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Foresight Leadership Theory: A Grounded Theory Study of the Conflict Management Experiences of Healthcare Managers with Remote Employees

Desiree Nichole Van Campen

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Foresight Leadership Theory: A Grounded Theory Study of the Conflict Management
Experiences of Healthcare Managers with Remote Employees

by

Desiree N. Van Campen

A Dissertation Presented to the
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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**Nova Southeastern University
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences**

This dissertation was submitted by Desiree N. Van Campen under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the Halmos College of Arts and Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

To my Husband, Keith, thank you for getting teary-eyed alongside me in the anticipation of the magnitude of this day. To my oldest son, Merritt, you are too young to know it now, but you have figured out how to light up even the most stressful of days, just by being you. To my youngest son, Vaughn, I was pregnant with you during the toughest part of this journey, and knowing you were with me gave me unimaginable strength. I love you all more than you will ever know.

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Abstract

Healthcare managers of remote employees are faced with unique challenges as they relate to conflict prevention and management. The Covid-19 pandemic further complicated this issue when, because of social distancing mandates and employee health concerns, a large volume of healthcare managers and their employees were forced to transition to a remote working environment. Managers had to then develop personal strategies to successfully lead their now-remote workforce. This qualitative Grounded Theory study revealed that intentional communication, engagement, and planning are ways in which managers have been able to minimize the effects that conflict has on their employees. From the research, the Foresight Leadership Theory has emerged. This theory highlights the role of these strategies, with foresight as the guide, in reducing conflict. Using these strategies, healthcare managers are better able to tailor meaningful communication and engagement with their staff, which has shown a decrease in conflict as a whole.

Chapter One: Introduction

Virtual healthcare can mean many different things, and depends on whether or not the type of healthcare being provided is clinical (performed by a doctor, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, etc.) or by a non-clinical support staff member (documentation improvement, clinical departmental support, scheduling support, etc.). The commonality between both types is that they are performed remotely. For the purpose of this study, I have explored virtual healthcare from the non-clinical perspective.

The virtual healthcare field is expanding to include more diverse roles such as medical coding, provider scheduling, client services, and medical transcription. As these changes occur, this impacts the responsibilities of managers in the healthcare industry. Managers are now tasked with finding creative ways to engage their team, ensuring that people and tasks do not become “out of sight, out of mind”, and to find ways to meaningfully communicate both successes and opportunities in impactful ways.

This concept is relevant now more than ever, as the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a sudden increase in the number of managers and team members who now work remotely. Remote work, for this study’s purpose, implies that the manager and the employee are not in the same physical location. All managers, at the time of the interviews conducted for the study, work from home, as do all of their employees.

I conducted this grounded theory study to explore the conflict resolution skills used in the healthcare field when a manager leads a remote team of employees. There is extensive literature specific to healthcare management, as well as for remote employee management. Conflict resolution is often a small piece of these publications, and far from the literature's focus.

My study focused on this area as a way to assist healthcare managers in navigating conflict, which is often challenging in its nature without the added component of a remote working environment. Body language is a determining factor often used to gauge emotion, which is especially useful when a difficult conversation is being held. This is also true of many situations of conflict. When the ability to see a person's body language is removed, such as when a conversation is held by phone or conducted via email, it can cause additional stress and may enhance conflict.

Conflict in the workplace can come in many forms, ranging from interpersonal conflict to organizational conflict, and everywhere between. Conflict can also take place within a person in the form of self-doubt, self-defeating behavior, and so on. "Settlements to conflict can be a stabilizing influence on organizational environments and also have the ability to be change inducing" (Helms & Oliver, 2015, p. 471). The Helms & Oliver 2015 study also noted that the way in which conflict settlements are achieved, "can dramatically change the way institutional constituents in a field relate to one another" (Helms & Oliver, 2015, p. 472).

With the Helms & Oliver study in mind, it speaks to how conflict resolution can be used as a tool to transform relationships for the better. When done properly, a manager can engage their employees in difficult conversations in a way that becomes transformative for the employee and ultimately helps them grow both in their role and on a personal level.

Research Question

Conflict in the workplace can occur for a variety of reasons. I wanted to find out directly from managers in the healthcare management industry who have remote employees, how they deal with being faced with conflict. Through the interview process, participants discussed how they prevent conflict from happening, as well as how they deal with conflict once it happens. The

research question that I decided was most appropriate was one that encompassed the essence of all interview questions that were asked of the 15 study participants.

