in the existing literature by collecting and analyzing government employee real-life accounts of the psychological safety phenomenon.

Previous studies discussed during the review of literature in Chapter 2 revealed a lack in understanding psychological safety in government organizations. As noted by Maximo et al. (2019) and Page et al. (2019), psychological safety research up to this point had largely been explored in the context of for-profit organizations. The findings from the study contributed to further understanding of the gap in literature because it asked employees in federal government organizations in the State of Hawaii to share their individual lived experiences of psychological safety in the workplace. Until the execution of the study, little was known of the challenges in government organizations, which Maximo et al. (2019) suggested in a need to examine unique challenges of other organizational constructs. In response to the Maximo et al. suggestion, views and

perspectives of participants in the study allowed for the discovery of patterns and themes that could advance the scientific knowledge in this field of study, including adding to the multi-theoretical insight of the phenomenon of psychological safety in unique organizational settings.

Advancing the body of knowledge, the investigation identified six overarching themes that addressed the study research questions and employee perceptions of psychological safety in a federal government organization, including: (1) impactful to motivation and quality of work, (2) supportive network that is family like, and (3) all-inclusive environment, (4) commitment that affects employee needs, (5) agent of change to organizational barriers, and (6) enabler to personnel engagement. While much more remains to be explored holistically in the government setting, the study findings provide a good depiction of how employees in federal government organizations in the State of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace. Notably, had a quantitative approach been taken, the same understanding of the lived experience may not have been revealed. For instance, many participants perceived their respective government organization to be distant and less engaging in areas supportive of psychological safety, especially from the senior levels of the organization. Turns out, this is perceived by participants as a sense of being out of touch and problematic to their psychological safety given that senior leaders often fail to engage and acknowledge the workforce issues across all organizational levels.

Additionally, participants shared that due to the lack of understanding in the true belief of psychological safety, they often encountered supervisors and leadership who seemed unaware of their own actions and the implications to psychological safety. Some

participants described a sense of inexperienced leadership and lack of soft skills that could be reinforced through better policies, practices, and training. This indicates that government organizations may lack robust leaders and employee relationships crucial to openness and psychological safety as previously discovered by Kim et al. (2020). As a result, some participants assumed self-blame in their own engagement and efforts to support psychological safety in the workplace and organization, taking the blame of supervisors and imposing it upon themselves. The interesting aspect of discovering self-blame is that based on the findings by Diegmann and Rosenkranz (2017), self-blame is in opposition to collective responsibility, a derivative of a psychologically safe workplace. Thus, one could surmise that government organizations where individuals feel self-blame for problems are not psychologically safe because collective responsibility is low. The findings in the study are critical because they provide insight into how employees fundamentally experienced the establishment, or lack of establishment, of psychological safety in a government organizational construct. Furthermore, the study findings provide an account of how employees in government understand psychological safety overall and prioritize the aspects and beliefs as it relates to their own health and mental well-being.

Resultant of the study findings, practical implications from the study can enhance government leaders understanding of psychological safety, a revelation that many participants found was needed. As presented in the recommendations for future research, understanding the implications of the organizational hierarchy in a government organization and how the effects of psychological safety were discovered as a need provide answers and more questions in the problem space surrounding psychological safety. While previous research by Subhakaran and Dyaram (2018) highlighted that

different organizational hierarchies have different levels of psychological safety, much is still unknown. Reflecting on the conduct of this study, we find that more horizontal exploration of psychological safety could lead to further understanding of tailored situational responses such as level of training, which was discussed in the practical implications and suggestions section of this chapter.

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Appendix A.

Ten Strategic Points

Ten Strategic Points	
Strategic Points Descriptor	Learner Strategic Points for Proposed Study
<p>1. Dissertation Topic- Provides a broad research topic area/title.</p>	<p>Supervisor Influence on Employee Psychological Safety in U.S. Federal Government Organizations: A Qualitative Descriptive Study</p>
<p>2. Literature Review - Lists primary points for four sections in the Literature Review: (a) Background of the problem and the need for the study based on citations from the literature; (b) Theoretical foundations (Theories, models, and concepts) and if appropriate the conceptual framework to provide the foundation for study); (c) Review of literature topics with key themes for each one; (d) Summary.</p>	<p>(a) Background to the problem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to Page et al. (2019), expanded research in psychological safety in diverse organizational settings will help to understand factors that contribute to psychological safety within organizational culture. According to Frazier and Tupper (2018), further research in employee perceptions of supervisor behavior in the workplace will help to translate supervisor behaviors into norms that influence employee psychological safety in the organization. Newman et al. (2017) reviewed psychological safety research over the course of 25 years and found that 74 out of the 78 empirical studies in psychological safety used a quantitative design, leading Newman et al. to suggest the need for more qualitative research design in the field of psychological safety. Further studies of psychological safety (PS) should be explored to examine the unique challenges of various organizational settings, utilizing other methodology, such as that of qualitative design (Maximo et al., 2019). Specifically, Maximo et al. suggests: (1) future studies should examine the unique challenges of various organizational settings (2) future studies should use other methodology, such as that of qualitative design, and (3) future studies should include other related leadership constructs. <p>(b) Theoretical foundation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The theory of Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) by Dollard and Bakker (2010): A framework for explaining the relationships between job expectations, supervisor influence, resources, worker well-being, and workers' psychological health. PSC consists of policies, practices, and procedures developed and

Ten Strategic Points	
Strategic Points Descriptor	Learner Strategic Points for Proposed Study
	<p>implemented within an organization to ensure the protection of workers' psychological health and safety. Lee and Idris (2017) suggested the importance of the psychosocial safety climate as the precursor to better working conditions and to indirectly boosting employees' engagement, job performance and productivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The theory of Transformational Leadership by Burns(1978): The approach wherein leaders and followers embark on a mutual process of exalting each other to higher degrees of motivation and morality. For leaders, they raise the standards by adhering to the higher values and ideals of their followers. <p>(c) Review of literature topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization Safety: According to Le Coze (2019), organizational safety is a representation of safety within an organization as expressed through the social structure and beliefs of the organization. Hasan et al. (2019) posit that organization safety is the combined interaction of not only human and social aspects, but also consists of environmental and management factors. Liu et al. (2020) asserts that when organizations build a supportive and safe workplace, employees will believe their well-being is at the forefront generating trust and engagement in the organization. • Leadership and Psychological Safety: Chugtai (2016) asserts that the type of leadership within an organization has a direct effect on the psychological safety climate an organization creates through employee inspiration and voice. • Factors Influencing Psychological Safety: The experiences and data from the current research and literature suggest that individual behavior, mutual trust and respect, group dynamics, organizational climate, communication, and practice field and simulation space are important factors in the psychological safe environment (Kostovich et al., 2020; Stephen et al., 2020).

Ten Strategic Points	
<p>The ten strategic points emerge from researching literature on a topic, which is based on, or aligned with a defined need or problem space within the literature as well as the learner's personal passion, future career purpose, and degree area. The Ten Strategic Points document includes the following key points that define the research focus and approach:</p>	
Strategic Points Descriptor	Learner Strategic Points for Proposed Study
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Influence of Psychological Safety on Employees: Psychological safety is an established organizational norm and common belief that provides open and trusting relationships to foster frank and candid discussion without fear of retaliation, rejection, or dismissal (Boylan & Turner, 2017). Frazier et al. (2017) confirmed the importance of psychological safety as a facilitator of organizational adaptability and employee engagement and productivity. According to Basit (2017), it is essential to form a psychologically safe workplace for improved engagement and productivity. Through the psychologically safe environment, employees feel free to interact and engage for better performance of the organization. • Psychological Safety and the Organization: McLinton et al. (2018) reported psychological safety to be vital in the hierarchical organizational structure, complex organizational systems, and on occasions where an error may result in dangerous consequences. Edmondson (2018) suggests that for a team member to feel free in information gathering, communication, and idea-sharing, they must be sure of their psychological safety. • The Influence of Psychological Safety on Non-Profit Organizations: The existence and survival of an organization is driven by positive attitudes and purpose driven attributes which consist of individual well-being and a psychosocial construct (Dhanesh, 2020). Recognizing this fact in both a for-profit and non-profit organization is similar based on the general assumption by Dhanesh that stakeholders possess the power of pressure that shapes organizational goals and responsibility. <p>(d) Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background: There is a need to understand supervisors' influence on employee perceptions of PS. • Prior Studies: There exist a gap in the literature regarding leader influences on PS in organizations other than corporations (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Maximo et al., 2019; Page et al.,

Ten Strategic Points	
<p>The ten strategic points emerge from researching literature on a topic, which is based on, or aligned with a defined need or problem space within the literature as well as the learner's personal passion, future career purpose, and degree area. The Ten Strategic Points document includes the following key points that define the research focus and approach:</p>	
Strategic Points Descriptor	Learner Strategic Points for Proposed Study
	<p>2019).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology and Design: Qualitative descriptive approach involves participants' perceptions and experiences through descriptions (Sandelowski, 2010). Current studies suggest that PS should be explored in various organizational settings using other methodology, such as qualitative (Maximo et al., 2019). Newman et al. (2017) revealed that of 78 empirical studies over the course of 25 years, 74 were of a quantitative nature, recommending that future research utilize a qualitative design.
3. Problem Statement - Describes the problem to address through the study based on defined needs or problem space supported by the literature.	<p>It is not known how federal government employees describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.</p>
4. Sample and Location – Identifies sample, needed sample size, and location (study phenomena with small numbers).	<p><u>Population</u>: Federal government employees located in the United States. <u>Target population</u>: Employees in a federal government organization in Hawaii. <u>Sample</u>: Questionnaire: 40; Interviews: 12-15 / <u>Sampling frame</u>: 120+</p>
5. Research Questions – Provides research questions to collect data to address the problem statement.	<p><i>RQ1</i>: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace? <i>RQ2</i>: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?</p>
6. Phenomenon - Describes the phenomenon to be better understood (qualitative).	<p>How employees describe their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of psychological safety.</p>
7. Methodology and Design - Describes the selected methodology and specific research design to address the problem statement and research questions.	<p>Qualitative descriptive study.</p>
8. Purpose Statement – Provides one sentence statement of purpose including the problem statement, methodology, design, target population, and location.	<p>The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.</p>

Ten Strategic Points	
<p>The ten strategic points emerge from researching literature on a topic, which is based on, or aligned with a defined need or problem space within the literature as well as the learner's personal passion, future career purpose, and degree area. The Ten Strategic Points document includes the following key points that define the research focus and approach:</p>	
Strategic Points Descriptor	Learner Strategic Points for Proposed Study
9.	<p>Data Collection – Describes primary instruments and sources of data to answer research questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Researcher developed open-ended questionnaires will be collected in SurveyMonkey. 2) Researcher developed questions will be used for individual semi-structured interviews via Zoom. 12-15 interviewees will be recruited from the questionnaire participants.
10.	<p>Data Analysis – Describes the specific data analysis approaches to be used to address research questions.</p> <p>Interview data will be transcribed using Zoom, followed by the member checking process. Data Analysis will follow the six-step procedure as described by Braun and Clarke (2006).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Familiarization with the data collected. 2. Coding the data by grouping similar statements. 3. Theming the data by grouping similar codes. 4. Reviewing and refining the themes by comparing them to the original data to ensure accuracy and relevance to answering the research questions. 5. Naming and defining the themes. 6. Presenting the results.

Appendix B.**Site Authorization Letter(s)**

Site Authorization(s) on file with Grand Canyon University.

Appendix C.

IRB Approval Letter



3300 West Camelback Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85017 602.639.7500 Toll Free 800.800.9776 www.gcu.edu

DATE: May 23, 2022

TO: Vernon Brown
FROM: Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board

STUDY: Supervisor Influence on Employee Psychological Safety in U.S. Federal
TITLE: Government Organizations: A Qualitative Descriptive Study
IRB:

REFERENCE IRB-2022-4605

#:
SUBMISSION: Submission Response for Initial Review Submission Packet
TYPE:

ACTION: Determination of Exempt Status

REVIEW: Category 2
CATEGORY:

Thank you for your submission of study materials.

Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board has determined this study to be EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations. You now have GCU IRB approval to collect data.

If applicable, please use the approved recruitment script and informed consent that are included in your published documents.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at irb@gcu.edu or 602-639-7804. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

Congratulations!

On behalf of the College of Doctoral Studies, we are pleased to inform you that you have now advanced to the Candidacy stage of your Doctoral journey. This means you have completed all of the required proposal phases of the dissertation and you are now ready to move into the research portion of the dissertation work.

This is an important step in the doctoral process. Through advancing to candidacy, you are now among an elite group of learners who are doing academic research. This also means you are representing yourself and Grand Canyon University as an independent doctoral researcher and with that comes a great deal of responsibility. We wish you the best in your endeavors! Congratulations on this important step in your doctoral journey and welcome to Candidacy!



Dr. Michael Berger
Dean, College of Doctoral Studies



Dr. Cynthia Bainbridge
Associate Dean, Research and Dissertations
Director, Institutional Review Board
College of Doctoral Studies

Appendix D.

Informed Consent



Grand Canyon University
College of Doctoral Studies
3300 W. Camelback Road
Phoenix, AZ 85017
Phone: 602-639-7804
Email: irb@gcu.edu

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INTRODUCTION

The title of this research study is, "Supervisor Influence on Employee Psychological Safety in U.S. Federal Government Organizations: A Qualitative Descriptive Study."

I am Vernon Brown, a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Liyan Jin in the College of Doctoral Studies at Grand Canyon University. The purpose of the study is to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.

KEY INFORMATION

This document defines the terms and conditions for consenting to participate in this research study.

- **How do I know if I can be in the study?**

- You can participate in the study if you:
 1. Are a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii.
 2. Are employed in a federal government organization for more than two years.
 3. Are at least 18 years of age or older.
 4. Are virtual participation and meeting accessible.
 5. Are willing to answer demographic questions related to age, gender, current position at your organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for your current supervisor.
 6. Are willing to complete a questionnaire.
 7. Are willing to be audio recorded if interviewed.
- You cannot participate in the study if you:
 1. Are not a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii.
 2. Are not employed in a federal government organization for more than two years.
 3. Are not 18 years of age or older.
 4. Are not virtual participation and meeting accessible.



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- 5. Are not willing to answer demographic questions related to age, gender, current position at your organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for your current supervisor.
- 6. Are not willing to complete a questionnaire.
- 7. Are not willing to be audio recorded if interviewed.

- **What am I being asked to do?**

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

What:

1. Complete the online questionnaire, which includes the informed consent form, the demographic questions related to age, gender, current position at your organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for your current supervisor, and the open-ended study questionnaire (30-45 minutes).
2. Take part in a single interview (60 minutes).
3. Review your interview transcripts (45 minutes).

When: May 2022 – August 2022.

Where: All study events will take place via the internet.

How: The online questionnaire, which includes the informed consent form, demographic questions, and open-ended study questionnaire can be accessible through a SurveyMonkey provided link. Interview with participants will be scheduled and conducted online via the Zoom conferencing app.

Audio recording:

I would like to use Zoom online recording services to record your responses during the one-on-one online interview. Because the Zoom recording services can show who you are if you choose so, the recorded files, which will be downloaded and stored on the researcher's personal password-protected laptop, will use a unique pseudonym as the file identifier and will be accessible only by the researcher. Recording files will be maintained for up to three years following the study after which they will be removed by permanent deletion. You cannot participate if you decline being audio recorded. An audio recording will allow the researcher to reduce errors in the interview transcription, confirming that the data is accurately reported.

- **Who will have access to my information?** My dissertation chair, committee members, and all College of Doctoral Studies' reviewers may view your information and your answers.

Participation is voluntary. However, you can leave the study at any time, even if you have not finished, without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop participation, you may do so by: requesting to end the interview early. If so, I will not use the information that I gathered from you before you chose to stop.



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- **Any possible risks or discomforts?** There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with the study.
- **Any direct benefits for me?** No.
- **Any paid compensation for my time?** All participants in the questionnaire will receive compensation in the form of a \$10.00 Visa gift card that will be sent by email once the questionnaire is complete. If you participate in both the questionnaire and the follow-up one-on-one interview, you will be compensated with a \$20.00 Visa gift card (vice \$10.00 Visa gift card) that will be emailed once the questionnaire and interview are both complete.
- **How will my information and/or identity be protected?** All data and identifiable information will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law. To protect your identity your data will be provided a pseudonym. Digital files will be stored in password-encrypted folders on the researcher's personal computer. When not in use, hardcopy data will be stored in a locked water/fireproof file cabinet in a private location.

PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION COLLECTED

The data collected will be grouped. The results of the study will be published as part of a dissertation. The data may be used in reports, lectures, and journals as required to complete a doctoral program. The researcher will code the data to protect the participant identity at all times.

PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY

- **Will researchers ever be able to link my data/responses back to me?** Yes, your real name will be collected on the informed consent and a pseudonym corresponding to your real name will be created and stored in an electronic ledger to replace your real name throughout the duration of the study. To protect your confidentiality, the informed consent and the electronic ledger will be separated from all study data and notes and will be stored in an isolated password protected folder on the researcher's password-protected laptop that will only accessible only to the researcher. Printed informed consent forms will be stored in an envelope separated from all printed research data and notes and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office which is only accessible by the researcher.
- **Will my data include information that can identify me (names, addresses, etc.)?** No.
- **Will researchers assign my data/responses a research ID code to use instead of my name?** Yes, your data will be provided a code name.
 - **If yes, will researchers create a list to link names with their research ID codes?** Yes, a ledger of the ID codes will be created.
 - **If yes, how will researchers secure the link of names and research ID codes? How long will the link be kept? Who has access? Approximate destroy date?** The researcher will secure the ledger in a password-encrypted folder on his personal computer. The computer cannot be unlocked without a password or face recognition. No one other than the researcher will have access to this information. After completing the study, the researcher will move the ledger to a password-encrypted flash drive. The researcher will store the flash



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drive at a secret location in a locked water/fireproof file cabinet for three years following completion of the study. The approximate date of destruction is 12/31/25.

- **How will my data be protected (electronic and hardcopy)? Where? How long? Who will have access? Approximate destroy or de-identification date?** Electronic data will be stored in a password-protected computer for three years. Once three years have passed, electronic data will be removed. Hardcopies of data will be stored in a locked water/fireproof file cabinet. After three years hard copy data will be shredded. The approximate date of destruction is 12/31/25.

- **What is the privacy policy for any recording software, or transcription software companies?**

Zoom: <https://explore.zoom.us/en/privacy/>

- **Where and how will the agreed upon consent forms be secured?** Consent forms will be collected electronically and stored separately from research data and notes in an isolated password protected folder on the researchers' password-protected computer. The researcher will print a hard copy of the agreed upon consent forms, which he will keep in an envelope separated from research data and notes and locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's home office. The researcher will be the only one with access to these files.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Once identifiers (name, phone number, email address) are removed from these data collected for the study, the de-identified information could be used for future research studies or distributed to other investigators for future research studies without additional informed consent from you or your legally authorized representative.

STUDY CONTACTS

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by Vernon Brown, email: [REDACTED], and telephone number [REDACTED].

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the College of Doctoral Studies at IRB@gcu.edu; (602) 639-7804.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- You have been given an opportunity to read and discuss the informed consent and ask questions about the study.
- You have been given enough time to consider whether or not you want to participate.



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- You have read and understand the terms and conditions and agree to take part in this research study.
- You understand your participation is voluntary and that you may stop participation at any time without penalty.

Your signature means that you understand your rights listed above and agree to participate in this study.

Please type your **First name and Last name** below along with **today's date** as your Electronic Signature. Example: Jane Doe 5/01/2022



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IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/22/2022

Appendix E.

Questionnaire/Interview Data Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire

This demographic questionnaire will be utilized to obtain key demographic information concerning the sample participants. This information will confirm that the sample participants meet criteria set by the researcher. The criteria collected includes age, gender, current position at your organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for your current supervisor. The demographic questionnaire will be provided through the SurveyMonkey application link to the informed consent and study questionnaire included in the research flyer.

1. Age: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+
2. Gender: _____
3. Current position at your organization: _____
4. Years of working in current position: _____
5. Years working for current supervisor: 2-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16+

Sincerely,

Vernon Brown
Doctoral Student
Grand Canyon University

Open-Ended Questionnaire Protocol

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.

Psychological safety is an important construct used in the study. The definition of this term is provided below:

Psychological safety is a shared belief that an organization is safe for employees to share ideas and fully express feelings without fear of rejection, punishment or retribution that affects well-being (Edmondson, 1999; Newman et al., 2017). The questions outlined in the open-ended questionnaire explore the perception one feels regarding the explained meaning of psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on their psychological safety.

1. Describe why psychological safety is important in the workplace. (RQ1)
2. Based on the provided definition of psychological safety, explain what aspect(s) of psychological safety is/are most important to you. (RQ1)
3. Tell me about your supervisor's commitment to the psychological safety of employees. (RQ2)
4. Describe your supervisor's communication skills and how it affects your workplace psychological well-being. (RQ2)
5. Describe a method of interaction your supervisor provides, or should provide, to allow you to freely communicate within the workplace. (RQ1, RQ2)
6. Describe a recent interaction you had with your supervisor and how it made you feel about your psychological safety in the workplace. (RQ2)
7. Describe your level of engagement and trust with your supervisor. (RQ2)
8. Describe how your coworkers react when you share concerns, ideas, or thoughts. (RQ1)
9. Describe how your supervisor reacts when you share concerns, ideas, or thoughts. (RQ1)
10. Describe how your upper-level leadership reacts when you share concerns, ideas, or thoughts. (RQ1)
11. Describe other ways that encourage you to feel safe and speak up in the workplace. (RQ1)

*** Qualification question for interview participation**

12. Are you willing to be interviewed? **Yes/No ***

The interview phase will further explore how you describe your supervisors' influence on psychological safety in your government organization. The data gathered in the interview phase may increase knowledge in the phenomenon of supervisor influence on psychological safety. The results will be used to develop a richer understanding to answer the research questions posed in this study. The interview would last approximately one hour. It could take place between May 2022 and August 2022. If interested, please provide your contact information below where you can be reached:

Email address

Phone Number (Optional)

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Interview Project: Supervisor Influence on Employee Psychological Safety in
U.S. Federal Government Organizations: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

Date of Interview: _____

Time of Interview: Begin: _____ End: _____

Interviewer: Vernon Brown

Participant Pseudonym: _____

In accordance with the interview script, the researcher will conduct the interview process in the following manner:

1. The researcher will thank the participant.
2. The researcher will review the purpose of the study.
3. The researcher reminds the participant of their rights, the confidentiality agreement, and destruction of data in the informed consent form.
4. The researcher will review the key term(s) and concept(s) provided for the study.

Psychological safety is an important construct used throughout the study and in the context of the interview questions. Psychological safety is a shared belief that an organization is safe for employees to share ideas and fully express feelings without fear of rejection, punishment or retribution that affects well-being (Edmondson, 1999; Newman et al., 2017). The questions outlined in the one-on-one interview explore the perception one feels regarding the explained meaning of psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on their psychological safety.

Associated terms used throughout the study are:

- a. **Employee Engagement.** The opposite of burnout, employee engagement refers to a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind towards work tasks.
- b. **Organizational Adaptability.** A derivative of organizational change, organizational adaptability is about setting expectations for the individual employee and the organization to adjust to the ever-changing environment and mobilizing followers to overcome challenges and improve the organization.

- c. **Organizational Culture.** A pattern of shared basic assumptions that an organization learns as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well; therefore, the organization teaches to new members the correct way it perceives, thinks, and feels in relation to those problems.
 - d. **Organizational Performance.** The collective performance of individual employees of an organization.
 - e. **Prosocial Motivation.** The desire to expend effort to benefit other people.
 - f. **Psychological Safety.** The extent to which employees feel comfort in taking interpersonal risks that are positive and free of embarrassment, shame, or ridicule.
 - g. **Psychosocial Safety Climate.** Consists of policies, practices, and procedures developed and implemented within an organization to ensure the protection of workers' psychological health and safety.
5. The researcher will review the logistics of the study (time and answering of questions).
 6. The researcher will ask for permission to audio record or video record the interview.
 7. The researcher will ask participants if they have any other questions before the interview begins.
 8. The researcher will begin the interview.

Interview Script

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. Are you currently in a private or secure location?

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.

As a reminder, the Informed Consent Form that you agreed to indicated that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may stop your participation at any time without any consequences. You may skip questions without any penalty during the interview process. If you choose to withdraw, your data will not be used.

Participation and all responses are confidential unless disclosure is required by law. All data collected will be provided a unique pseudonym to protect your identity. Data collected during this interview will be password-protected on USB flash drives and stored for three years in a secure lockbox that only I have access to, unless the dissertation chair and committee, peer reviewer, Institutional Review Board, or College of Doctoral Studies representative request access. After three years, the electronic data stored on the flash drives will be erased.

Do you have any questions regarding the consent or the purpose of the study?

This interview will take approximately 60 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions you will be asked. Please answer to the best of your ability or recollection.

1. Do I have your permission to audio record (video record) this interview?
2. Do you have any other questions before we begin the interview?

Interview Questions

1. Describe your perception of your organization's psychological safety. (RQ1)

Probe 1- What impact do you think your perception of psychological safety has on your work engagement?
2. Please describe how psychological safety is included within your organization policies. Please provide an example. (RQ1)

Probe 1- How has your organization policy influenced your well-being, engagement, and productivity?

Probe 2- What would you do if you could change your organization policies to further support psychological safety?
3. Describe how your perception of psychological safety influences your contribution to the organization, if any. (RQ1)

Probe 1- You mentioned... could you tell me a little bit more about that please?

Probe 2- What is the single most important thing you would focus on within your organization to change your perception?
4. Describe the ways you express your feedback, ideas, and concerns within your organization. (RQ1)

Probe 1- Describe your official organization policy and process for submitting feedback, ideas, and concerns.

Probe 2- What change would you like to make in your official organization policy for submitting feedback, ideas, and concerns?
5. Describe what you have experienced when trying to express your opinions or ideas within your workplace. (RQ1)

Probe 1- Please describe your most vivid experience(s).

Probe 2- Just to make sure that I fully understand the problem, could you give me an example of what you mean by...

Probe 3- What would you do, if anything, to change the experience you felt when you expressed your opinions or ideas?
6. Please describe how psychological safety has impacted your sense of belonging or acceptance in the workplace, if any. (RQ1)

Probe 1- Please describe how you feel when you share your personal characteristics or put forth an effort to be yourself.

Probe 2 – Please describe changes you may have made to your personal characteristics or actions to fit in and feel accepted in your workplace.
7. Please describe how psychological safety affects your motivation to learn and expand your professional knowledge within the workplace. (RQ1).

Probe 1- How has your workplace psychological safety affected your desire to learn new things relevant to your work?

Probe 2- How has your workplace psychological safety affected your involvement in new projects in your workplace?

8. Please describe any changes you have experienced in the psychological safety of your current organization since you first started your employment with them. (RQ1)

Probe 1- What has been the cause of the changes you have experienced?

Probe 2- What changes have created the most impact? Why?

9. Please describe what your organization has done well to encourage employees to speak up and share ideas. (RQ1)

Probe 1- Why did you say _____?

Probe 2 - How could your organization become better?

10. Please describe the interpersonal relationship you have with your supervisor, your coworkers, and others in the organization. (RQ2)

Probe 1- How does your perception of your organizations psychological safety affect your interpersonal relationship within your workplace and team?

Probe 2- What do you think would happen if...?

11. Please describe how you feel when you voice your thoughts and feelings to your immediate supervisor. (RQ2)

Probe 1- How did you feel when your voice was welcomed? / How did you feel when your voice was unwelcomed?

Probe 2- What would you change to support your psychological safety?

12. Describe the influence that supervisor feedback may have on your psychological safety. (RQ2)

Probe 1- What type of supervisor feedback behaviors would make you feel unsafe? What type of supervisor feedback behaviors would make you feel safe?

Probe 2- What type of supervisor feedback behaviors do you feel allow an employee to freely express themselves?

13. Describe how your psychological safety in the organization has been affected by your supervisor. Explain. (RQ2)

Probe 1- Can you describe the influence your supervisor has on your level of work engagement?

Probe 2- Can you describe what your supervisor does great or not so great to support your psychological safety? How would you improve your supervisors influence and impact on your psychological safety?

14. Please describe your perception of the psychological safety impact on the quality of work within your organization. (RQ1/RQ2)

Probe 1- Why do you perceive the quality of work to be _____?

Probe 2- What policies and procedures do you feel have impact on the quality of work in your organization?

15. Please describe how supervisor influence on psychological safety has impacted your attitude and behavior within your organization. (RQ2)

Probe 1- Why do you feel that supervisor influence on psychological safety has impacted the _____ in your attitude and behavior at your workplace?

Probe 2- What aspects of leadership have contributed to your perception of the influence on your attitude and behavior?

Probe 3 – What policies and practices have impacted your attitude and behavior that you described?

16. Please describe what your organization does well to address psychological safety within the workplace. (RQ1/RQ2)

Probe 1 – What can your organization do more of to support psychological safety in your workplace?

17. Please describe what your supervisor does well to support positive psychological safety in the workplace. (RQ2)

Probe 1 – What preventative measures could your supervisor include to increase the positive psychological safety in the workplace?

Probe 2- What aspects do you feel your supervisor could focus more on to increase psychological safety in the workplace?

18. Is there anything that you would like to add about your supervisor's influence on your psychological safety that has not been discussed? Explain. (RQ2)

End Interview

1. Thank the respondent for their participation.
2. Inform the participant of the member checking process. Inform participant that the interview transcription will be emailed to them within 2-3 days of completion of the interview.
3. Inform participant that they will have 5 business days to confirm the accuracy of their interview transcription. Inform the participant that if nothing is received within 5 business days, the researcher will initiate a follow-up.
4. Ask participant if they have anyone that they can reach out to who might be interested in participating in the study and if so, have that person contact the researcher.

Appendix F.