RQ1. How do managers in the healthcare management industry experience dealing with conflicts with remote employees?

This broad of a question allowed managers to take the questions asked in any direction of their choosing. It allowed the interviews to flow in a more natural and conversational manner, and positioned interview participants to openly share experiences, opinions, and proven successes that they have personally engaged in.

History of Remote Employee Management

The idea of employees working remotely, in its most basic sense and description, is not a new concept. If we view remote workers as those who work from home, then the first reported time of this taking place is 1975 (“The history, evolution and future of remote work”, 2020). During this time, a personal computer, although much different than we know of it today, was used to allow employees to take their work on the go.

In the 1990’s the introduction to the internet revolutionized how work was done. With the internet came online tools, such as email, that employees could use to communicate with each other both in and out of the office. To test how remote working impacted the workforce, “the Federal Government conducted a telecommuting study on 2,000 federal workers” (“The history, evolution and future of remote work," 2020).

Also noted in The History, Evolution and Future of Remote Work article, workers showed increased productivity, an improvement in work-life balance, and a reduction in expenses as they relate to travel to and from a physical office. Soon thereafter, large companies

like American Express and AT&T followed the government's lead and began allowing employees to telecommute.

Once wireless internet and broadband was introduced in the 2000s, internet speeds and functionality were improved significantly from its dial-up predecessors. This allowed employees to work exclusively remote, with no ties needed, to a physical workspace. Team collaboration tools have proven to be effective in helping managers and employees keep in touch, as well as employees with each other to replicate the bond often found in the physical workplace environment ("The history, evolution and future of remote work," 2020).

How managers of remote employees face the introduction and continuation of ground rules and expectation is similar to those expected of a traditional in-office employee (Knight, 2015). Setting expectations and a predictable meeting schedule are steps that help a manager to build a working relationship that revolves around trust, honesty, and fairness.

A key to successful communication with remote employees is to help them not actually feel remote. Feeling forgotten about can easily occur when employees do not have regular communication with their manager and/or team. To help keep this from happening, a manager can employ the use of online collaboration tools as well as routine, regular, team meetings. (Knight, 2015).

Just as impactful as routine conversations, are impromptu ones. These unplanned conversations mimic those that occur in a traditional office setting among employees; often a way for employees to decompress and speak casually with one another. This is valuable time between colleagues that can help to both initiate and sustain interpersonal relationships. (Knight, 2015).

Recognition, when done correctly, can make any employee feel valued. This is especially important for employees who work remotely. The consideration on behalf of the manager to keep in mind here, is to create an inclusive environment, which includes public recognition. This proves to employees that their efforts and successes have not gone unnoticed, and can serve as a reminder to other employees who are not remote, that those who are, are pulling their weight as a part of the team. (Knight, 2015).

As this study was taking place, the COVID-19 pandemic began to radically shift the way people live and work. Due to federal regulations that were put into place that did not allow people to be within six feet of each other, many employees became unemployed, in furlough status, or working remotely. In this study, I have examined the impact remote work has had on managers, most of which were forced to embrace a role of remote employee management that they did not have experience with in the past.

History of Healthcare Management

Healthcare management is a relatively new concept in the formal sense. Though there may have been people overseeing departments within medical establishments before this time, the first formal training for health systems management was not established until 1934 at the University of Chicago (Healthcare Administration-Historical Background, 2019). As the number of medical establishments increased, so did the need for properly trained personnel in the field of healthcare administration.

The success of the program at the University of Chicago prompted other universities to follow suit and develop similar programs. The popularity of these programs was especially high after World War II. During this era, the healthcare administration program was part of the business school department in most schools, which many found detrimental to the importance of

the field, as business schools "were widely seen as lacking academic rigor" (Healthcare Management Education, n.d., p. 3)

The demand for hospital administrators increased significantly as healthcare establishments expanded to include long term care and ambulatory facilities, as well as the increasing number of hospitals being established continued to grow. During this period the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA) was established to help establish guidelines for these degree programs.

Healthcare administration is not specific to any one management position in healthcare. This title is applied to managers in healthcare finance, human resources, health information, patient billing, etc. Some graduates from a healthcare administration program may not even work directly in the healthcare field, but rather hold positions in insurance, consulting firms, and government agencies.

No matter the position location or designation, the healthcare administration field continues to grow immensely year after year. Additional education requirements also vary by position. An example of this being clinical healthcare administration positions that require a nursing license, as well as a healthcare administration degree, to be considered for employment.

A position in healthcare administration requires specialized training and education, and most employers require at least a Bachelor's degree in the field to consider a candidate for a role in their organization. As the healthcare field evolves, so do the requirements medical establishment have for new hires. This has concurrently led to the rapid evolution of healthcare administration programs in terms of course offerings, and degree completion requirements such as mandatory satisfactory completion of onsite training at a medical facility.

Justification for the Study

This study has developed best practices in conflict resolution for healthcare managers with remote employees, to manage and resolve the conflicts that may occur. Given that the healthcare workforce is becoming more diversified, conflict resolution training for managers is more important now than ever before. Companies are still responsible for reducing employee turnover, creating a workforce environment that is satisfactory to employees, and that brings success to the company. These needs remain for both parties even when that workforce is conducting their role remotely.

Without physical supervision of their employees, managers may feel added pressure and stress to make this desirable atmosphere a reality. Often, heightened stress increases the likelihood of conflict, which may become a negative cycle if a manager is not well-versed in conflict resolution.

Many non-clinical healthcare employees also work on production-based schedules and/or tight deadlines. This adds to the growing stress that managers of remote employees already feel because they have to supervise employee progress electronically. Not knowing how to address the conflicts that may arise can easily lead to employee dissatisfaction and an increase in managerial stress.

To understand the types of conflict resolution skills that would best suit healthcare managers of non-clinical remote employees, this grounded theory study was necessary. I have interviewed 15 managers of remote employees. From the interviews, I have discovered what conflict prevention and/or resolution tactics remote healthcare managers find most useful with their teams.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate remote employee management in the healthcare industry to discover patterns of success among managers in the reduction and management of conflict, and with that data, I have formulated a grounded theory of best practice development. There is a generous amount of literature regarding healthcare management, as well as remote employee management. What I was unable to find, however, was a substantial amount of literature combining the two, and accumulating to remote employee management in the healthcare field.

The literature which I was able to source made brief mention of conflict among management and remote employees, and how to manage it. My personal purpose for embarking on this study was to expand on that knowledge, and to create a new source of information for managers of remote employees in the healthcare field to reference.

Context of the Researcher

My experience working in the healthcare field has shown me that healthcare is a unique sector that is continuously evolving. The start of my healthcare employment journey started as a medical assistant at a podiatry practice. This position evolved to an office manager position for the same office, and I knew then that management and leadership was my passion. I had the pleasure of becoming an intern at the VA Medical Center in the nutrition department, and from there, became the business office supervisor for a hospital. This supervisory position evolved to also include management over the patient access department employees. I have since worked for a private family practice office as the business manager, and as a documentation specialist and provider support specialist for a medical management company.

My career evolution has uncovered successes and challenges alike. As someone who is currently a remote employee, as well as someone who interacts with remote employees daily, I began to notice trends that I knew I wanted to explore further.

The department in which I work grew rapidly with the acquisition of two competing companies within a year's time. With these acquisitions brought about numerous positions, many of which were filled by employees located throughout the United States. This presented a new challenge to a stable company that had a traditional management structure, and a workforce made up of predominantly in-house employees.

Managers who had never had experience working with remote employees were given them without any formal training. I began to wonder if managers and employees alike were performing to their full potential, and whether or not they felt a sense of accomplishment in their work. This evolved to a curiosity of how conflict management skills would be employed between managers and their remote employees, and if the lack thereof had a negative effect on both the manager and their employees.

I decided that I would explore this concept further through my dissertation, and that an ideal setting in which to conduct this study would be the company in which I work, as it is the third largest of its kind in the United States. It is my personal belief that a specific set of leadership skills can help to prevent and/or reduce conflict with remote employees.

I spoke with the Director of Engagement and Organizational Development within the company and asked if this type of study would be welcomed, and was met with open arms. The company finds value in this study and I have been granted access to 81 managers in the Revenue Cycle Services (RCS) division, all of which have remote employees.