Codebook

Table F

Codebook

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
accessibility	17	How employees talk of the access to leaders	"Oh, I would, if there is something I'm sure everybody would appreciate or would want to have that direct approach or that direct avenue to top leadership or to the Commander. You know that's just a good idea, though I mean operational, you can have...it has some impact to things in the schedules and I would say in a perfect world it'd be awesome to just go to the Commander and say hey, these are the issues that are happening within the organization writ large, here's how I think we should fix it."
acknowledge problems	3	Describing the handling of problems in the organization	"A...not so great from where I sit um there's a lot of I feel like on a certain level people kind of acknowledging problems and turning a blind eye because of fear of how deep the rabbit hole goes or how heavy the hammer that falls, you know you bring up one thing and it just gets...you'll get smashed."
anonymity	10	The ability to provide anonymous input	"Um I think, maybe anonymous I know that a lot of people if they don't think that their name is specifically attached to things then they're more willing to give honest feedback."
approachability	23	Employee description of leadership accessibility	"I trust her more than I have most supervisors in the past. She loves to talk story and we laugh, and things are not so stressful. I can also go to her with an issue and know she will listen and do her best."
ask for input	2	Supervisor encouragement to provide input	"Asking for you know my opinions and really that's it asking for my opinions."
attentive	6	Supervisor attention span and behavior when employees provide input	"My supervisor is attentive and listens to my concerns and those of everyone in my office. She always emphasizes that her door is open, and she is always willing to talk about anything."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
autonomy	5	Expressed as the ability to work independently	"Supervisors who have done this well, in my opinion, provide leadership and organizational goals and objectives, enable employees to operate with some degree of autonomy to align to those goals and objectives, provide guidance when needed to ensure alignment and enhance individual and collective (team) value to the organization."
avoid contact	2	Avoidance of others	"I now avoid that particular person at every turn. I skip meetings if they are going to be there. Zero Trust, complete fear of reprisal."
barriers	2	Obstacles to interact with leadership	"I don't interact with upper-level management much, but I think this is mostly because they feel out of touch to me. Maybe if management socialized with everyone more equally it would be different and break the barriers of separation or the perception of that separation."
be heard	3	Description of how employees want to feel	"Psychological safety is important to me because I want to feel safe when I come to work. I want to be heard and listened to and I want to know that I can say something if I am concerned or worried about a process or even another coworker."
be myself	7	Employee description of not having to change their personal characteristics or personal attributes when working	"Yeah, I don't think I've had to change if there's change its change to the outside environment right which group am I in, because we work in a professional environment that includes many levels."
care for people	22	Discussing how supervisors should regard their employees as human beings through a caring attitude	"That makes me again feel secure because she cares about me as an individual and um...and also, you know she cares you know for the rest of our team, so it gives like a sense of security and that you matter and um."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
clear and concise	4	The ability to be specific and to the point with clear communication efforts in the workplace	"This this can go in so many different ways. So, a lot of times like my personality can be very expressive just because I feel like I need to be as clear as possible so that way there's no misunderstanding. But again, I've learned to be clear and concise and lean with my communication in my engagement with people. That's not to say that has affected my psychological safety negatively or my ability to be myself negatively, but it has actually made me, I think, better has helped me to gauge...and it's a skill that I that now apply in my personal and I appreciate it."
collaboration	7	The coming together and working together of all in the workplace	"Psychological safety is important in the workplace because it provides an environment for employee engagement. When employees feel safe at work, it's more open to engage. This includes working on projects together, solving problems, collaboration and working with other stakeholders external to the organization."
collaboration tools and space	8	Employee discussions of the tools and means they have to collaborate with the organization, such as Microsoft Teams, video teleconferencing apps, email	"We just use Microsoft teams and zoom to communicate and share documents and taskers that need to be done. Mostly teams, because of the many features to collaborate anytime and share anything with coworkers and my supervisor."
collaborative	3	A process of working together to solve problems	"All my coworkers are open and listen. Some more than others but I've never had any bad interaction in discussing things. We share a lot of work ideas and talk sometimes about personal things but mostly work."
collaborative teams	20	The team structure that works to solve problems and provide solutions	"My office is very open, and we respect each other as equals and teammates. Weekly office meetings, training and problem solving together have helps us build and learn to work together and respect each other."
comfortable mindset	14	How employees describe their general mindset in a psychologically safe workplace	"I was very comfortable with just telling him like, this is what's really going on this is like what I really think you can do, and so we had we had a good relationship like that, and you know we vented to each other a lot, which helped."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
command events	2	Socializing events that a government organization holds to bring employees together (e.g., organizational picnics, family days)	"Command events help. Before covid we used to have annual picnics, family day, Saturdays at the college football game and other fun events. I learned a lot about my peers and felt more comfortable talking with them at work. Not so much now and especially since covid and since many transferred or still telework."
committed	4	A behavior of leadership as seen by employees	"Commitment is there and shown through the open-door policy and willing to discuss issues to make things better."
common bond	3	What employees see as commonality that brings them together in their efforts	"My coworkers usually have the same concerns as I since our work is pretty much the same but different situations."
communication policy	74	A look at the organizational policies and process that support communication	"My local organization, we do, we sit down, we talk all the time, not just within our little shop here, but within the overall organization. In looking at the local one here in Hawaii it's very good at that very, lot of lines of open communication between all things that they do very well."
confidentiality	3	Describing the ability to feel safe in expressing things one-on-one	"Having a method to privately share a concern or thought such that it is confidential."
considerate	3	Having care and concern for one another and different views	"My supervisor take in consideration of my views and opinion. As well as gives encouragement in areas, that can or may need focus in also."
COVID effects	26	When describing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizational psychological safety	"There hasn't been a whole lot done in the last two years to promote a safer psychological environment, however, they continue to emphasize, you know, that people should be willing to speak up willing to share thoughts and everything, so I don't think it's degraded any um in effort, but it certainly hasn't increased much either."
creativity	2	The ability to be creative and provide creative input to organizational objectives	"Psychological safety in an organization is key to innovation and higher morale. When employees feel safe, they also feel comfortable bringing up new or opposing ideas to the table, allowing for more creativity and comradery."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
culture of openness	101	A culture that is open and free to share ideas and thoughts	"It is a very open place of business that allows people to use their imagination, sometimes without that fear of you know, looking bad or you know being ridiculed so it very much is an inclusive organization that allows you to speak what you think, and they will at least listen to you before a decision is made on any of our decision points."
deal with stressors	2	Ability to express and counter the stressors in the workplace	"Dealing with stressors and coping with situations allow us to be able to manage and recover from situational stressors."
difference of opinions	3	Healthy difference of opinions with others	"My supervisor is committed, easy going and understanding most of the time. Of course, we have disagreements but overall, my supervisor makes me feel comfortable by listening and giving proper attention to me and my fellow coworkers."
dismissive	3	Not willing to accept new ideas	"He occasionally has positive reactions but will only allow them if he can see that it has worked elsewhere. Other times they will be discounted before the conversation is finished."
distant	3	Employee description of management	"Upper-level management is unapproachable and distant. I have never spoken to them about anything and avoid them where I can because they just seem out of touch and don't care."
efficiency	2	The status of the organization output	"Psychological Safety is important in an efficient workplace because an organization/business should want their employees to feel safe in approaching them with inefficiencies, good ideas, or problems requiring senior level leadership attention."
email	2	An electronic means of collaboration and communication	"So, some might even be just passing emails back and forth, because we just don't have time to get together, but we still need to communicate."
emotional intelligence	9	Describing a supervisor's ability to read and understand others around them	"As I mentioned before they can identify and see the red flags early on, when a person might be having a difficult time and either engage with them early and engage with them early and then get them either the support or help that they may need or be able to mitigate what comes out of those."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
employee recognition	12	A description of recognition of employee efforts in the workplace	"I think, acknowledging different groups and members of our organization for achievements and accomplishments whether that's a monetary achievement or a just a certificate of appreciation or being put out on a bulletin that hey this person is being congratulated for this or this person is receiving a reward for this um getting you know either whether it's a monetary or a type of leave or something like that, as a thank you, I think that that helps a lot."
employee well-being	2	The mental comfort resultant from the organization's reduction of stressors in the workplace	"Establishing the safe well-being for me is most important."
empowers	2	Describing the supervisor ability to give power to the employee in task and innovation efforts	"A good supervisor that has a healthy relationship with the people that work for them, and with them kind of fosters empowerment and ownership."
encouraging	9	A supervisor behavior that enables employees to succeed in various areas	"My supervisor is supportive in his communication and encourages me to do things outside of my comfort box. This has made me more eager to learn and to explore new things and ideas. I feel empowered to do more and to learn."
engagement	77	Description of the interaction between the employee and supervisor and employee and coworkers	"What they do well, is you know I've talked about the overarching many of the supervisors many of leadership have that personal engagement when they come to a meeting, whether it be a one-on-one meeting I mean it could be stopping in the hallway and talking to somebody but that that personal engagement."
equality	9	Employee description of equal and fair treatment	"My supervisor works to support equality and respect in our office. This is most evident by the way he listens, supports new ideas and encourages everyone to lead and take charge in their own areas."
express feelings	2	Employee descriptions of feel free to express themselves	"Having the ability to express these types of stressors or situations allows us to heal and cope with them."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
face-to-face	4	Describing the interaction with other employees and with supervisors and the proximity versus virtual	"Command events help. Before covid we used to have annual picnics, family day, Saturdays at the college football game and other fun events. I learned a lot about my peers and felt more comfortable talking with them at work. Not so much now and especially since covid and since many transferred or still telework."
fail and learn	4	Description of the ability to make a mistake and not be punished but learn from it	"And then when people do make a mistake right it's just a learning experience so being able to you know make good out of bad how you know how do you do that."
family	10	A description of the workplace construct that employees share in the organization	"My coworkers are like family, and we are comfortable speaking with each other openly about usually anything."
feedback process	52	Describing the feedback loop and process that the organization maintains	"Having command quarters and allowing to have open forums with the Commander you know I think he allows if anybody has any questions that's a pretty good you know idea of how well people can get feedback, we have some online ways to provide feedback to what we refer to as the Triad and they're just being able to make our command a little bit better."
feel valued	31	Employee descriptions of feeling a part of the organization	"It definitely helps me feel like I am a valuable asset to my organization and that the things that I say are not just because I may be a not a supervisor or on the lower end. It makes it feel like I'm being heard understood, so that way they know that there is there is an identified problem or a potential identified problem that needs to be addressed."
follow through	3	A description of the action's leadership takes when hearing out issues and concerns	"I have a great trust in my supervisor that actions and concerns will be addressed accordingly in a timely manner."
good communicator	9	How employees describe their supervisor communication skills	"A great communicator in that he shows empathy and caring and has a high level of emotional intelligence to see a problem or notice and issue and then ask what's wrong."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
group discussions	18	Describing the way conversations are held with the employees in the organization	"We have weekly Monday morning meetings, and it gets the input what's going on to the big boss what's going on from all the levels and then he asks input from everybody to each department and division on what they think is the best action and, by doing that everybody feels like they have an input into the overall mission."
helpful	2	How employees describe the attitude and behavior of their supervisor	"The tone and speaking is respectfully, helpful and informative which encourages me to be better and do better in an office that is relaxed and family like."
hesitation	2	How employees describe some behavior within the organization depending on the personalities and behavior of others	"Talking with him about somethings often leads to discussions about others in the organization. I fear that this may happen with others he talks with so I had to hold back some things I fear could be shared with others. Lacks a feeling of privacy."
human needs	2	Employee descriptions of the basic needs to feel safe and to trust in the organization	"It is said that there are 6 human needs: certainty, variety, significance, love/connection, growth, contribution. My personal experience is that, with higher degrees of psychological safety, I can maintain high functionality and performance even if the environment lacks certainty and variety. With lower degrees of psychological safety, however, all areas of human needs are negatively impacted."
human interaction	77	Employee descriptions of the importance of interaction with each other	"I think the major thing that has helped me evolve and understand that it is safe to speak up and to do things is looking at the human interaction from the upper leadership during meetings, whether it be you know one on one meetings or in a group setting just that instead of the institutional regimental meeting structure that I have unfortunately been used to it, it's seeing that leader as a human being."
hypocrisy	5	Employee descriptions of how supervisors say one thing and do another; practice what you preach	"It is borderline. While he does frequently say mental health is important and supports needs randomly, his actions do not always convey that it really is important."
ice breakers	2	Description of the entry points into personal interactions with supervisors and coworkers	"Having conversations about something other than work is an ice breaker that often leads to other conversations regarding work. So, it helps to talk about non work things."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
improves morale	2	Employee description of the moral boost that a positive psychological safety environment fosters	"Psychological safety in an organization is key to innovation and higher morale. When employees feel safe, they also feel comfortable bringing up new or opposing ideas to the table, allowing for more creativity and comradery."
in sync	3	Describing the ability to be on the same page in thought and actions with supervisors and others	"People to weigh in on this tasker and let us know what you think about whatever the subject is so it's just a way of like organizing socializing taskers making sure everybody's synced up and then kind of kind of sharing across the division here's what I'm working on."
inclusive	19	How employees describe being included in the organizational process	"The fact that there's encouragement at all levels, both at the upper leadership level, all the way to the department level and down through to include everybody in the conversation when there's a there's an issue or problem that needs to be solved, instead of just running off and solving it but asking people and it only takes a few minutes or it could take several hours or several days to get all of the information to come up with the best solution."
innovation	9	A description of the ability to generate new ideas, new ways, and new processes through exploration	"Our team is always trying to help one another with our tasks or problems. When someone has a concern, we usually take a few minutes to see how we can resolve it in the best manner for all those involved. New ideas are also welcome and will usually be implemented for a short while to see if they are worth becoming a process."
in-person	2	How employees describe and interaction between supervisors and coworkers as in-person versus distant and virtual	"Command events help. Before covid we used to have annual picnics, family day, Saturdays at the college football game and other fun events. I learned a lot about my peers and felt more comfortable talking with them at work. Not so much now and especially since covid and since many transferred or still telework."
interpersonal relationships	233	The explanation of human connections and shared personal interaction between people	"My immediate supervisor, I'm with him every day. We talk more we talk about things, whether it's work related or non-work related we spend a lot of time discussing you know families that type stuff so it's not you don't feel like you can only talk about work and because of that it makes the work portion much easier to deal with."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
isolated	2	How employees describe the impact of COVID-19 and the impact on their psychological well-being	"Mental health is important especially in the pandemic years and COVID."
lack of transparency	3	A description of leadership inability to share and communicate with employees	"I think they listen, but I don't get to have much interaction with them in the so called "big castle" so I think it could be better if I actually received feedback on ideas or got to talk more face to face."
leadership traits	49	The fundamental traits that employees describe of their supervisors and leaders	"I for one, myself, if I don't think that the leader has integrity or certainly doesn't have any communication, then it's very hard to feel like you really want to work for that person or put out your best for that person."
learning organization	4	A description of how the organization shares and learns from everyone in the organization. Opposite of stove pipes	"You know just to kind of hear what's going on and what are the initiatives and what is the language that people are using because the language always changes right so I'd say that's one of the things that's impactful is feeling like there's an open opportunity to grow and understand hey what's everybody working on and where, can you add value."
listening behavior	83	The explanation and discussion of how supervisors listen to others	"I guess it's just them, you know trying...trying and I don't know if that's a behavior but, but you know, like them actually putting forth effort if they put forth effort to listen, or to actually like implement changes or whatever I feel like that would really you know, show proof that they care."
makes time for others	10	Describing how supervisors give of their time to their employees	"My supervisor is always ready to listen. Even if he is busy, he seems to make time to listen and genuinely cares I feel."
mental health	4	The discussion of the mental well-being and state of mental health of employees in the organization	"Mental health is important especially in the pandemic years and covid, which personally affected me and without a feeling of sanity and comfort I suffer from mood shift and lack of mental safety."
mentor	5	What employees see as a trait of a good supervisor to pass knowledge and help employees	"My immediate supervisor, I can disagree with at any point in time, and they will be very patient and understanding and a lot of times educational on things and if you know, it's a healthy relationship, I look at that person as a mentor."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
mentoring	4	The process of supervisors taking an interest and passing knowledge to others	"I need help on review some issues and rather than just trying to do myself I ask my supervisor if she could get someone to help me take a look. Because she is always easy to talk too, I had no problem asking for help and she actually reviewed the documents with me too. Not many supervisors would probably have done this."
motivation	2	The ability of supervisors to motivate employees to a common goal as seen from the employee perspective	"Increased sense of responsibility and interest in their own roles."
mutual respect	26	Employee descriptions of respect that flow two-way between employee and supervisor	"Number three is that you have those open lines of communication and You know, goes back and forth both ways right I talk to you with respect, and you talk back to me with respect so respecting one another."
no fear	60	The overall description employees describe of their workplace	"I don't feel any personal push backs it doesn't matter if it's a small project or a large project. I think we can have those conversations and no fear or no reprisal."
no focus	2	Employees describing how their supervisors lack the ability to take seriously their input and focus on the topic at hand	"Sometimes distracted and jumps between subjects."
no follow through	2	Employees describing the inability of their supervisors and leadership to address their issues and concerns and provide action or result	"My upper-level leadership is more of a head nod."
not interested in personal things	2	How employees describe the lack of interpersonal skills in their supervisor	"My supervisor mostly likes to hear about job completion things. Ideas that help complete a job are good and he listens on that. But just thoughts or ideas in general that are not work related are not encouraged from my experience."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
open door policy	34	Describing the process of a one-way feedback and interaction loop from employee to supervisor. As in the door is always open to come in and talk	"Hey by the way my door is always open you got something for me come talk to me, you know you can talk to me, you can talk to your boss, we just want you to know like if you see something you got something to say come talk to us like open door policy right."
organizational change	4	A discussion of the overall change within the organizational construct	"From day one, to now I don't think I've never had anybody, you know speak to me from a psychological safety point of view that I feared from those individuals and so across the board. there's going to be change, and you have to expect change so but overall, I think that it's been good change and we're moving in the right direction."
out of touch	5	How employees describe the lack of interaction or proactive efforts from leadership	"Upper-level leadership does not view our concerns or ideas the same as direct leadership. On numerous occasions I have been reminded that upper-level leadership doesn't know or care what our office does. I have since refrained from offering up new ideas or concerns to him."
perception vs reality	11	Employees discussion of how leadership conveys the appearance of psychological safety through policy or process, but actions are different	"Therefore, I think it sometimes just passes through and gives an appearance of listening but is he really taking actions to address concerns."
personal performance	2	Employees discussing how psychological safety impacts their work and output	"Psychological safety is directly tied to trust, motivation and contributes to overall contribution/ performance/ effectiveness. Functioning in a physiologically safe environment enables creativity and contribution (basic human physical needs), which in turn effects trust, unit/team cohesion, and individual and collective contribution to shared goals/objectives."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
positive reinforcement	2	Employees describing the support and backing of their supervisor to foster a psychological safe workplace	"I think positive reinforcement is a big one that to make sure that the employees under you understand that whether it's a great idea that you go with or an idea that didn't work that it didn't matter if it might be wrong, but that you are still free to express it but also to be compassionate and all that sometimes outside life can affect your job, you know and that you know that your employee knows that, no matter what your situation your Supervisor is going to back you up they're not going to tear you down in front of others."
problem solving	5	How employees describe their environment, and the contribution of positive psychological safe environment contributes overall	"Psychological safety is important in the workplace because it provides an environment for employee engagement. When employees feel safe at work, it's more open to engage. This includes working on projects together, solving problems, collaboration and working with other stakeholders external to the organization."
psychological safety impact	117	Employees describing the quality and productive output of their workplace that is psychologically safe	"So yeah, productivity motivation work ethic all increases, especially when you're my personal psychological well-being is on the positive note, and then on the negative it does decrease your productivity."
quality of life	2	How employees describe positive psychological safety in their life	"When someone feels safe at work it enhances productivity, teamwork and collaboration without fear of retribution. The quality of work life and output increases. You feel comfortable going to work and speaking up. Task become a joy vice a chore to accomplish."
receptive	6	A discussion on the attitude of supervisors when employee provides input	"High level of trust since he listens takes safety serious and is open to feedback."
retribution	3	How employees describe the negative feeling in a low psychologically safe workplace	"I had brought up a concern in an area that I felt wasn't going well in what I thought was a purely informative way. I was later singled out by name in a group setting about something completely unrelated in a very confusing way. Someone approached me afterward asking what I did to incite such a reaction."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
safe space to work	66	Employees discussing their positive workplace environment	"I never felt there was a fear there of failure of like or any kind of retribution or, being treated poorly, and so I think that that's a big piece of it is just being safe in your environment."
safe to speak up	33	A description of the environment that employees feel safe to speak up in	"I think my organization has done a really good job of anytime that you have some sort of idea to where it's not going to go right, or it might not go right immediately stop and seek assistance."
share information	22	The impact that psychological safety has upon the workplace environment to provide and share information	"All my coworkers are open and listen. Some more than others but I've never had any bad interaction in discussing things. We share a lot of work ideas and talk sometimes about personal things but mostly work."
sharing ideas	2	Employees discussing the importance to share ideas freely	"Sharing ideas freely is an important aspect because if freedom to think up anything or go outside the box is taken away then how can we fix problems or create new ways of doing business that keeps moving forward. Otherwise only a few people decide what's best and others feel unimportant."
show action	18	Employees discussing the need to see action after they provide input in the workplace	"If you make a recommendation for changes and people don't see that changes took place or that changes were looked at, but not accepted, or have some sort of feedback and nothing ever happens, then they will not give you any more feedback so that restricts it."
singled out	4	A fear that employees describe when working in a psychologically unsafe setting	"It also felt that I was put on the spot to speak up. This made me feel a little apprehensive and uncomfortable because I was unprepared at the time."
socialize	12	The human interaction that employees desire with others within the organization and outside of work	"I think any organization can benefit from its TEAM members having a relationship beyond the professional setting. Now I understand like people are busy they live on all parts of the island, they got kids and soccer in school and everything, so it doesn't have to be full bore, but you know the occasional gathering."
solve problems	2	A benefit that a psychologically safe workplace brings to the organization	"Identify problems is needed for a safety and successfully working environment."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
stove pipes	2	The description of isolated pockets of information in the organization where information is not shared	"I've talked to some people senior to me in my organization and I've talked to them about the way I see our culture at our organization that people are interactive or not interactive that there's not a sense of camaraderie and team across the whole organization, but it exists in the in the stove pipes."
sup comm skills	46	Employees discussing communication skills of their supervisor	"Clear and direct, nothing left to potentially misinterpret or assume. This gives me a secure sense of psychological safety."
sup method of interact	46	Employees discussing the methods of interaction with their supervisors	"My supervisor communicates with the shop through group meetings, one on one discussions, over the phone, and via text. Whichever method is appropriate/makes the worker most comfortable is used."
supervisor encouragement	143	How employees describe the need to feel encouraged by their supervisor	"It's not a one off it's an everyday thought and conscious effort by leadership to throw out there, those questions and ask that and not be not be a dictator, but be looking for people to come up with answers to problems, instead of just the management, making a decision in a vacuum, they are they're looking for the people that it's going to affect or have that information to give good advice."
supervisor influence	10	Employees discussing the influence their supervisor has over their psychological health	"The person that I, my direct Supervisor was great. Okay, when I left I just didn't you know enjoy working okay with knowing that what he had to deal with to get my ideas pushed OK, so I took a, I took a job somewhere else, and was forced back I didn't want to come back because that person was no longer there. Okay, it would have been a lot easier for me to accept Okay."
supportive	26	A supervisor behavior that allows employees to feel supported in their efforts in the workplace	"I always have a lot of ideas, but recently I came to my supervisor with an off the cuff idea and although he didn't think it had much merit in the current situation, he encouraged me to not discard the idea and rethink and refine it a little more. This was encouraging not disparaging. It made me feel my time and effort was still for good."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
systems thinking	10	Discussion on the ability to cross barriers and share information and explore the impact in the organization without obstacles	"If I would say there's one way to improve you know not just our supervisor, in general, but like the entire organization, it would be hey each division get together discuss your processes discuss you know why, for another shop, why can do you need more than one person certifying you know funds fund distribution it can't just be the one comptroller, but it has to be you know, two people and here's why because we're a global organization and we need to move 24/7."
takes notes	2	A method that employees describe of their supervisor when interacting	"My supervisor is good at making note of my concerns."
telework challenges	2	A hurdle that employees describe in their ability to interact during the COVID-19 pandemic	"My time under my current supervisor has been challenging in this arena simply b/c we have been working in a telework/covid environment for so long."
transparency	8	Employees concerns of the free sharing of information and effective communication by leadership	"Either when someone is disciplined or someone leaves under unusual conditions or we pick up that people are talking about this, you know. Whatever level leadership could address it, they came in, you know hey everyone come here right, I know you guys are all talking about this, but this is what really happened, let me explain it to you."
trust	46	An aspect that employees feel is highly important to have faith and belief and interpersonal connection with their supervisor	"So psychological safety, I think, comes down to trust. And I think the way you build trust with an employee is you know first off, you've got to be really technically competent I don't think anybody wants to work for somebody that they think is an idiot."
unavailable	2	The feeling some employees get when trying to connect with their supervisor	"I don't get time with them. Actually, they seem stuck up or in a different world."
understanding	15	A trait that employees feel is necessary for an effective supervisor	"Open two-way communications and treating issues carefully and treating me and my fellow workers equally to show support and understanding."

Code	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar Quotation
virtual meetings	2	A description of the alternate ability to connect when geographical limitations are present or in the instance of COVID-19	"The upper big organization does a VTC with all employees and takes questions that's their attempt, at least in hearing from down below it's done very efficient, inefficiently, but it's their attempt to try to get input from all personnel."
voice	2	Discussing the ability to provide input and speak up in the organization	"Everyone has a voice and talking is one of the most important things in work and life. If that ability is suppressed or taken away, then people feel controlled and made to do things."
waste of time	4	The description of how employees feel when they provide input, and no action is taken	"I engage only on work things. I have no trust to engage on personal matters because it would be ignored and a waste of my time. My supervisor cares mostly about work and jobs completed."
we can relate	2	Employee descriptions of the bond and connection within the workplace	"I trust her like a friend. We have worked together for a long time even before she was my supervisor, and we were just coworkers, so she is kind nice and a good friend that understands me because she was once doing the same work I do."
work related	2	How employees describe a less than effective interpersonal relationship that avoids the human aspects of employees	"Upper leadership is also focused on job and completion. If I have ideas or concerns about jobs and job safety, they listen. But other ideas or thoughts about job satisfaction are not always given attention."

Appendix G.

Sample of Hand-Coded Transcripts

Questionnaire Transcript

#3 - AVA_Q	
SHARE THOUGHTS + IDEAS	
FIT IN	Q7 Describe why psychological safety is important in the workplace. Being able to share without feeling out of place.
NO FEELING NEGATIVITY	Q8 Based on the provided definition of psychological safety, explain what aspect(s) of psychological safety is/are most important to you. Sharing without anyone being negative towards your ideas,
ENCOURAGES P.S. / IMPROVED CONSIDERATION	Q9 Tell me about your supervisor's commitment to the psychological safety of employees. My supervisor is excellent in taking into consideration the psychological safety of all employees,
POSITIVE ATTITUDE	Q10 Describe your supervisor's communication skills and how it affects your workplace psychological well-being. My supervisor is very positive and always has open communication with the employees which makes the workplace an awesome place to work,
OPEN DOOR POLICY	Q11 Describe a method of interaction your supervisor provides, or should provide, to allow you to freely communicate within the workplace. My supervisor has an open door policy and interacts as much as our busy work allows us to.
MAKES TIME FOR OFFERS	Q12 Describe a recent interaction you had with your supervisor and how it made you feel about your psychological safety in the workplace. My supervisor interacted with me when I had my review and was very positive and dope. To any questions that I might have.
POSITIVE LISTENS OPEN TO Q.S.	Q13 Describe your level of engagement and trust with your supervisor. I have a very high level of trust for my supervisor
HIGH TRUST	Q14 Describe how your coworkers react when you share concerns, ideas, or thoughts. My coworkers usually have the same concerns as I since our work is pretty much the same but different situations
WE CAN RELY ON	Q15 Describe how your supervisor reacts when you share concerns, ideas, or thoughts. My supervisor is good at making note of my concerns and always gets back to me with an answer if it's not right away
LISTENS MAKES NOTES PROVIDES UPDATE	Q16 Describe how your upper-level leadership reacts when you share concerns, ideas, or thoughts. My upper level leadership is good with taking note of concerns and I see things being done if it can be changed.
LISTENS MAKES NOTES FIXES PROBLEMS WORKABLE	Q17 Describe other ways that encourage you to feel safe and speak up in the workplace. Working with my coworkers and overall office makes me feel safe and speak up.
WORK WITH TEAMWORK TOGETHER	Q18 Are you willing to be interviewed?

Interview Transcript

MATEO_I: I think it's greatly enhanced I believe we have better product productivity, because everybody feels free to chime in. More than once i've sent something out or somebody above me has sent something out and the deck plate looks at it and comes back and says hey you probably need to make this change or this change and we all mule it around and come up with a better answer and because of that, I think we get a much better product for our customers.

RESEARCHER_1: What would you do if you could change anything, and the organization policy or the process that would further support psychological safety in the workplace?

MATEO_I: For our...I guess it would have to do with how we react with our overall, we are just a branch of the overall program up the chop chain and...um...and they're in a different state and doesn't always seem that they listen to what we, we have here, or they don't pay attention to what we do here and so, a lot of what we do here is very important, and then, and not just important to us, but important to the overall mission of the organization, but because they don't seem to care what we think out here, it kind of it knocks down the mission effectiveness overall.

RESEARCHER_1: Could you describe how your overall perception of the psychological safety has a direct influence on your contributions that you provide to the organization overall?

MATEO_I: Well, if you feel safe you're going to step forward and feel free to make recommendations up the chop chain, if you don't and there's times when the overall that the parent Organization has made us feel like our input is not important, so we don't give it and therefore it makes it harder to come to work.

RESEARCHER_1: What do you feel is the single most thing or most important thing that you would recommend or you would focus on within your organization to change that perception of psychological safety throughout the entire organization?

MATEO_I: One communication, two get rid of bureaucracy, if you have an idea goes up it doesn't get shot down just because it didn't meet the bureaucrats approval process. If someone submits an idea, you want to make you want to...one wants to feel like at least somebody up there will read it may not agree with it, but at least take time to read it, and not just knock it out, because the bureaucratic paperwork says, I can't look at it

- 💬

 Vernon Brown
 PS influences productivity
July 24, 2022, 7:48 AM
Reply
- 💬

 Vernon Brown
 Policy enhances PS

Reply
- 💬

 Vernon Brown
 Listen more

Reply
- 💬

 Vernon Brown
 Higher leadership care

Reply
- 💬

 Vernon Brown
 Too much bureaucracy

Reply

Appendix H.

Feasibility and Benefits Checklist

<p>Gatekeepers:</p> <p>Who are the possible gatekeepers? (i.e., If you are in a school district, have you checked with the principal and the superintendent's office or their designee to see what the process is for research? Or, if you are at a company, talked with the management, etc.?)</p> <p>If you are planning on collecting data from a college, what is the process? It is preferred that you obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from that institution prior to applying for GCU's IRB approval).</p>	<p>Authorization from the Grand Canyon University IRB committee will be required prior to recruitment, as the study requires participation from human subjects. I will recruit participants through a members-only LinkedIn group Page.</p> <p>To recruit from a members-only LinkedIn group, I will need permissions from the LinkedIn group administrators. I will message the LinkedIn group administrators directly and provide screen shots or letters of their responses with documented consent.</p>
<p>Gatekeeper Contact:</p> <p>Who do you need to keep in contact with as you form your research project to ensure that the benefits outweigh the risk and you can conduct your research? How will you initiate and maintain contact with them?</p>	<p>Communication with LinkedIn group administrators for recruitment will be necessary. I will contact the LinkedIn group administrators through LinkedIn and maintain this communication as needed.</p>
<p>Outside IRB:</p> <p>If you are planning on recruiting participants or getting data from a college (or other institutions within IRB), have you talked to their IRB to determine the process and what participants/data they will allow you access? Please note, IRB approval typically takes some time.</p>	<p>As previously stated, the plan is to recruit participants through a members-only LinkedIn group. Thus, the study should be exempt from obtaining IRB approval from an outside institution.</p>
<p>Study Benefits:</p> <p>What is the benefit of your research? Who do you need to keep in contact with as you form your research project to ensure that the benefits outweigh the risks?</p> <p><i>Remember that research should have a benefit; what benefit does your research have to others beside yourself?</i></p>	<p>The study may advance the scientific knowledge and contribute to literature, as the study tries to fill a research gap in supervisor influence and a recommended focus on employee perception of psychological safety, especially in the context of federal government organizations. The study may have implications for organizational practices, which include developing evidence-based recommendations to assist leaders in U.S. federal government organizations in exerting an influence that fosters psychological safety.</p>
<p>Research Activity:</p> <p>Is your research part of <i>normal every day activities</i>? This is significant because this must be outlined in your site authorization. A preliminary site authorization letter could simply be an email from a school/college/organization that indicates they understand what you want to do and how that benefits the school/college/organization. In some cases this will determine the classification of the study (this is especially important for educational research studies).</p>	<p>The research activity will consist of a researcher developed open-ended questionnaire, including the informed consent and an interview with each individual participant, regarding their experiences of supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace. A member checking process will also be included in the research and involve the participants of the study.</p>

<p>***Please see below for information regarding preliminary site authorization</p>	
<p>Recruitment:</p> <p>Please describe your proposed recruitment strategy. How do you plan to involve your participants in the process? What would your flyer/email say?</p>	<p>The goal is to recruit participants via LinkedIn. A recruitment post will be shared via one members-only LinkedIn group with administrator consent and approval. The post will list the inclusion criteria for the study, which are: (1) a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii and (2) employed in a federal government organization for more than two years. Thus, initial recruitment will be conducted via a criterion sampling. The initial recruitment post will include all relative information regarding the study, such as purpose of the study, researcher contact information, and a link to SurveyMonkey which will include access to the informed consent form, demographic questionnaire, and open-ended questionnaire. The end of the questionnaire will consist of a final yes/no question to recruit for the one-on-one follow-up virtual interview, asking, "Would you be willing to participate in a one-on-one virtual interview?" If yes, the participant will also be asked to provide contact information (an email address and phone number) so they can be contacted to take part in the one-on-one virtual interview with the researcher.</p> <p>Participants will be asked, if possible, to share the research post with other potential candidates, which is the process of snowball sampling. Outside of participating in the study and assisting the research in conducting snowball sampling, participants will also be included in the research through a member checking process.</p>
<p>Data Collection:</p> <p>What are you asking of participants? Are you asking them personal information (like demographic information such as age, income, relationship status)? Is that personal information necessary? How much time are you asking of participants (for example, if you are asking them to be interviewed, be in a focus group, fill out a questionnaire, fill out a journal/survey, collect artifacts, etc.)? How much time will they have to spend to be in your study?</p> <p>Does each part of your data collection help answer your research question? Participants <u>must be told how long it will take to participants to participate in each activity</u>. Are you concerned that the activities will take too long and participants might not finish/drop out?</p> <p>Can you collect your data in a reasonable amount of time considering the stakeholders and possible</p>	<p>All data collection procedures (e.g., informed consent, open-ended questionnaire, one-on-one interview, and the member checking process) may require participants to spend 2-3 hours in the research process. The researcher has anticipated that 30-45 minutes will be necessary to review the consent form and complete the researcher developed demographic and open-ended questionnaire. Additionally, the researcher has anticipated that 60 minutes will be sufficient for the one-on-one interviews. An additional 45 minutes may be needed for the participants to review their interview transcripts. Lastly, participants will be asked to re-share the initial recruitment post with individuals who may meet the criteria. This process should take no longer than 15 minutes of participant's time. All of the data collection tasks are on a voluntary nature.</p>

challenges of gaining access to participants?	
Child Assent. Studies with children often fall under the regulations for a full board review (full board reviews take significantly longer in IRB). Each child must fill out a child assent AFTER there is parental consent. (It can be very difficult to get parental consent, especially if this is something sent home to parents).	Participants of the study are required to be at least 18 years of age or older. No children will be involved in this research examination.
Informed Consent: Participants <u>must be told how long it will take to participants to participate in each activity</u> . Are you concerned that the activities will take too long and participants might not finish/drop out?	At the current time there is no concern that research participation will take too long. As the primary researcher, I have ensured that all data collection steps (e.g., researcher developed open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews) are a continuous process. All participants will be asked to participate in the open-ended questionnaire and one 60-minute interview via Zoom at a date and time convenient to participants. All relevant study information will be provided to participants in the initial recruitment post/flyer and through a link to the informed consent process before proceeding to the online questionnaire. The process will allow participants to fully understand the research process prior to accepting and opting into participation. This process will therefore minimize potential drop out.
Site Authorization: Do you have a site authorization letter? How difficult will this be to get from the school/ school district/college/organization? Use the GCU template to ensure the correct information is included.	Site authorization will be required from the administrators of the one members-only LinkedIn group. For the purpose of this research, participants will be recruited via the recruiter's personal social media (LinkedIn) page and one members-only social media (LinkedIn) group. The researcher will obtain site authorization from the group administrators of the members-only LinkedIn group.
Can you collect your data in a reasonable amount of time considering the stakeholders and possible challenges of gaining access to participants?	Recruiting participants via LinkedIn allows the researcher the ability to access a diverse population. Additionally, the ability to recruit via a LinkedIn page provides the opportunity to bypass additional site authorization (with exception to only LinkedIn members-only groups) and other institutional IRB processes. With the elimination of these additional steps, it may allow the researcher the ability to conduct the study in a considerable amount of time.
Organizational Benefits: Have you talked to your principal/supervisor/district/college/boss /organization about your research? If so, have you asked them what you can do to help the district/organization/school?	I have not discussed the research with my current organization, as my study will not directly involve my current work-institution. However, at the completion of this research, findings may aid a variety of organizational settings in government and commercial sector populations with enhanced employee- and team engagement and performance, as well as the improved performance and adaptability of the organization.
What is the overall benefit of your research to participants?	There is no direct benefit to participants. An indirect benefit is that participation in the study will contribute to the understanding of employee

	perceptions of supervisor influence on psychological safety, especially in the context of federal government organizations. This may allow for current and future leaders in federal government organizations determine appropriate methods that could inform how to best foster psychological safety.
What are the risks of your research? Please note that there are usually some risks (like revealing participant identity) in all research.	Potential risks include a slight chance of revealing participant identity. To mitigate this risk the beneficence criterion will be upheld through procedures implemented to minimize risks to participants. To protect participants from any consequences that might result from the disclosure of their identities, participants' identities will be protected through de- identification of transcripts by removing all Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and replacing participants' real names in all study materials with pseudonyms (i.e., pseudonym1, pseudonym2, etc.). Safeguarding of data will consist of restricted access to the researcher's password protected laptop and researchers' thumb-drive locked in a safe container. Beneficence will also be ensured by conducting the interviews remotely, by video chat, in order to allow the researcher and participants to observe social distancing and/or stay-at-home guidelines in place at time of study as a result of the COVID- 19 pandemic.
Now that you have contemplated the above questions, how long do you imagine it will take you prior to access your participants/data? AND, how much are you asking of your participants?	I believe any researcher seeking participation from unknown participants is essentially asking a lot of those potential respondents. However, the best that can be done is ensuring that the process from start to finish is well-planned so that things go smoothly, barring any unforeseen obstacles that may arise. I believe that it can take a few days or at most a week to network via LinkedIn and gain the initial participants. From there the process can take several more weeks to answer any potential questions that may arise, including the details and specifics of snowball sampling.
Based on the information that you have learned, is your study feasible? Why or why not? If not, how can you modify your ideas to make your study manageable?	At the current stage the study does appear to be feasible. Along with the assistance of my Dissertation chair, I have thought about the process and what makes the most sense to conduct the study. Every component of my study will be done online. Therefore, allowing potential respondents the ability to be more comfortable with participation. Using SurveyMonkey to collect the informed consent form, demographic questionnaire, open-ended questionnaire, and Zoom video calling to conduct one-on-one interviews will aide in the process by providing flexible times for the participants.