I was an intern for one of the departments within RCS early in my doctoral studies, and had the opportunity to work closely with several managers with remote employees. They discussed how difficult they felt it was to deliver feedback to their remote employees, especially if that feedback could result in conflict. They collectively felt that this was the most difficult aspect of their positions because they could not read the employee's body language or see their faces.

The company tried to help managers build better relationships with their remote staff by purchasing video phones. These phones proved to be a success with relationship building because it allowed a face-to-face connection that was not possible beforehand. However, it did not necessarily impact conflict management in a positive way. What it did allow for, was a sense of inclusion that made employees feel more like a part of the team as opposed to a voice on the other end of the phone.

My personal perspective still remains that a specialized set of skills is required to analyze and manage conflict with remote employees. There are steps that can be taken to help to prevent conflict from occurring, as well as specialized skills that can be used once conflict does occur to minimize the negative impact that it can bring to a team, and ultimately, the organization in which they are employed.

Context of the Study

The company in which my study will take place is a medical management company based out of Louisiana. What began as a company in one office location, has now grown to be the third largest company of its kind, and has offices in several U.S. cities.

The purpose of the organization's presence in the medical field, as it began and as it remains, is to bring hospitals and clinicians together in the pursuit of clinical effectiveness. Since

the company's inception in 1994, it has grown substantially. They now employ 7,500 providers in 30 states in the United States, who are staffed in 400 medical facilities.

The company also has a large non-clinical support staff employed and located in several corporate offices and hospital locations throughout the U.S. With such a large and diverse staff, not all are able to work within one of the corporate offices owned by the company due to their geographical location. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, of the 722 employed support staff hired to work in the Revenue Cycle Services (RCS) division, 102 of those employees worked remotely.

The company has implemented tools and strategies in an effort to help remote employee managers connect with their offsite team. Examples of these communication tools are phone cameras, WebEx, employee engagement surveys, and employee appreciation. The latter-mentioned tools are available to all managers, although the ways in which these tools are used may vary among leaders in RCS.

An example of a strategy implemented by one of the RCS department leaders was a lunch and learn session during which managers of remote employees got together to discuss ways in which they communicate with their team. They shared successes and struggles, and some even teamed up with other managers that they felt they could learn more from. It was not only an opportunity for communication and networking, it was also an opportunity for personal growth.

For the purpose of the data gathering that I have conducted in this study, I interviewed 15 managers of remote employees that work for this medical management company. The company employs hundreds of offsite personnel to carry out non-clinical support tasks such as medical coding and billing, medical provider recruitment, provider enrollment and credentialing, documentation support, electronic medical record support, etc.

Although employees in these positions may not inherently have fast-paced and stressful job tasks, the medical provider teams that they support, do. This adds an all too often unspoken about element of stress to these positions, which can exacerbate when conflict arises.

Anticipated Contribution of the Study

In the healthcare field, the most important customer is the patient. There are numerous layers of support staff that work in the background to create a safe and pleasant experience for each and every patient both before and after they are seen. Improperly managed conflict at any step in that process has the ability to negatively affect the patient experience.

The goal of this research is to add a study saturated in conflict analysis and resolution to the field of remote employee management in healthcare. My personal goal is for this information to be used as a guide for managers, with an ultimate result of greater confidence and successful outcomes in their roles, and an improvement in employee satisfaction.

As a concurrent goal, I hope to elicit a sense of actualization; the realization that leadership is not a "one size fits all" approach, and what works for an in-house employee may not work for a remote employee in the application of conflict resolution skills. Not only will the study affect the healthcare field, it will add to the conflict resolution field as well by providing insight to the unique conflicts that arise in a remote healthcare employee environment.

Summary

This study sought to discover how managers with remote employees navigate through conflict. The results of the study will serve both managers in the healthcare field and conflict resolution practitioners alike. Most previous research is related to healthcare leadership or remote employee management, with conflict resolution as a small part of the overall picture. This

study combined the unique scenarios faced in both healthcare leadership and remote employee management with the central focus being conflict resolution.

There are four more chapters to follow. In Chapter two, current literature was reviewed for the topics of remote employee management, healthcare management, workplace conflict, and conflict management. This review reveals the multiple components that will combine to be fully incorporated in this study, and will illustrate how this research study fills this gap in the literature. Chapter three includes a description of the research methodology and design, as well as details regarding how the research was conducted, and how the resultant theory was discovered. In Chapter four, the findings of the research are presented, followed by Chapter five, in which I discuss the study summary, the resultant theory and how it compares to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, I will review current literature focused around the four primary themes of remote employee management, healthcare management, workplace conflict, and conflict management. The purpose of this review of literature is to examine the primary focus areas which will come together to form the basis for the study, with a primary focus on conflict resolution.

What the literature has shown, is that there are no current resources that are specific to conflict management of remote employees in healthcare. This is what I hope to add to the literature through the analysis of research obtained directly from current healthcare managers of remote employees.

Remote Employee Management

Remote employee management refers to the management of employees who are not located in the same physical working space as their manager. The act of hiring employees to work remotely has increased in popularity over the last 15 years. According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, “between 2005 and 2015, the number of U.S. employees who telecommuted increased by 115%” (as cited in Greenbaum, 2019, p. 1). Maher suggested that remote employee management is proving to be a challenging task for managers for a variety of reasons (Maher, 2014).

It is important to note, that at the time of this study, the world is coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced a large number of employees into unemployment, furlough status, or working remotely. For the purpose of this study, we will explore the number of employees working from home in the United States who would normally have a traditional

employment arrangement working within an office. Global Workplace Analytics is a company that reviews global working trends. They estimate that “25-30% of the workforce will be working from home multiple days a week by the end of 2021” (Lister, 2020, p. 3). This is important data to consider within the context of this study, as more managers will be expected to lead employees who are working remotely than ever before.

Some challenges cited and explored throughout this study are "the feeling of isolation of remote employees or lack of management control over them" (Maher, 2014, p. 160). Also considered are the challenges of emotional and technical support for the remote employees. Maher has noted that there are strategies that remote leaders can use to manage the behavioral and competency challenges that they may face.

Kevin Sheridan, SVP of HR Optimization at Avatar HR Solutions stated that, regarding remote employee management, "managing people with an old, in-house management style does not apply and will not be effective" (Sheridan, 2012, p. 1). With this idea in mind, he also stated that there are three key components to be considered with respect to a thriving remote workplace. These three areas of consideration are communication, connectivity, and technology, each of which need the other to function successfully.

Regarding communication, Sheridan suggested that managers of remote employees acknowledge that their employees may feel a sense of distance or isolation, so even an email to express gratitude or a job well done can make a profound positive impact. Openly communicating with employees about their engagement needs and expectations and holding regular employee meetings are also key steps in creating open communication and engagement (Sheridan, 2012).

Sheridan noted that despite the challenges involved, hiring remote employees can be desirable to companies and organizations for a number of reasons. From a financial perspective, the reduction of overhead expenses is a significant benefit to companies and organizations (Sheridan, 2012). Employees also benefit financially due to no longer engaging in a daily commute and the reduced or eliminated financial burden of maintaining a corporate wardrobe.

Another consideration that appeals to many remote workers is the idea of greater work-life balance. However, a study published by Eddleston & Mulki in 2017 showed that the work-family interface carries its own challenges overall for those who work exclusively from home. They also found that there were specific challenges that presented themselves to each gender. One of the primary findings of the study is that "the work role becomes embedded in the family domain such that their home comes to be associated with the work role" (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017, p. 346).

Managers have different management styles that they employ, regardless if they are traditional or remote managers. However, "physical separation can create circumstances in which traditional management approaches may no longer be appropriate" (Lombardo, 2011, p. 1). Lombardo's study theorizes that the application of transformational leadership, relational psychological contracts, and open management communication combine to positively influence remote employees.

Collaboration between remote employees and their managers turns from face-to-face interactions to way of electronic communications such as email, desktop sharing applications such as WebEx and Skype, and any other means suitable to each unique company structure. The reduction in social interaction that may occur from this alternate workplace structure adds to the strain on some working relationships between employee and manager.

A study in 2009 by Mulki, Bardhi, Lassk, & Nanavaty-Dahl states that companies find that there is a loss of organizational synergy as well as the ability for management to control their employees in remote employee situations. Some of this loss of control has been attributed to remote employees feeling as if they are in a position to make their own decisions without the direct physical management seen in a more traditional employee-manager setting. This employee reaction was shown to have a direct link to certain management styles, such as transactional leadership.