Appendix I.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Table I

Sampling Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii. • Are employed in a federal government organization for more than two years. • Are at least 18 years of age or older. • Are virtual participation and meeting accessible. • Are willing to answer demographic questions related to age, gender, current position at your organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for your current supervisor. • Are willing to complete a questionnaire. • Are willing to be audio recorded if interviewed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii. • Are not employed in a federal government organization for more than two years. • Are not 18 years of age or older. • Are not virtual participation and meeting accessible. • Are not willing to answer demographic questions related to age, gender, current position at your organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for your current supervisor. • Are not willing to complete a questionnaire. • Are not willing to be audio recorded if interviewed.

Appendix J.

Recruitment Script LinkedIn/Email



Grand Canyon University
College of Doctoral Studies
3300 W. Camelback Road
Phoenix, AZ 85017
Phone: 602-639-7804
Email: irb@gcu.edu

RECRUITMENT

Date: May 23, 2022

I am a doctoral learner under the direction of Dr. Liyan Jin, in the college of Doctoral Studies at Grand Canyon University. My name is, Vernon Brown. I am conducting a research study to explore how federal government employees in Hawaii describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.

You can participate in the study if you:

1. Are a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii.
2. Are employed in a federal government organization for more than two years.
3. Are at least 18 years of age or older.
4. Are virtual participation and meeting accessible.
5. Are willing to answer demographic questions related to age, gender, current position at your organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for your current supervisor.
6. Are willing to complete a questionnaire.
7. Are willing to be audio and video recorded if interviewed.

You cannot participate in the study if you:

1. Are not a current employee in a federal government organization within the State of Hawaii.
2. Are not employed in a federal government organization for more than two years.
3. Are not 18 years of age or older.
4. Are not virtual participation and meeting accessible.
5. Are not willing to answer demographic questions related to age, gender, current position at your organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for your current supervisor.
6. Are not willing to complete a questionnaire.
7. Are not willing to be audio and video recorded if interviewed.



IRB APPROVED
IRB NUMBER: IRB-2022-4605
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/22/2022

The activities for this research project will include:

- Complete the online questionnaire, which includes the informed consent form, the demographic questions related to age, gender, current position at your organization, years of working in current position, and number of years working for your current supervisor, and the open-ended study questionnaire through a SurveyMonkey provided link (30-45 minutes).
- Take part in a single interview (60 minutes).
- Review your interview transcripts (45 minutes).

Your participation in the study is voluntary. *All participants who complete the questionnaire will receive compensation in the form of a \$10.00 Visa gift card sent via email. If you complete both the questionnaire and the follow-up one-on-one interview, you will be compensated with a \$20.00 Visa gift card (vice \$10.00 Visa gift card) that will be emailed once the questionnaire and interview are both complete.*

All digital data in the study will be protected and stored in password-encrypted folders. I will select pseudonyms for each participant to uphold confidentiality. Hard copies of the data will be securely stored in a locked fire/waterproof file cabinet. No one other than the researcher will have access to this data.

LinkedIn is the platform of recruitment for this study, however the link to acknowledge the informed consent and to commence the study is accessible through the SurveyMonkey link provided at the end of this recruitment flyer. To aid in the protection of your privacy, the following LinkedIn privacy information is provided as a courtesy:

- All information shared directly through post on LinkedIn cannot be given a guarantee of privacy. Please avoid responding openly and directly to this recruitment flyer posting on LinkedIn to ensure your privacy and confidentiality. For full details of LinkedIn's privacy policy please visit: <https://www.linkedin.com/legal/privacy-policy>

Please use the following link to access the informed consent and questionnaire:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5FDRCZX>

If you have any questions, please contact me through LinkedIn direct messaging, by phone at [REDACTED], or by email at [REDACTED]

Thank you!



IRB APPROVED

IRB NUMBER: IRB-2022-4605

IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/22/2022

Appendix K.

Expert Panel Feedback

To: Prospective Expert Panel Members

Date: February 18, 2022

From: Vernon Brown-Doctoral Student-Grand Canyon University

Subject: Scholarly Review of Dissertation Research Protocols [REQUEST]

Message body:

Forms attached: 1) **CDS Expert Paneling Guide _ Brown.Vernon_SEND.pdf**
2) **Brown.Vernon.Protocols_v.6_02.17.2022.docx**

Attached I have provided my current questionnaire and interview questions contained in a self-developed protocol based on the research topic, research questions, and theoretical foundation of the study.

I have also attached the associated expert panel review form with instructions at the top and details of my proposed study with sections for scholar feedback.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you for any assistance you may be able to provide.

Have a great day and wonderful week!

Vernon Brown
Doctoral Student
Grand Canyon University

Feedback from panel reviewers:

Reviewer 1: [REDACTED], EdD

Expertise: Scholarly + Practitioner Expertise // 11-15 Years

Certifications: Board of Certified Safety Professionals: Certified Safety Professional (CSP); Safety Management Specialist (SMS); Occupational Hygiene and Safety Technician (OHST); Institute of Hazardous Materials Management (IHMM): Certified Safety Management Practitioner (CSMP)

Feedback-Open-Ended Questionnaire: A well thought out and well written, open-ended questionnaire. I anticipate these questions will result in a broad body of data pertinent to your qualitative study.

Feedback-Interview Questions: The interview questions presented are specific to the study, open-ended, and mindful of follow-on probing questions. The questions invite participants to expound on their personal, first hand experiences and perspectives, while reflecting on how and why they reached their respective conclusions on psychological safety in their work environments.

Based on what was provided to me for review, I recommend you modify your interview questions to capture the missing elements below:

- The protocol includes an overview of the confidentiality agreement and reminds the participant that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time (per the consent agreement). I cannot confirm this because the interview question doc does not fully cover it and I do not have the consent form for review.
- The protocol reminds each participant that s/he can “member check” their contributions after receiving the transcript of the recorded interview proceedings. I cannot confirm this because the interview question doc does not fully cover it and I do not have the consent form for review.
- The protocol includes an overview of how the transcripts will be stored (and for how long). I cannot confirm this because the interview question doc does not fully cover it.
- The protocol includes a set of working definitions for key terms and concepts. I cannot confirm this because the interview question doc does not fully cover it.

Feedback-Demographic Questions: The demographic questionnaire is thoughtful and reflective, revealing an understanding that the interviewer recognizes employee time/relationship with supervisor, age, gender, and workplace experience have a high probability of resulting in multiple responses across employee demographics, which can later be analyzed critically and data mined.

Reviewer 2: [REDACTED], EdD

Expertise: Practitioner Expertise (academic/professional practice, licensure) // 15+ Years

Certifications: Certified Master Spiritual Life Coach, Certified Master Mindset Coach, Certified Professional Life Coach, Certified U.S. Navy Master Training Specialist

Feedback-Open-Ended Questionnaire: *Question #6 seems incomplete. It may be missing a word or two at the beginning that would provide direction or the participant's expectation related of the question. Also, the word "own" in the sentence is redundant and should be removed.

Feedback-Interview Questions: *Protocol does not contain explicit mention related to participants' right to withdraw at any time. The confidentiality form more than likely mentions the "right to withdraw." However, the researcher did not provide the consent form for panelist review. Recommend adding Consent Form to Appendix E for full transparency related to duplicating the protocols of this study for future research and peer review.

*Interview questions #1, #2, and #16 contain the phrase "psychological health." The reviewer is unsure if psychological health is a relevant element in the study? If it is not, the reviewer recommends removing the phrase psychological health from the interview questions and highlighting the focus on psychological safety. However, alongside psychological safety, if psychological health is an important element in the study, consider adding the phrase psychological health to the Research Questions.

Feedback-Demographic Questions: Good. Introduction paragraph provides important information and highlights key protocol elements such as purpose, application, and methodology (survey monkey).

Reviewer 3: [REDACTED], EdD

Expertise: Scholarly + Practitioner Expertise // 15+ Years

Certifications: None provided

Feedback-Open-Ended Questionnaire: I provided a couple of points that should be considered in the other document. Question #1 - First, this isn't a question. It is a prompt. As a prompt, it may be ok. Just remove the question mark and add a period. In fact, none of the "questions" are really questions BUT they are fine as prompts.

Feedback-Interview Questions: Overall, very well done! All of these questions look fine. In my opinion, you have too many questions that will take longer than an hour to get through. However, this is really not the responsibility of the panel of experts. Just my thoughts.

Feedback-Demographic Questions: Well done!

Reviewer 1:

INFORMATION PACKET: EXPERT PANEL REVIEW

Instructions:

- 1) The CDS researcher will complete *Section I* below, providing a basic profile of the study for all invited panelists.
- 2) The CDS researcher will attach copies of each data source (including the data collection instrument and protocol) in Microsoft Word® format, so that invited panelists can review and provide feedback.
- 3) The CDS dissertation committee (chair and methodologist) will assist the researcher with the development of data sources and the selection of appropriate review criteria to be used by panelists – if different from those below.
- 4) The CDS researcher will send the full complement of paneling material (*Sections I-III* below and copies of each data source) to all invited panelists.
- 5) Invited panelists will complete *Section II* and *Section III* below, and return to the researcher (the research can then share the completed packet with the dissertation committee).

I. PROFILE OF THE DISSERTATION RESEARCH

[to be completed by the CDS researcher]

1. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN:

- DESCRIPTIVE (MIN. TWO DATA SOURCES EXPECTED)
 CASE STUDY (MIN. THREE DATA SOURCES EXPECTED) SINGLE-CASE MULTIPLE-CASE
 PHENOMENOLOGICAL
 NARRATIVE INQUIRY
 GROUNDED THEORY

2. DATA TYPE(S) PLANNED - CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
 FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL
 QUESTIONNAIRE OPEN-ENDED SCALED OTHER
 DOCUMENT COLLECTION PROTOCOL
 OBSERVATION TOOL
 OTHER: Demographic Questions included with Questionnaire

3. DATA TYPE(S) FOR REVIEW - CHECK ALL THAT APPLY AND SEND WITH EXPERT PANEL REVIEW SHEET:

- SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
 FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL
 QUESTIONNAIRE OPEN-ENDED SCALED OTHER
 DOCUMENT COLLECTION PROTOCOL
 OBSERVATION TOOL
 OTHER: Demographic Questions included with Questionnaire

If all the proposed data types are *not* part of this panel review, please explain why below

N/A

4. PURPOSE STATEMENT:

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

6. PHENOMENON:

How employees describe their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of Psychological Safety.

7. TARGET POPULATION: Briefly describe the population you intend to sample (if you intend to field test ahead of the formal data collection, please answer how you will obtain test volunteers similar to the target population).

The target population will be employees in federal government organizations in Hawaii.

A field-test will include three individuals who are volunteers and share a similar background with the target population but are not part of the target population or study.

8. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK SUPPORTING THE STUDY: Include how the theory or conceptual framework relates to the research questions, the phenomenon, and/or the development of the data source(s).

Burns (1978) transformational leadership (TL) theory and Dollard and Bakker (2010) psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory are the basis of the theoretical foundation of this study.

Using the transformational leadership lens by which leaders compel their followers through motivation (Burns, 1978) and strive to enhance the spirit of commitment and teamwork (Al-Jednat, 2018) is used to help guide the study.

The PSC lens of leader influence on worker well-being through the organizational climate is used to help guide the study. The application of PSC is reflected by the exploration on organization policy, practice, and leader commitment, that is conducive to a stress-free and uninhibited work environment (Dollard & Bakker, 2010).

9. **INSTRUMENT MODIFICATIONS AND PERMISSIONS:** Have any data sources/instruments been **adopted** from prior authors [i.e., replicated in precisely the same fashion the authors had created them]? NO

If so, which data types? **N/A**

Have you obtained (or are you in the process of obtaining) the permission to use?

Yes N/A
 No

Have any data sources/instruments been **adapted** from prior authors [i.e., borrowed with modifications from the original authors]? NO

If so, which data types? **N/A**

Describe the specific modifications made:

N/A

Have you obtained (or are you in the process of obtaining) the permission to use?

Yes N/A
 No

II. PROFILE OF THE EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER

[to be completed by invited panelist]

1. Do you have professional licensure or certification?

Yes

No

2. If yes to the above, what type of licensure/certification?

Board of Certified Safety Professionals: Certified Safety Professional (CSP); Safety Management Specialist (SMS); Occupational Hygiene and Safety Technician (OHST)

Institute of Hazardous Materials Management (IHMM): Certified Safety Management Practitioner (CSMP)

3. Do you have a terminal degree?

Yes

No

4. If yes to the above, please select the relevant degree type obtained

Masters

Doctorate

Higher Doctorate

5. If yes to the above, please select the field that most closely describes your terminal degree

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology | <input type="checkbox"/> Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture/Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sociology | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Sciences |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Linguistics | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Admin. | <input type="checkbox"/> Data Analytics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economics | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminology | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare Admin. | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Law/Jurisprudence | <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Sciences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anthropology | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Tech./Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Earth Sciences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Therapy (OT, PT, ST) | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing | <input type="checkbox"/> Physics/Chemistry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Geography | <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry/Theology | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacology | <input type="checkbox"/> Humanities |

Other Field (Not Listed)

6. Having read the researcher's planned study (from *Section I*), do you claim one of the following areas of expertise related to the study?

- Scholarly Expertise (academic or professional research publication, rank)
- Practitioner Expertise (academic or professional practice, licensure)
- Both Scholarly and Practitioner Expertise

7. How long have you worked in that particular academic field or industry?

- Less than three years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- More than fifteen years

8. Please describe your area of expertise as it relates to this topic:

Since 2009, I have been involved in the development, execution and modification of methodologies to capture data on and improve federal workplace environments. Examples of the processes used are Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Surveys (DEOCS) and Department of Defense Command Climate Surveys (DODCCS) for US Navy and US Marine Corps organizations, installations, and commands. Several custom surveys have been specific to organizations, installations, and commands in Hawai'i.

The data garnered from these surveys has been integral to understanding the lenses through which federal civilian and military employees (some of whom often share work environments and supervisors) communicate their perceptions of psychological safety within their respective workplaces. Moreover, efforts revealed the employee's discernment of their supervisors' direct impact and influence on employees' insights of psychological safety in their workplaces. Analysis and confirmation of the data on psychological safety in these workplaces has resulted in consistent tools, practices and training for employees and supervisors to better align federal employees and supervisory personnel to desired states of psychological safety in work environments.

Please review the data sources attached to this information packet and offer any feedback you have on their adequacy for this study. The panel's evaluation rubric below (*Section III*) offers helpful criteria by which you can rate the data sources, but those criteria may not be comprehensive, so all panelists are encouraged to add more descriptive feedback in the open-ended sections at the bottom.

III. EXPERT PANEL EVALUATION RUBRIC

[to be completed by invited panelist]

Semi-Structured Interview

Yes	No	Protocol
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes an introductory narrative that provides the participant with a basic set of expectations and instructions for participating in the study
☐	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes an overview of the confidentiality agreement, and reminds the participant that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time (per the consent agreement)
☐	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol reminds each participant that s/he can “member check” their contributions after receiving the transcript of the recorded interview proceedings
☐	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes an overview of how the transcripts will be stored (and for how long)
☐	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes a set of working definitions for key terms and concepts
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol closes appropriately: the interviewer asks the participant whether s/he wants to share any additional insights, and then thanks them, offering information about the next steps in the study
Instrumentation		
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions avoid a ‘double-barreled’ structure (two questions in one) – but can be sequenced alongside follow-up questions in case there is a need to probe further
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are ‘open-ended’ (a participant cannot simply answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study’s overarching ‘Research Questions’ (they answer one or more of the RQs, and adhere to the study’s purpose statement)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study’s ‘Core Design’ (e.g., in a Narrative Inquiry, the questions are posed in a way that frames a participant’s experience as part of a story-arc or plotline)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain easily accessible words and phrases (the participants are likely to grasp the meaning, and all potentially confusing terms and concepts are defined ahead of time)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain clear grammatical structure and punctuation, leaving little or no ambiguity in their syntax
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are written in a way that is not ‘leading’ (suggesting participant answer only in a certain way)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to share <i>first-hand</i> experiences, thoughts, and beliefs; rather than to speculate about the experiences and beliefs of others
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions prompt participants to explore <i>how and why</i> they developed their thoughts and beliefs, or discuss the evolution of those thoughts and beliefs (by drawing on meaningful life experiences)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions challenge participants to reflect critically on conventional (or received) views and theories; and share unique perspectives from their own life experiences
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to ‘paint a broad picture’ of the phenomenon, drawing on multiple contextual examples or situations in order to capture the complexity of the phenomenon

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): [REDACTED]	DATE OR REVIEW: 19 Feb 2022
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PANELIST'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR INTERVIEW

Based on what was provided to me for review, I recommend you modify your interview questions to capture the missing elements below:

The protocol includes an overview of the confidentiality agreement and reminds the participant that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time (per the consent agreement). I cannot confirm this because the interview question doc does not fully cover it and I do not have the consent form for review.

The protocol reminds each participant that s/he can "member check" their contributions after receiving the transcript of the recorded interview proceedings. I cannot confirm this because the interview question doc does not fully cover it and I do not have the consent form for review.

The protocol includes an overview of how the transcripts will be stored (and for how long). I cannot confirm this because the interview question doc does not fully cover it.

The protocol includes a set of working definitions for key terms and concepts. I cannot confirm this because the interview question doc does not fully cover it.

III. EXPERT PANEL EVALUATION RUBRIC

[to be completed by invited panelist]

Open-Ended Questionnaire

Yes	No	Instrumentation
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are not repeated from/identical to those on the semi-structured interviews (or other data sources)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are ‘open-ended’ (a participant cannot simply answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions promote descriptive in-depth feedback by using appropriate prompts (“Tell me more about a time when...”) and avoiding cap limits on the response (“Answer in ten words or less”)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions avoid a ‘double-barreled’ structure (two questions in one) – but can be sequenced alongside follow-up questions that probe for further detail
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study’s overarching ‘Research Questions’ (they answer one or more of the RQs, and adhere to the study’s purpose statement)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study’s ‘Core Design’ (e.g., in a Narrative Inquiry, the questions are posed in a way that frames a participant’s experience as part of a story-arc or plotline)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain easily accessible words and phrases (the participants are likely to grasp the meaning, and all potentially confusing terms and concepts are defined ahead of time)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are written in a way that is not ‘leading’ (suggesting participant answer only in a certain way)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain clear grammatical structure and punctuation, leaving little or no ambiguity in their syntax
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions avoid an overly verbose (wordy) construction
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions do not ‘overreach’, asking participants to discuss ideas or events beyond their cognition or understanding (e.g., asking fourth graders to discuss the political implications of a recent legal ruling)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to share <i>first-hand</i> experiences, thoughts, and beliefs; rather than to speculate about the experiences and beliefs of others
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions prompt participants to explore <i>how and why</i> they developed their thoughts and beliefs, or discuss the evolution of those thoughts and beliefs (by drawing on meaningful life experiences)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions challenge participants to reflect critically on conventional (or received) views and theories; and share unique perspectives from their own life experiences
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to ‘paint a broad picture’ of the phenomenon, drawing on multiple contextual examples or situations in order to capture the complexity of the phenomenon

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): [REDACTED]	DATE OR REVIEW: 19 Feb 22
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PANELIST'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE

A well thought out and well written, open-ended questionnaire. I anticipate these questions will result in a broad body of data pertinent to your qualitative study.

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): [REDACTED]	DATE OR REVIEW: 19 Feb 2022
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PANELIST'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

The demographic questionnaire is thoughtful and reflective, revealing an understanding that the interviewer recognizes employee time/relationship with supervisor, age, gender, and workplace experience have a high probability of resulting in multiple responses across employee demographics, which can later be analyzed critically and data mined.

Reviewer 2:

INFORMATION PACKET: EXPERT PANEL REVIEW

Instructions:

- 1) The CDS researcher will complete *Section I* below, providing a basic profile of the study for all invited panelists.
 - 2) The CDS researcher will attach copies of each data source (including the data collection instrument and protocol) in Microsoft Word® format, so that invited panelists can review and provide feedback.
 - 3) The CDS dissertation committee (chair and methodologist) will assist the researcher with the development of data sources and the selection of appropriate review criteria to be used by panelists – if different from those below.
 - 4) The CDS researcher will send the full complement of paneling material (*Sections I-III* below and copies of each data source) to all invited panelists.
 - 5) Invited panelists will complete *Section II* and *Section III* below, and return to the researcher (the research can then share the completed packet with the dissertation committee).
-

I. PROFILE OF THE DISSERTATION RESEARCH

[to be completed by the CDS researcher]

1. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN:

- DESCRIPTIVE (MIN. TWO DATA SOURCES EXPECTED)
 CASE STUDY (MIN. THREE DATA SOURCES EXPECTED) SINGLE-CASE MULTIPLE-CASE
 PHENOMENOLOGICAL
 NARRATIVE INQUIRY
 GROUNDED THEORY

2. DATA TYPE(S) PLANNED - CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
 FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL
 QUESTIONNAIRE OPEN-ENDED SCALED OTHER
 DOCUMENT COLLECTION PROTOCOL
 OBSERVATION TOOL
 OTHER: Demographic Questions included with Questionnaire

3. DATA TYPE(S) FOR REVIEW - CHECK ALL THAT APPLY AND SEND WITH EXPERT PANEL REVIEW SHEET:

- SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
 FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL
 QUESTIONNAIRE OPEN-ENDED SCALED OTHER
 DOCUMENT COLLECTION PROTOCOL
 OBSERVATION TOOL
 OTHER: Demographic Questions included with Questionnaire

If all the proposed data types are *not* part of this panel review, please explain why below

N/A

4. PURPOSE STATEMENT:

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

6. PHENOMENON:

How employees describe their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of Psychological Safety.

7. TARGET POPULATION: Briefly describe the population you intend to sample (if you intend to field test ahead of the formal data collection, please answer how you will obtain test volunteers similar to the target population).

The target population will be employees in federal government organizations in Hawaii.

A field-test will include three individuals who are volunteers and share a similar background with the target population but are not part of the target population or study.

8. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK SUPPORTING THE STUDY: Include how the theory or conceptual framework relates to the research questions, the phenomenon, and/or the development of the data source(s).

Burns (1978) transformational leadership (TL) theory and Dollard and Bakker (2010) psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory are the basis of the theoretical foundation of this study.

Using the transformational leadership lens by which leaders compel their followers through motivation (Burns, 1978) and strive to enhance the spirit of commitment and teamwork (Al-Jednat, 2018) is used to help guide the study.

The PSC lens of leader influence on worker well-being through the organizational climate is used to help guide the study. The application of PSC is reflected by the exploration on organization policy, practice, and leader commitment, that is conducive to a stress-free and uninhibited work environment (Dollard & Bakker, 2010).

9. **INSTRUMENT MODIFICATIONS AND PERMISSIONS:** Have any data sources/instruments been **adopted** from prior authors [i.e., replicated in precisely the same fashion the authors had created them]? NO

If so, which data types? **N/A**

Have you obtained (or are you in the process of obtaining) the permission to use?

Yes N/A
 No

Have any data sources/instruments been **adapted** from prior authors [i.e., borrowed with modifications from the original authors]? NO

If so, which data types? **N/A**

Describe the specific modifications made:

N/A

Have you obtained (or are you in the process of obtaining) the permission to use?

Yes N/A
 No

II. PROFILE OF THE EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER

[to be completed by invited panelist]

1. Do you have professional licensure or certification?

Yes

No

2. If yes to the above, what type of licensure/certification?

Certified Master Spiritual Life Coach, Certified Master Mindset Coach, Certified Professional Life Coach, Certified U.S. Navy Master Training Specialist.

3. Do you have a terminal degree?

Yes

No

4. If yes to the above, please select the relevant degree type obtained

Masters

Doctorate

Higher Doctorate

5. If yes to the above, please select the field that most closely describes your terminal degree

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology | <input type="checkbox"/> Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture/Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sociology | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Sciences |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Linguistics | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Admin. | <input type="checkbox"/> Data Analytics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economics | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminology | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare Admin. | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Law/Jurisprudence | <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Sciences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anthropology | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Tech./Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Earth Sciences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Therapy (OT, PT, ST) | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing | <input type="checkbox"/> Physics/Chemistry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Geography | <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry/Theology | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacology | <input type="checkbox"/> Humanities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Field (Not Listed) | | | |

6. Having read the researcher's planned study (from *Section I*), do you claim one of the following areas of expertise related to the study?

- Scholarly Expertise (academic or professional research publication, rank)
- Practitioner Expertise (academic or professional practice, licensure)
- Both Scholarly and Practitioner Expertise

7. How long have you worked in that particular academic field or industry?

- Less than three years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- More than fifteen years

8. Please describe your area of expertise as it relates to this topic:

My area of expertise resides in 24 years of professional practice in organizational and leadership development at the federal level. As it relates to this topic, my professional practice is reinforced by an educational background in Psychology, Social Work, and Education.

Please review the data sources attached to this information packet and offer any feedback you have on their adequacy for this study. The panel's evaluation rubric below (*Section III*) offers helpful criteria by which you can rate the data sources, but those criteria may not be comprehensive, so all panelists are encouraged to add more descriptive feedback in the open-ended sections at the bottom.

III. EXPERT PANEL EVALUATION RUBRIC

[to be completed by invited panelist]

Semi-Structured Interview

Yes	No	Protocol
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes an introductory narrative that provides the participant with a basic set of expectations and instructions for participating in the study
<input type="checkbox"/>	☒	The protocol includes an overview of the confidentiality agreement, and reminds the participant that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time (per the consent agreement)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol reminds each participant that s/he can “member check” their contributions after receiving the transcript of the recorded interview proceedings
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes an overview of how the transcripts will be stored (and for how long)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes a set of working definitions for key terms and concepts
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol closes appropriately: the interviewer asks the participant whether s/he wants to share any additional insights, and then thanks them, offering information about the next steps in the study
Instrumentation		
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions avoid a ‘double-barreled’ structure (two questions in one) – but can be sequenced alongside follow-up questions in case there is a need to probe further
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are ‘open-ended’ (a participant cannot simply answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’)
<input type="checkbox"/>	☒	Questions are aligned with the study’s overarching ‘Research Questions’ (they answer one or more of the RQs, and adhere to the study’s purpose statement)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study’s ‘Core Design’ (e.g., in a Narrative Inquiry, the questions are posed in a way that frames a participant’s experience as part of a story-arc or plotline)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain easily accessible words and phrases (the participants are likely to grasp the meaning, and all potentially confusing terms and concepts are defined ahead of time)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain clear grammatical structure and punctuation, leaving little or no ambiguity in their syntax
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are written in a way that is not ‘leading’ (suggesting participant answer only in a certain way)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to share <i>first-hand</i> experiences, thoughts, and beliefs; rather than to speculate about the experiences and beliefs of others
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions prompt participants to explore <i>how and why</i> they developed their thoughts and beliefs, or discuss the evolution of those thoughts and beliefs (by drawing on meaningful life experiences)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions challenge participants to reflect critically on conventional (or received) views and theories; and share unique perspectives from their own life experiences
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to ‘paint a broad picture’ of the phenomenon, drawing on multiple contextual examples or situations in order to capture the complexity of the phenomenon

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME):	DATE OR REVIEW:
[REDACTED]	3/6/2022

PANELIST'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR INTERVIEW

*Protocol does not contain explicit mention related to participants' right to withdraw at any time. The confidentiality form more than likely mentions the "right to withdraw." However, the researcher did not provide the consent form for panelist review. Recommend adding Consent Form to Appendix E for full transparency related to duplicating the protocols of this study for future research and peer review.

*Interview questions #1, #2, and #16 contain the phrase "psychological health." The reviewer is unsure if psychological health is a relevant element in the study? If it is not, the reviewer recommends removing the phrase psychological health from the interview questions and highlighting the focus on psychological safety. However, alongside psychological safety, if psychological health is an important element in the study, consider adding the phrase psychological health to the Research Questions.

III. EXPERT PANEL EVALUATION RUBRIC

[to be completed by invited panelist]

Open-Ended Questionnaire

Yes	No	Instrumentation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are not repeated from/identical to those on the semi-structured interviews (or other data sources)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are ‘open-ended’ (a participant cannot simply answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions promote descriptive in-depth feedback by using appropriate prompts (“Tell me more about a time when...”) and avoiding cap limits on the response (“Answer in ten words or less”)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions avoid a ‘double-barreled’ structure (two questions in one) – but can be sequenced alongside follow-up questions that probe for further detail
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study’s overarching ‘Research Questions’ (they answer one or more of the RQs, and adhere to the study’s purpose statement)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study’s ‘Core Design’ (e.g., in a Narrative Inquiry, the questions are posed in a way that frames a participant’s experience as part of a story-arc or plotline)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain easily accessible words and phrases (the participants are likely to grasp the meaning, and all potentially confusing terms and concepts are defined ahead of time)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are written in a way that is not ‘leading’ (suggesting participant answer only in a certain way)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain clear grammatical structure and punctuation, leaving little or no ambiguity in their syntax
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions avoid an overly verbose (wordy) construction
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions do not ‘overreach’, asking participants to discuss ideas or events beyond their cognition or understanding (e.g., asking fourth graders to discuss the political implications of a recent legal ruling)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to share <i>first-hand</i> experiences, thoughts, and beliefs; rather than to speculate about the experiences and beliefs of others
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions prompt participants to explore <i>how and why</i> they developed their thoughts and beliefs, or discuss the evolution of those thoughts and beliefs (by drawing on meaningful life experiences)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions challenge participants to reflect critically on conventional (or received) views and theories; and share unique perspectives from their own life experiences
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to ‘paint a broad picture’ of the phenomenon, drawing on multiple contextual examples or situations in order to capture the complexity of the phenomenon

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): [REDACTED]	DATE OR REVIEW: 3/6/2022
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PANELIST'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE

*Question #6 seems incomplete. It may be missing a word or two at the beginning that would provide direction or the participant's expectation related of the question. Also, the word "own" in the sentence is redundant and should be removed.

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): [REDACTED]	DATE OR REVIEW: 3/6/2022
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PANELIST'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Good. Introduction paragraph provides important information and highlights key protocol elements such as purpose, application, and methodology (survey monkey).

Reviewer 3:

<p>INFORMATION PACKET: EXPERT PANEL REVIEW</p> <p>Instructions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The CDS researcher will complete <i>Section I</i> below, providing a basic profile of the study for all invited panelists. 2) The CDS researcher will attach copies of each data source (including the data collection instrument and protocol) in Microsoft Word® format, so that invited panelists can review and provide feedback. 3) The CDS dissertation committee (chair and methodologist) will assist the researcher with the development of data sources and the selection of appropriate review criteria to be used by panelists – if different from those below. 4) The CDS researcher will send the full complement of paneling material (<i>Sections I-III</i> below and copies of each data source) to all invited panelists. 5) Invited panelists will complete <i>Section II</i> and <i>Section III</i> below, and return to the researcher (the research can then share the completed packet with the dissertation committee). <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">I. PROFILE OF THE DISSERTATION RESEARCH</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[to be completed by the CDS researcher]</p> <p>1. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN:</p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DESCRIPTIVE (MIN. TWO DATA SOURCES EXPECTED) <input type="checkbox"/> CASE STUDY (MIN. THREE DATA SOURCES EXPECTED) <input type="checkbox"/> SINGLE-CASE <input type="checkbox"/> MULTIPLE-CASE <input type="checkbox"/> PHENOMENOLOGICAL <input type="checkbox"/> NARRATIVE INQUIRY <input type="checkbox"/> GROUNDED THEORY </p> <p>2. DATA TYPE(S) PLANNED - CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:</p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL <input type="checkbox"/> FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> QUESTIONNAIRE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPEN-ENDED <input type="checkbox"/> SCALED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER <input type="checkbox"/> DOCUMENT COLLECTION PROTOCOL <input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATION TOOL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: <u>Additional Data: Demographic Questionnaire</u> </p> <hr/> <p>3. DATA TYPE(S) FOR REVIEW - CHECK ALL THAT APPLY AND SEND WITH EXPERT PANEL REVIEW SHEET:</p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL <input type="checkbox"/> FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> QUESTIONNAIRE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPEN-ENDED <input type="checkbox"/> SCALED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER <input type="checkbox"/> DOCUMENT COLLECTION PROTOCOL <input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATION TOOL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: <u>Additional Data: Demographic Questionnaire</u> </p>

If all the proposed data types are *not* part of this panel review, please explain why below

N/A

4. PURPOSE STATEMENT:

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how federal government employees of Hawaii describe psychological safety and their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in the workplace.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

RQ1: How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?

RQ2: How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?

6. PHENOMENON:

How employees describe their supervisors' influence on their perceptions of Psychological Safety.

7. TARGET POPULATION: Briefly describe the population you intend to sample (if you intend to field test ahead of the formal data collection, please answer how you will obtain test volunteers similar to the target population).

The target population will be employees in federal government organizations in Hawaii.

A field-test will include three individuals who are volunteers and share a similar background with the target population but are not part of the target population or study.

8. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK SUPPORTING THE STUDY: Include how the theory or conceptual framework relates to the research questions, the phenomenon, and/or the development of the data source(s).

Burns (1978) transformational leadership (TL) theory and Dollard and Bakker (2010) psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory are the basis of the theoretical foundation of this study.

Using the transformational leadership lens by which leaders compel their followers through motivation (Burns, 1978) and strive to enhance the spirit of commitment and teamwork (Al-edenat, 2018) is used to help guide the study.

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9. **INSTRUMENT MODIFICATIONS AND PERMISSIONS:** Have any data sources/instruments been **adopted** from prior authors [i.e., replicated in precisely the same fashion the authors had created them]? NO

If so, which data types? **N/A**

Have you obtained (or are you in the process of obtaining) the permission to use?

Yes **N/A**
 No

Have any data sources/instruments been **adapted** from prior authors [i.e., borrowed with modifications from the original authors]? NO

If so, which data types? **N/A**

Describe the specific modifications made:

N/A

Have you obtained (or are you in the process of obtaining) the permission to use?

Yes **N/A**
 No

II. PROFILE OF THE EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER

[to be completed by invited panelist]

1. Do you have professional licensure or certification?

Yes

No

2. If yes to the above, what type of licensure/certification?

3. Do you have a terminal degree?

Yes

No

4. If yes to the above, please select the relevant degree type obtained

Masters

Doctorate

Higher Doctorate

5. If yes to the above, please select the field that most closely describes your terminal degree

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology | <input type="checkbox"/> Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture/Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sociology | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Sciences |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Linguistics | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Admin. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data Analytics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economics | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminology | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare Admin. | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Law/Jurisprudence | <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Sciences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anthropology | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Tech./Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Earth Sciences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Therapy (OT, PT, ST) | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing | <input type="checkbox"/> Physics/Chemistry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Geography | <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry/Theology | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacology | <input type="checkbox"/> Humanities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Field (Not Listed) | | | |

6. Having read the researcher's planned study (from *Section I*), do you claim one of the following areas of expertise related to the study?