Greenbaum's 2019 study of the future of remote work revealed that positions which required problem-solving and concentration were more successful when remote, as in-office distractions make their tasks more difficult to perform. Greenbaum also determined that certain job tasks are better suited for remote work than others. A task noted that is more well-received when performed in person is performance reviews given to employees by their managers. Such a task can, however, be carried out successfully when communicated via technology which allows each party to see the other while delivering more personal, and potentially conflict-inducing, information.

Healthcare Management

Healthcare management has transformed as technology has changed the ways in which many managers function, even at the most basic levels. Wikstrom and Dellve's research explored "contemporary challenges for healthcare leaders in their everyday work practice, and the support they need to master their experienced dilemmas" (Wikstrom & Dellve, 2009, p. 411). What they found is that leaders desire to receive increased support regarding the definition, structure, division and allocation of tasks (Wikstrom & Dellve, 2009). Healthcare managers are ultimately

seeking out ways to “strengthen proactive leadership and shape the basis for participative employeeship” (Wikstrom & Dellve, 2009, p. 411).

Healthcare is a unique type of business in that it is constantly changing to better suit the needs of its customers while increasing the quality of and access to care, and remaining cost-efficient in its practices in doing so. It is a delicate balance that creates unique challenges for managers within the healthcare sector. Due to the nature of the work, there must be an underlying sense of a process-oriented workplace. Without such boundaries, patients’ lives would be at risk. Leaders are then tasked with ensuring employees abide by these specific guidelines while carrying out certain job functions while still creating a sense of job satisfaction.

Frequent changes in the healthcare environment from a governmental and insurance payer standpoint are regulations outside of a healthcare manager’s control. Nonetheless, these are regulations that require flexibility on the part of the manager so that they may implement the changes needed to abide by those regulations while maintaining an uninterrupted workflow. An example of these regulatory changes is the way in which healthcare organizations are paid for their services. Insurance companies, including governmental contracts such as Medicare and state-run programs such as Medicaid, have the ability to alter their reimbursement structure which can drastically affect a healthcare organization’s ability to pay their providers, employees, and various other overhead expenses (Meyers, 2008).

Aside from the financial challenges that present themselves to healthcare managers, they are also faced with the conflict that may arise from the idea of power in the workplace. Longstanding is a discourse between clinical staff (such as doctors) and non-clinical staff (such as hospital administration). This conflict can be due to many reasons, but is often seen most in cases where there is a lack of communication. This often leads each group to question the others

understanding of their perspective as it relates to the importance of certain functions in the organization. An example of this would be a hospital CEO questioning a doctor's understanding of the economic directives they have been given so that they facility may remain operational (Wikstrom & Dellve, 2009).

Healthcare managers are tasked with not only buffering their own stress levels, but also act as such for their employees, and are often looked to by their subordinates as a source of stabilization in the workplace. As noted by the 2009 Wikstrom & Dellve study, there is not much research or literature to indicate what kind of support managers need in order to successfully navigate through these types of stress so frequently seen in the healthcare environment.

A study by Mary E. Stefl, PhD in 2008 found that specific competencies should exist to match the demands placed on them as contemporary healthcare leaders. The Healthcare Leadership Alliance (HLA) accumulated five interdependent domains based on research and their experience as an organization. Those domains are "communication and relationship management, professionalism, leadership, knowledge of the healthcare system, and business skills and knowledge" (Stefl, 2008, p. 360). These domains provide commonality amongst all areas of healthcare management from C-suite executive roles to practice managers, and every position between and beyond.

The HLA study also noted that the navigation of the healthcare landscape is complex, and managers are often put in situations in which they are expected to do more with less available to them. Healthcare management is unique in this facet as the healthcare industry itself is a focal point in the lives of many. Not only are there government and state expectations and regulations to abide by, but there is also the general public and their outcry for transparency in the industry. Healthcare also must navigate through staffing shortages and increasingly diminishing

reimbursements for services provided. With these changing demands, some of which have historically been rapid with little to no time to prepare appropriately, the HLA wanted to explore whether or not managers have been keeping up pace with those demands (Stefl, 2008).