- Scholarly Expertise (academic or professional research publication, rank)
- Practitioner Expertise (academic or professional practice, licensure)
- Both Scholarly and Practitioner Expertise

7. How long have you worked in that particular academic field or industry?

- Less than three years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- More than fifteen years

8. Please describe your area of expertise as it relates to this topic:

I have been working on K-12 education for 30 years and have worked in the research arena for nearly 20 years. In the research arena, I have worked with both quantitative and qualitative large-scale and smaller-scale studies relating to a variety of research interests.

Please review the data sources attached to this information packet and offer any feedback you have on their adequacy for this study. The panel's evaluation rubric below (*Section III*) offers helpful criteria by which you can rate the data sources, but those criteria may not be comprehensive, so all panelists are encouraged to add more descriptive feedback in the open-ended sections at the bottom.

III. EXPERT PANEL EVALUATION RUBRIC

[to be completed by invited panelist]

Semi-Structured Interview

Yes	No	Protocol
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes an introductory narrative that provides the participant with a basic set of expectations and instructions for participating in the study
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes an overview of the confidentiality agreement, and reminds the participant that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time (per the consent agreement)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol reminds each participant that s/he can “member check” their contributions after receiving the transcript of the recorded interview proceedings
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes an overview of how the transcripts will be stored (and for how long)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol includes a set of working definitions for key terms and concepts
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protocol closes appropriately: the interviewer asks the participant whether s/he wants to share any additional insights, and then thanks them, offering information about the next steps in the study
Instrumentation		
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions avoid a ‘double-barreled’ structure (two questions in one) – but can be sequenced alongside follow-up questions in case there is a need to probe further
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are ‘open-ended’ (a participant cannot simply answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study’s overarching ‘Research Questions’ (they answer one or more of the RQs, and adhere to the study’s purpose statement)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study’s ‘Core Design’ (e.g., in a Narrative Inquiry, the questions are posed in a way that frames a participant’s experience as part of a story-arc or plotline)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain easily accessible words and phrases (the participants are likely to grasp the meaning, and all potentially confusing terms and concepts are defined ahead of time)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain clear grammatical structure and punctuation, leaving little or no ambiguity in their syntax
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are written in a way that is not ‘leading’ (suggesting participant answer only in a certain way)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to share <i>first-hand</i> experiences, thoughts, and beliefs; rather than to speculate about the experiences and beliefs of others
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions prompt participants to explore <i>how and why</i> they developed their thoughts and beliefs, or discuss the evolution of those thoughts and beliefs (by drawing on meaningful life experiences)
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions challenge participants to reflect critically on conventional (or received) views and theories; and share unique perspectives from their own life experiences
☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to ‘paint a broad picture’ of the phenomenon, drawing on multiple contextual examples or situations in order to capture the complexity of the phenomenon

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): [REDACTED]	DATE OR REVIEW: 3/10/22
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PANELIST'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR INTERVIEW

Overall, very well done!

III. EXPERT PANEL EVALUATION RUBRIC

[to be completed by invited panelist]

Open-Ended Questionnaire

Yes	No	
Instrumentation		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are not repeated from/identical to those on the semi-structured interviews (or other data sources)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are 'open-ended' (a participant cannot simply answer 'yes' or 'no')
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions promote descriptive in-depth feedback by using appropriate prompts ("Tell me more about a time when...") and avoiding cap limits on the response ("Answer in ten words or less")
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions avoid a 'double-barreled' structure (two questions in one) – but can be sequenced alongside follow-up questions that probe for further detail
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study's overarching 'Research Questions' (they answer one or more of the RQs, and adhere to the study's purpose statement)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are aligned with the study's 'Core Design' (e.g., in a Narrative Inquiry, the questions are posed in a way that frames a participant's experience as part of a story-arc or plotline)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain easily accessible words and phrases (the participants are likely to grasp the meaning, and all potentially confusing terms and concepts are defined ahead of time)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions are written in a way that is not 'leading' (suggesting participant answer only in a certain way)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Questions contain clear grammatical structure and punctuation, leaving little or no ambiguity in their syntax
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions avoid an overly verbose (wordy) construction
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions do not 'overreach', asking participants to discuss ideas or events beyond their cognition or understanding (e.g., asking fourth graders to discuss the political implications of a recent legal ruling)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to share <i>first-hand</i> experiences, thoughts, and beliefs; rather than to speculate about the experiences and beliefs of others
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions prompt participants to explore <i>how and why</i> they developed their thoughts and beliefs, or discuss the evolution of those thoughts and beliefs (by drawing on meaningful life experiences)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions challenge participants to reflect critically on conventional (or received) views and theories; and share unique perspectives from their own life experiences
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions encourage participants to 'paint a broad picture' of the phenomenon, drawing on multiple contextual examples or situations in order to capture the complexity of the phenomenon

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): 	DATE OR REVIEW: 3/10/22
PANELIST'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE I provided a couple of points that should be considered in the other document.	

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): 	DATE OR REVIEW: 3/10/22
PANELIST'S WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE	
Well done!	

Appendix L.

Excerpts from Reflexive Journal

Participant Pseudonym OLIVIA | Interview Date: 30MAY2022

Researcher Observation Notes:

This participant has similar experiences that I can relate to given my own years of government service. As the researcher, I found myself visiting the situations that this participant spoke of and felt inside a feeling of “that’s what I thought too.” This is inherently a bias of my own perception and I acknowledge that not all study participants will have similar stories or reactions. The participant was outside in a quiet setting. I noted two interrupts perhaps from her son in the background, but nothing that distracted thought or interrupted the interview. The participant did not look like the traditional Hawaii population sector of Asian-Pacific Islander, which is a personal bias and belief of my own. I corrected myself in that I acknowledge that the Hawaii base is diverse more than the U.S. Mainland and therefore I should expect that all participants may come from various background and ethnicities. I recognize this is a bias based on my own background and life experience. Before future interviews, I must acknowledge the diversity piece and that Hawaii is unique to other parts of the United States. I should reflect on how this may or may not affect my data collection process and the way I project questions throughout the interview. Additionally, the diversity of thought and vocabulary could be something I need to ask clarification on during future interviews as some vernacular appears to be unique.

Participant Pseudonym LIAM | Interview Date: 03JUN2022

Researcher Observation Notes:

Since this participant has many similar experiences that I have encountered throughout my career I was careful to check myself to avoid bias or drifting in a biased direction in the interview. The participant did not have a video line so I could not observe body language or provide an observation that the participant was actually from Hawaii. I did not detect a local Hawaii accent, but this may be my own bias. I found myself very engaged based on his analytic approach to questions and due to some commonality and association with his responses. Based on that I was carefully to not lead into any conversations or lean one way or the other to avoid tainting the interview process. Overall, this was a well-structured interview and initial thought is that a high level of rich data was collected. The participant was a pleasure to speak to and had a unique interest in this topic.

Research Progress Notes (03MAY2022)

DAY 8: No change, still at 16 respondents. 12 respondents have fully completed the questionnaire and four/twelve have volunteered for the interview phase.

This is slow, but then again it's a holiday weekend, school is getting out and people want to get out and do things rather than answer questions and do interviews. I will continue monitoring attrition to determine if/when I may need to invoke plan B and plan C fully. Might have to move on next plan when I hit the two-week mark if no further progress is made. Focusing now on preparing for three interviews I have scheduled in the coming week. Achieved my first interview today. It went smooth and was approximately 1hr/19minutes in length. Good first start.

Interviews scheduled today = 0

Interview conducted today = 1

Total interviews scheduled = 4

- Monday (May 30) 9am - 10am HST (COMPLETE)
- Wednesday (June 1) 1:30pm - 2:30pm HST
- Wednesday (June 1) 3:30pm - 4:30pm HST
- Friday (June 3) 6pm - 7pm HST

Participant Pseudonym JACK | Interview Date: 17JUN2022

Researcher Observation Notes:

This participant has similar experiences that I can relate to given my own years of government service and particularly in an organization I once was a member in years and years ago. As the researcher, I found myself visiting the situations that this participant spoke of and observed some of his experiences were my own and have not changed since my years past employment there. This strokes indications of how my own bias could affect my interpretation of the participant response but I have done my best to check those biases going into the conversation. I will continue once I do a full analysis of the data. The participant was in a quiet setting. The participant had an accent not of Hawaii and due to the participant only being on audio, I was unable to see visual signs or see the appearance of the participant. I continue to monitor myself for my perception on the Hawaii population which may affect my own bias. Before future interviews, I need to continue to acknowledge the diversity piece and that Hawaii is unique to other parts of the United States. Also, maybe future interviews I need to steer the interview a little more to be clearer and more concise. A lot of data and a very lengthy interview. Longest interview to date so maybe good, but maybe also bad.

Appendix M.

Excerpt from Field Test Transcripts

00:43:55.560 --> 00:43:57.990

***CASTOR_I:** From a safety from a psychological safety standpoint. I have no problems whatsoever in providing feedback, I have no problems whatsoever in voicing a concern. And it's switched to the personnel that I work with whether their senior or subordinate.

00:44:22.470 --> 00:44:26.010

***CASTOR_I:** They know that I'm all ears as well. Because I don't know everything right um, and I think, it's what makes good interpersonal relationships is I don't know everything, and I know I don't know everything I may know where to find most things. But I'm not a walking encyclopedia of safety right and things change all the time, so somebody may know something more than I do, or they know uh a different reference than I do right so. As much as they, much as I would voice my concern and they would listen to what I have to say now, with the personnel that I work with the same is probably even more so with myself right um.

00:45:05.310 --> 00:45:07.830

***CASTOR_I:** Especially if it's me dealing with a subordinate or somebody who's younger in the organization than me that I may be in charge of I don't want to be proven wrong by somebody that's not at you know that's in the organization that I'm not in charge of right or I don't want something to happen because I didn't listen to one of my fellow coworkers um. So I think I'm more inclined to listen and take a step back and hear other vocal or other concerns of others than um probably most people I would say um yeah I think it's just the ability for uh people on both sides of the coin um, no matter your rank structure whatever the case may be um just listen to each other, and I think at my organization currently it's top notch in terms of communication factor.

00:46:28.440 --> 00:46:30.000

***CASTOR_I:** I have no reservations at all. So, the immediate supervisor um. I go in to said concern or conversation, just like I would with anything else you know, trying to be cool, calm and collective um, but I'm not trying to hide anything, and they know it. And I think that makes it easier to just kind of having that uh no reservation and just going straight into the person saying hey I don't think this is right, look at this, please, what do you think you know, do you think there anything could be changed about this. You know, then just again having that open door policy, even with your immediate supervisor and having that open forum of connection um.

00:52:23.730 --> 00:52:31.350

***CASTOR_I:** Ensuring overall safety psychological safety in terms of this um maybe, given that person, you know. The feeling of okay, well, I did bring this up um and we talked about this, and they came back with this, um I think that's all you can ask for as well right, at least that person knows that they were heard, um for me, I know that I was heard um.

* Participant pseudonym used during the study.

Appendix N.

Descriptive Data of Questionnaires and Interviews

Table N1

Descriptive Data of Questionnaires and Interviews

Pseudonym	Interview Setting	Interview Duration (minutes)	Interview Transcription (*pages)	Questionnaire Setting	Questionnaire Data (*pages)
EMMA				SurveyMonkey	1.00
AVA				SurveyMonkey	1.00
LIAM	Zoom	1:04:32	18.00	SurveyMonkey	1.20
NOAH				SurveyMonkey	1.80
OLIVER	Zoom	1:06:56	18.00	SurveyMonkey	1.20
CHARLOTTE	Zoom	0:42:30	13.00	SurveyMonkey	1.20
ELIJAH				SurveyMonkey	1.50
OLIVIA	Zoom	1:19:23	25.00	SurveyMonkey	2.20
WILLIAM				SurveyMonkey	1.50
JAMES	Zoom	1:13:45	18.00	SurveyMonkey	1.00
SOPHIA				SurveyMonkey	1.50
BENJAMIN				SurveyMonkey	1.20
LUCAS	Zoom	1:05:46	18.00	SurveyMonkey	1.20
HENRY				SurveyMonkey	1.20
AMELIA				SurveyMonkey	1.20
ALEXANDER	Zoom	1:22:31	23.00	SurveyMonkey	1.20
ISABELLA				SurveyMonkey	1.00
MASON				SurveyMonkey	1.00
MICHAEL				SurveyMonkey	1.20
MIA				SurveyMonkey	1.50
EVELYN				SurveyMonkey	1.50
HARPER				SurveyMonkey	1.50
ETHAN	Zoom	1:03:35	19.00	SurveyMonkey	1.00
JACOB	Zoom	0:59:49	16.00	SurveyMonkey	1.50
DANIEL				SurveyMonkey	1.50
LOGAN				SurveyMonkey	1.00
LEVI	Zoom	1:22:38	23.00	SurveyMonkey	1.20
CAMILA				SurveyMonkey	2.00
GIANNA	Zoom	0:53:03	14.00	SurveyMonkey	1.50
SEBASTIAN				SurveyMonkey	1.20
ABIGAIL	Zoom	1:17:10	19.00	SurveyMonkey	1.00
MATEO	Zoom	0:45:55	13.00	SurveyMonkey	1.20
LUNA				SurveyMonkey	1.50
ELLA				SurveyMonkey	1.25
JACK	Zoom	2:11:20	41.00	SurveyMonkey	1.00
ZOEY				SurveyMonkey	1.50
OWEN				SurveyMonkey	1.00
THEO				SurveyMonkey	1.20
AIDEN				SurveyMonkey	1.20
SAM				SurveyMonkey	1.00
JOE				SurveyMonkey	1.50
EMILY				SurveyMonkey	1.20
LEO				SurveyMonkey	1.00
LUKE				SurveyMonkey	1.25
NORA				SurveyMonkey	1.00
MILA				SurveyMonkey	1.00
Average		01:10:38	20		1.5
Total		16:28:53	278		58.5

* Single Spaced – 12 pt. Times New Roman

Table N2

*Demographics of Questionnaire and Interview Participants (*All Participants)*

*Pseudonym	Age Range	Gender	Current Position	Years Working in Current Position	Years Working for Current Supervisor	1 = Questionnaire 2 = Interview
EMMA	55-64	Female	Assistant	3	2-5	1
AVA	45-54	Female	Travel Assistant	3	2-5	1
LIAM	45-54	Male	Operations	22	2-5	1, 2
NOAH	55-64	Male	Requirements Writer	11	2-5	1
OLIVER	25-34	Male	Emergency Management	4	2-5	1, 2
CHARLOTTE	25-34	Female	Management Analyst	7	2-5	1, 2
ELIJAH	25-34	Male	Ship Fitter	6	2-5	1
OLIVIA	35-44	Female	Requirements Analyst	10	2-5	1, 2
WILLIAM	35-44	Male	Financial Specialist	5	2-5	1
JAMES	45-54	Male	Maintenance Manager	20	2-5	1, 2
SOPHIA	35-44	Female	Executive Assistant	4	6-10	1
BENJAMIN	35-44	Male	Navy Civilian Mechanic	6	2-5	1
LUCAS	55-64	Male	Equipment Specialist	8	2-5	1, 2
HENRY	25-34	Male	Maintenance Manager	6	6-10	1
AMELIA	35-44	Female	Financial Analyst	7	6-10	1
ALEXANDER	35-44	Male	Transportation Officer	5	2-5	1, 2
ISABELLA	55-64	Female	Financial Management Analyst	9	2-5	1
MASON	45-54	Male	Air Transportation Journeyman	2	2-5	1
MICHAEL	45-54	Male	Logistics Specialist	8	6-10	1
MIA	45-54	Female	Payroll Clerk	11	6-10	1
EVELYN	35-44	Female	Administrative Assistant	12	2-5	1
HARPER	25-34	Female	Postal Clerk	6	2-5	1
ETHAN	25-34	Male	Ocean Systems Analyst	5	2-5	1, 2
JACOB	35-44	Male	Training Officer	16	2-5	1, 2
DANIEL	35-44	Male	Operations	6	6-10	1
LOGAN	55-64	Male	Operations Specialist	15	11-15	1
LEVI	35-44	Male	Shipboard Firefighter	19	2-5	1, 2
CAMILA	45-54	Female	Payroll Administrator	17	6-10	1
GIANNA	35-44	Female	Accounting Officer	12	2-5	1, 2
SEBASTIAN	45-54	Male	Mechanic	14	6-10	1
ABIGAIL	55-64	Female	Management Analyst	12	11-15	1, 2
MATEO	65+	Male	Operations Officer	13	2-5	1, 2
LUNA	25-34	Female	Logistics Specialist	4	2-5	1
ELLA	25-34	Female	Public Affairs	6	2-5	1
JACK	65+	Male	EM Specialist	12	2-5	1, 2
ZOEY	35-44	Female	Ops Analyst	4	2-5	1
OWEN	35-44	Male	Manpower Analyst	2	2-5	1
THEO	55-64	Male	Operations Officer	2	2-5	1
AIDEN	18-24	Male	Welder Apprentice	2	2-5	1
SAM	35-44	Male	Program Analyst	3	2-5	1
JOE	25-34	Male	Executive Services	8	2-5	1
EMILY	25-34	Female	Office Assistant	6	2-5	1
LEO	25-34	Male	Special Projects	6	2-5	1
LUKE	25-34	Male	IT Support Technician	6	2-5	1
NORA	25-34	Female	Systems Engineer	3	2-5	1
MILA	25-34	Female	Training	4	2-5	1

Appendix O.