Leadership development is something that has increased in popularity as organizations try to “create managers with the skills and characters of leaders, capable of guiding healthcare organizations through the crises of the 21st century workplace” (Ford, 2015, p. 261). Ford points out, however, that mainstream leadership development initiatives do not include the interpersonal dynamic between leaders and their followers. He also notes that surveys sent out to employees within an organization often focus solely on leader performance, and deliver a means for leaders to improve themselves in some way but do little to improve the bond between manager and employee.

Workplace Conflict

Conflict in the workplace can come from an unlimited amount sources and for a vast array of reasons. Perceptions, lived experiences, bias, cultural differences, communication styles and much more often attribute to the underlying root cause of conflict experienced in the workplace. Other types of workplace conflict, such as harassment and violence exist, although will not be discussed in detail for the purpose of this study.

Employee well-being, as it relates to workplace conflict, is addressed in a 2019 study by Kurlakose, Sheejesh, Wilson & Anusree. The researchers examine not only relationship conflict, but process and task conflict as well, and how each type of workplace conflict impact an employee’s well-being. The study proposes that workplace conflict “reflects in individual-level repercussions that gradually influence the higher levels of individual-level psychological consequences” (Kurlakose et al., 2019, p. 684).

The Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) stated that workplace conflict is inevitable, however, it “can-and should-be managed and resolved” (Managing workplace conflict, 2020, p. 1). SHRM created a toolkit that combined responsibilities on the part of the manager as well as the employee to resolve conflict. They also explained how conflict can present itself in the workplace, citing “insults, noncooperation, bullying and anger” as well as how “emotional stress can be both a cause and an effect of workplace conflict” (Managing workplace conflict, 2020, p. 1).

One of the primary methods of managing workplace conflict is the culture under which the organization operates. Avgar also proposed in their study of integrating conflict management strategies, that a working environment which allows conflict-inducing behaviors to occur without discipline are a direct reflection of the decision makers within the organization (Avgar, 2020). The SHRM guidance for employers includes that every employee, regardless of title, be held accountable for conflict resolution. They have also noted the importance of discovering the underlying emotions in a presenting conflict, to adapt conflict resolution skills and strategies to the unique conflict at hand, and to be consistent and clear about communication (Managing workplace conflict, 2020).

Avgar’s 2020 study focused on a three-tiered framework that involved the interconnectivity of strategic-level activities, functional-level activities, and workplace-level activities and outcomes. Also considered were the external pressures that may affect those activities, as well as the resulting outcomes (Avgar, 2020). Also referenced were the differences in conflicts that can occur in task conflict versus relationship conflict within the workplace. Task conflict refers to conflict as a result of disagreements stemming from approaches and

responsibilities as they relate to a functional task. Relationship conflict, however, is conflict that occurs regarding how employees get along with and treat one another.

Grievances on the behalf of the employee are another area of both conflict and opportunity that organizations face. How an organization responds to employee grievances may determine the outcome of the conflict, such as whether or not the employee decides to remain employed at the place of business once the grievance has been addressed. A grievance process is seen as a way for employees to have a voice in the workplace, and although a track record of grievances is deemed as negative for an organization, the process itself often results in greater employee retention because it allows for a formalized process in which their concerns are addressed (Avgar, 2020).

Conflict Management

No matter the company type or where the company is located, it will inevitably be staffed with people who bring a variety of skills, experiences, and personality traits to the workforce. Magnuson's case study involved the exploration of how employee personality traits affect conflict in the workplace. The traits discussed in the study are more specifically labeled as "conflict handling intentions" (Magnuson, 2011, p. 15). These intentions are listed as avoiding, collaborating, competing, accommodating, and compromising.

An avoiding strategy does not allow for the resolution of the conflict, and can further complicate the conflict. Competing is often seen in situations where one person's benefit comes at the expense of another, which can easily escalate the conflict. Accommodating takes place with the aim of pleasing others, and is often seen in the form of someone doing or giving something to someone simply because they want it. Compromise requires that both parties involved in the conflict participate in a give-and-take strategy so that no one party receives more

than the other. Collaboration allows considerations for all parties' points of view and the solution is decided, and agreed upon, by all involved. (Magnuson, 2011).

The way in which conflicts are handled are also dependent on factors such as a person's connection to the issue, whether or not there is emotional involvement, and the energy level involved in the motivation to resolve the conflict. The more connected emotionally or personally a person is to the conflict, the more difficult it can be to find resolution. (Magnuson, 2011).