Researcher Field Memo

Participant Pseudonym: ALEXANDER	Date and time of interview: 10JUN2022 @ 0630 (HST)	Location of interview: Zoom Conferencing App.	Date and time of memo: 10JUN2022 @ 0649 (HST)
Memo: Observation Notes	<p><i>Interview observation notes:</i> The participant expresses interest in the subject and also refers to the questionnaire experience and how it made him think more about the topic being discussed today. Seems excited to do the interview phase. Good descriptions of vivid experiences in the workplace and a great breakdown of transitioning from a previous organization that did not value him speaking up and “muzzled him” whereas his current organization allows him to be fully open. The participant shares a unique perspective of differences in military and civilian government workers which is interesting having experienced the lens of both sides in different aspects of my own career. The participant is pleasant to speak with and is clear and concise about his points. My observation of verbal cues given off by the participant shows passion in the responses and I detect no cause for concern or distress resulting from my delivery or the content of the questions. Since the caller is dialing in via the Zoom telephone line, I am not able to see any visual cues or body language.</p>		

Note: Completed during the interview. (e.g., emotional observations and non-verbal communications).

Field Notes Used for Bracketing

Participant Pseudonym: ALEXANDER	Date and time of interview: 10JUN2022 @0630 (HST)	Location of interview: Zoom Conferencing App.	Date and time of memo: 10JUN2022 @ 0843(HST)
Memo: Reflexive Journal	<p><i>Interview observation notes:</i> This participant has similar experiences that I relate to, given my own government service so it makes it crucial to continue to reflect and distance myself from preconceived notions or assumptions. An important thing I should know, but maybe ignore, is the fact that military rank and structure affects the military population in federal service more than the civilians in federal service. Not sure why I had not acknowledged before, but it's good to be reminded so I ensure I check myself in the data analysis. During this interview I experience a forced computer reboot which was unavoidable by most accounts even after having checked the night before for any mandatory updates. To that effect, I told the participant after the first question that I would be forced to reboot and when we came back up, we continued immediately from question two without interruption. I was unable to visually see the participant due to his use of the Zoom phone line but based on responses and professionalism I assume through my own bias that the participant is well educated and therefore able to articulate his experience more clearly than most. Honestly, I felt comfortable doing an interview where the participant and I could not see each other, but probably just a personal preference rather than a true benefit given the lack of body language and visual cues which also tell a human story. A good interview that I found went long but did not seem so long in reality. I look forward to reviewing the transcript to become more familiar with the data.</p>		

Note: Completed after the interview (e.g., researcher biases, beliefs, and personal experiences).

Appendix P.

Coding Analysis Audit Trail Excerpt

CODING AUDIT TRAIL DOCUMENT

ENTRY	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION
38	7/31/2022	Combined codes: Culture of no repercussion, no embarrassment, no feeling of negativity, no harassment, no judgement, no punishment, no rejection, no repercussion, no reprisal, no fear, fear, fear of reprisal, fear reprisal = no fear . File: EXTRACTED CODES COMBINED (b).xlsx
39	7/31/2022	Combined codes: All hands meetings, all-hands meetings, benefits of group discussion, group discussions, group huddles, group meetings, Open group meetings = group discussions . File: EXTRACTED CODES COMBINED (b).xlsx
40	7/31/2022	Combined codes: accept new ideas, be open to new ideas, Closed to new ideas, encouraging ideas, Ideas should be allowed, ignore ideas, Not open to new ideas, pushes ideas, Resistant to new ideas, supports ideas = open to new ideas . File: EXTRACTED CODES COMBINED (b).xlsx
41	7/31/2022	Combined codes: collaboration applications, collaboration space, collaboration tools, collaborative platforms and tools, collaborative tools and space, provided collaboration tools, virtual collaboration, Microsoft teams = collaboration tools and space . File: EXTRACTED CODES COMBINED (b).xlsx
42	7/31/2022	Combined codes: Direct interaction, daily interaction, Emotional level of interaction, Face to face interaction, Good coworker interaction supports PS, human interaction, limited interaction, low interaction, no direct interaction, one-on-one interaction, Safe interactions, Selective interaction, Self limit interaction, recent interact = human interaction . File: EXTRACTED CODES COMBINED (b).xlsx
43	7/31/2022	Combined codes: anonymity, anonymous, anonymous feedback, Anonymous feedback mechanism, anonymous input, anonymous surveys, Lack of anonymity, Need anonymous input methods = anonymity . File: EXTRACTED CODES COMBINED (b).xlsx
44	7/31/2022	Combined codes: Encourage feedback, Encourage feedback on process, encourage free thought, encourage junior employees, Encourage process improvement, Encourage questions, ENCOURAGE SAFE SPEAK, encourage speaking up, Encourage to expand knowledge, Encourage to speak up, Encouraged to ask questions, Encouraged to innovate, Encouraged to learn, encouraged to share, Encouraged to share experience, encouraged to speak up, Encouragement, Encourages collaboration, encourages feedback, encourages innovation, encourages input, Encourages learning, encourages openness, encourages problem solving, encourages process improvement, encourages questions, encourages respect, encourages speaking up, encourages to speak up, encourages voice, Leadership encouragement to speak up, Leadership encourages input, Peer encouragement, Supervisor encouragement, Supervisor encourages contribution, Supervisor encourages us to speak up, sup commitment, superviso encouragement = supervisor encouragement . File: EXTRACTED CODES COMBINED (b).xlsx
45	7/31/2022	Combined codes: innovate, innovation, innovative, stifles innovation = innovation . File: EXTRACTED CODES COMBINED (b).xlsx

Appendix Q.

Expanded Data Analysis Tables

Table Q1

Codes to Initial Themes

Initial Theme	Initial Theme Defined	Code
Encourages collaboration, resulting in a healthy work environment to enhance personal and professional performance.	Description of the importance of positive psychological safety in the workplace	accessibility, autonomy, collaboration, collaborative teams, comfortable mindset, communication policy, creativity, culture of openness, deal with stressors, efficiency, engagement, express feelings, human needs, improves morale, innovation, isolated, learning organization, listening behavior, mental health, motivation, no fear, personal performance, problem solving, quality of life, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, solve problems, systems thinking, trust, voice
Share thoughts and feelings in an environment of mutual respect absent of fear.	Discussion of the aspects of psychological safety that employees find the most impactful in the workplace	be heard, be myself, care for people, communication policy, COVID effects, culture of openness, deal with stressors, employee well-being, equality, express feelings, feel valued, human needs, improves morale, inclusive, innovation, isolated, mental health, mutual respect, no fear, organizational change, psychological safety impact, retribution, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, sharing ideas, solve problems, trust
Builds an innovation network where relationships are built on openness and sharing of information.	How employees describe the ideal interaction and support network with their coworkers that is fostered by a psychologically safe environment	collaboration, collaborative, collaborative teams, comfortable mindset, common bond, communication policy, culture of openness, encouraging, engagement, equality, family, feedback process, innovation, interpersonal relationships, listening behavior, mutual respect, no fear, receptive, share information, supervisor encouragement, supervisor influence, supportive, transparency, understanding, we can relate
Fosters a family like structure where employees are supportive of each other and build on common bonds.	How employees describe their interpersonal relationships that support good human connection and effective information flow in the workplace	anonymity, approachability, attentive, autonomy, care for people, collaboration, collaboration tools and space, collaborative teams, communication policy, culture of openness, employee recognition, equality, face-to-face, family, feel valued, group discussions, human interaction, interpersonal relationships, leadership traits, listening behavior, makes time for others, mutual respect, no fear, open door policy, receptive, safe space to work, share information, socialize, stove pipes, sup method of interact, supervisor encouragement, supportive, systems thinking, transparency, understanding
Strengthens communication	A discussion surrounding the policies and processes	accessibility, anonymity, approachability, ask for input, collaborative teams, comfortable mindset,

Initial Theme	Initial Theme Defined	Code
and trust through policies that encourage safety zones and speaking up.	in place to allow and encourage safety in speaking up	command events, communication policy, confidentiality, COVID effects, culture of openness, email, employee recognition, encouraging, face-to-face, fail and learn, family, feedback process, feel valued, follow through, human interaction, ice breakers, inclusive, in-person, interpersonal relationships, leadership traits, listening behavior, mentor, mutual respect, no fear, positive reinforcement, receptive, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, show action, socialize, supervisor encouragement, supportive, transparency, trust, virtual meetings
Supervisor behavior affects how employees feel as humans and determines the impact of feeling safe in the workplace.	The feeling and desire that employees seek from their supervisor to support their basic human needs in the workplace	approachability, autonomy, care for people, collaboration, collaborative teams, comfortable mindset, committed, considerate, culture of openness, difference of opinions, encouraging, equality, feedback process, feel valued, good communicator, hypocrisy, inclusive, innovation, interpersonal relationships, leadership traits, listening behavior, makes time for others, mutual respect, no fear, open door policy, perception vs reality, problem solving, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, supervisor encouragement, supportive, understanding
Supervisor traits and soft skills affect employee behavior and safety in the workplace.	The description of necessary soft skill traits such as communication, collaboration, and encouragement to strengthen the personal connections in the workplace	approachability, attentive, avoid contact, care for people, clear and concise, collaboration, communication policy, COVID effects, culture of openness, emotional intelligence, encouraging, equality, feedback process, feel valued, good communicator, helpful, human interaction, in sync, interpersonal relationships, leadership traits, listening behavior, mutual respect, no focus, no follow through, open door policy, perception vs reality, problem solving, retribution, safe space to work, share information, show action, sup comm skills, supervisor encouragement, supervisor influence, supportive, telework challenges, waste of time
The level of supervisor connection and commitment strengthens or diminishes the feeling of value and engagement in the workplace.	A description of the investment and connection that employees seek from leadership in the organization	acknowledge problems, approachability, attentive, barriers, care for people, collaborative teams, comfortable mindset, considerate, COVID effects, culture of openness, distant, employee recognition, engagement, equality, feedback process, group discussions, human interaction, interpersonal relationships, lack of transparency, listening behavior, no fear, no follow through, not interested in personal things, open door policy, out of touch, perception vs reality, receptive, safe space to work, share information, show action, supervisor encouragement, supportive, takes notes, unavailable, understanding, work related

Initial Theme	Initial Theme Defined	Code
Eliminating barriers and being approachable affects employee actions, behaviors, and relationships.	Describing the ability for supervisors to eliminate barriers to approachability that further enable trust and engagement	approachability, avoid contact, care for people, comfortable mindset, communication policy, culture of openness, difference of opinions, engagement, equality, feedback process, follow through, hypocrisy, in sync, interpersonal relationships, confidentiality, leadership traits, listening behavior, makes time for others, mentor, mutual respect, no fear, open door policy, receptive, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, show action, supportive, trust, understanding, waste of time, we can relate
Building rapport with employees in work and non-work-related areas builds a bond and relationship that impacts openness and understanding.	How employees describe the relationship with their supervisor in both work and non-work-related areas that helps to build quality rapport and human connection	anonymity, approachability, attentive, care for people, comfortable mindset, communication policy, culture of openness, difference of opinions, empowers, encouraging, equality, feedback process, feel valued, group discussions, helpful, hesitation, human interaction, inclusive, interpersonal relationships, confidentiality, listening behavior, makes time for others, mentor, mentoring, motivation, mutual respect, retribution, safe space to work, safe to speak up, share information, show action, singled out, supervisor encouragement, supportive, transparency, understanding

Table Q2

Questionnaire and Interview Examples for Initial Themes for RQ1

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
Encourages collaboration, resulting in a healthy work environment to enhance personal and professional performance.	Camila (Questionnaire)	"Psychological safety is important to me because I want to feel safe when I come to work. I want to be heard and listened to and I want to know that I can say something if I am concerned or worried about a process or even another coworker."
	Liam (Questionnaire)	"There hasn't been a whole lot done in the last two years to promote a safer psychological environment, however, they continue to emphasize, you know, that people should be willing to speak up willing to share thoughts and everything, so I don't think it's degraded any in effort, but it certainly hasn't increased much either."
Share thoughts and feelings in an environment of mutual respect absent of fear.	Daniel (Questionnaire)	"Psychological safety is important in the workplace because it provides an environment for employee engagement. When employees feel safe at work, it's more open to engage. This includes working on projects together, solving problems, collaboration and working with other stakeholders external to the organization."
	Oliver (Interview)	"So yeah, productivity motivation work ethic all increases, especially when my personal psychological well-being is on the positive note, and then on the negative it does decrease your productivity."
Builds an innovation network where relationships are built on openness and sharing of information.	Harper (Questionnaire)	"All my coworkers are open and listen. Some more than others but I've never had any bad interaction in discussing things. We share a lot of work ideas and talk sometimes about personal things but mostly work."
	Lucas (Interview)	"I don't feel any personal push backs it doesn't matter if it's a small project or a large project. I think we can have those conversations and no fear or no reprisal."
Fosters a family like structure where employees are supportive of each other and build on common bonds.	Sophia (Questionnaire)	"My coworkers are like family and we are comfortable speaking with each other openly about usually anything."
	James (Interview)	"It is a very open place of business that allows people to use their imagination, sometimes without that fear of you know, looking bad or you know being ridiculed so it very much is an inclusive organization that allows you to speak what you think."
Strengthens communication and trust through policies that encourage safety zones and speaking up.	Evelyn (Questionnaire)	"My office is very open and we respect each other as equals and teammates. Weekly office meetings, training and problem solving together have helps us build and learn to work together and respect each other."
	Liam (Interview)	"My door is always open you got something for me come talk to me, you know you can talk to me, you can talk to your boss, we just want you to know like if you see something you got something to say come talk to us like open door policy right."

Table Q3

Questionnaire and Interview Examples for Initial Themes for RQ2

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
Supervisor behavior affects how employees feel as humans and determines the impact of feeling safe in the workplace.	William (Questionnaire)	"My supervisor is committed, easy going and understanding most of the time. Of course, we have disagreements but overall, my supervisor makes me feel comfortable by listening and giving proper attention to me and my fellow coworkers."
	James (Interview)	"It's not a one off it's an everyday thought and conscious effort by leadership to throw out there, those questions and ask that and not be not be a dictator, but be looking for people to come up with answers to problems, instead of just the management, making a decision in a vacuum, they are they're looking for the people that it's going to affect or have that information to give good advice."
Supervisor traits and soft skills affect employee behavior and safety in the workplace.	Camila (Questionnaire)	"I trust her more than I have most supervisors in the past. She loves to talk story and we laugh, and things are not so stressful. I can also go to her with an issue and know she will listen and do her best."
	Oliver (Interview)	"As I mentioned before they can identify and see the red flags early on, when a person might be having a difficult time and either engage with them early and engage with them early and then get them either the support or help that they may need or be able to mitigate what comes out of those."
The level of supervisor connection and commitment strengthens or diminishes the feeling of value and engagement in the workplace.	Mason (Questionnaire)	"My supervisor take in consideration of my views and opinion. As well as gives encouragement in areas, that can or may need focus in also."
	James (Interview)	"I think the major thing that has helped me evolve and understand that it is safe to speak up and to do things is looking at the human interaction from the upper leadership during meetings, whether it be you know one on one meetings or in a group setting just that instead of the institutional regimental meeting structure that I have unfortunately been used to it, it's seeing that leader as a human being."
Eliminating barriers and being approachable affects employee actions, behaviors, and relationships.	Sebastian (Questionnaire)	"High level of trust since he listens takes safety serious and is open to feedback."
	James (Interview)	"What they do well, is you know I've talked about the overarching many of the supervisors many of leadership have that personal engagement when they come to a meeting, whether it be a one-on-one meeting I mean it could be stopping in the hallway and talking to somebody but that that personal engagement."
Building rapport with employees in work and non-work-related	Emily (Questionnaire)	"Open two-way communications and treating issues carefully and treating me and my fellow workers equally to show support and understanding."

Initial Theme	Participant	Exemplar Quotation
areas builds a bond and relationship that impacts openness and understanding.	Mateo (Interview)	"My immediate supervisor, I'm with him every day. We talk more we talk about things, whether it's work related or non-work related we spend a lot of time discussing you know families that type stuff so it's a it's not you don't feel like you can only talk about work and because of that it makes the work portion much easier to deal with."

Appendix R.

Theory to Theme Matrix

THEORY	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	CODES	INITIAL THEMES*	THEMES*
<p>Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978)</p> <p>+</p> <p>Psychosocial Safety Climate Theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010)</p>	<p><i>RQ1:</i> How do federal government employees describe psychological safety in their workplace?</p> <p><i>RQ2:</i> How do federal government employees describe their supervisors' influence on psychological safety in their workplace?</p>	<p>be heard be myself communication COVID effects culture of openness deal with stressors equality express feelings feel valued human needs improves morale inclusive innovation isolated mental health mutual respect no fear organizational change psychological safety impact retribution safe space information sharing ideas solve problems trust</p> <p>approachability autonomy care for people comfortable mindset committed encouraging equality feedback process feel valued communicator inclusive interpersonal relationships leadership traits listening behavior makes time for others mutual respect open-door policy perception-vs-reality problem-solving supervisor encouragement supportive understanding</p>	<p>Importance of Psychological Safety</p> <p>Aspects of Psychological Safety</p> <p>Coworker Interaction and Support</p> <p>Interpersonal Coworker Relationships</p> <p>Workplace Policies Encouraging Safe Speak</p> <p>Supervisor Commitment to Employee Needs</p> <p>Supervisor Soft Skills</p> <p>Senior Leadership Commitment</p> <p>Supervisor Engagement and Trust</p> <p>Interpersonal Supervisor Relationships</p>	<p><i>A:</i> Impactful to Motivation and Quality of Work</p> <p><i>A:</i> Supportive Network that is Family Like</p> <p><i>A:</i> All-inclusive Environment</p> <p><i>A:</i> Commitment that Affects Employee Needs</p> <p><i>A:</i> Agent of Change to Organizational Barriers</p> <p><i>A:</i> Enabler to Personnel Engagement</p>

* Titles abbreviated for illustration: See tables 13, 14, 15