Group conflict is another dynamic to be explored in conflict management, and how it can affect team performance. Behfar, Peterson, Mannix & Trochim studied these phenomena to discover if there are particular conflict resolution tendencies that result in the maintenance and/or improvement of team performance. What they found through their research, is that there are three particular conflict resolution tendencies that accomplish this task. The study cited that "focusing on the content of interpersonal interactions, explicitly discussing reasons behind any decisions reached, and assigning work to members who have the relevant task expertise" (Behfar et al., 2008, p. 170) are successful ways to maintain group performance and satisfaction.

The study also explored task, relationship, and process conflict, and how these types of conflicts seen within group structures affect their overall impact on conflict resolution. The researchers described task conflict as a disagreement about ideas and opinions related directly to the group's task, relationship conflict relates to interpersonal friction, and process conflict was described as conflict that arises when determining the best way to get the work done (Behfar et al., 2008).

Adding a different dimension to conflict management, is doing so within the setting of a virtual team. A 2009 study conducted by Kimberly Furumo explored the idea of conflict management styles and their use amongst two distinct types of team members – deadbeats and

deserters. “Deserters were significantly more likely to use an avoidance conflict management style than active team members” (Furumo, 2009, p. 66).

Furumo (2009) also noted in their study that in traditional group settings, the outcome is often richer than that of an individual due to the lack of sharing of ideas. However, she stated that when faced with the complications of a virtual team, which may be negatively affected by a purely electronic exchange of ideas, meaning can be diminished as well as team morale and satisfaction.

Further Consideration

Lacking from current research is the study of conflict management as it directly pertains to the manager-employee relationship in virtual teams in the healthcare field. This study explored this phenomenon utilizing a qualitative study methodology. More specifically, grounded theory has been developed from the analysis of participant responses in a survey of current healthcare managers who lead remote teams.

The purpose of the study is to provide insight for current and future healthcare managers of remote teams regarding the preparation for such a role. I feel that traditional in-person management, although complex in its own right, has a different set of required skills than those which are needed to successfully lead a remote team. To transition from one to the other may cause unnecessary stress and feelings of frustration for both parties.

My goal in conducting the study was to gather the knowledge and lived experiences of current healthcare managers of remote employees to discover how they have been successful in preventing and/or navigating through conflict in the workplace with their remote employees. I left the concept of conflict with remote employees broad, and allowed the study participants to

expand on the unique situations that they faced, whether it be manager-employee conflict, or employee-employee conflict.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose and Objectives

This chapter will describe and explain the rationale for the methodology that has been chosen to conduct the research study. The chapter begins with a discussion regarding qualitative methodologies, and continues to the rationale of the method and research design selected. Furthermore, the chapter will explore the data collection methods employed and the data analysis utilized to complete the study review.

The purpose of this study is to investigate remote employee management in the healthcare industry to discover patterns of successes among managers in the reduction and management of conflict, and with that data, to formulate a grounded theory of best practice development. Qualitative interviews have allowed for rich discussions with current remote healthcare managers. The employment of grounded theory has allowed me to use the data collected as my guide to the creation of a theory that will assist current and future managers in the healthcare field with practical ways to avoid or address workplace conflict with remote employees.

Qualitative Research

I chose the qualitative research method for the purpose of this study. The purpose of qualitative research is to “examine and interpret data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1). It was necessary that robust interviews take place with study participants for the purpose of the research, making the qualitative method the best possible and most reasonable choice.

Qualitative research contains both a set of necessary steps and natural thought processes. These steps include the creation of a research problem, research question(s), data collection, the

incorporation of a review of current literature relevant to the study topic, and data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Within the scope of qualitative research, there are several methods for a researcher to choose from to narrow down the way in which they will conduct their study based on the proposed or hopeful outcome. For the purpose of this study, I have conducted my research using pragmatic grounded theory, which will allow me to use the data collected from the study participants to create a unique theory about the reduction and management of conflict that may arise in the healthcare field for managers of remote employees.

Grounded Theory as a Method

Grounded theory, like its counterparts in qualitative research, utilizes the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection. What sets grounded theory apart, however, is that at the conclusion of the study being conducted, a theory will emerge from the data. The type of theory derived is substantive in nature, which inherently allows for specificity rather than generality (Merriam, 2009).

The grounded theory methodology was developed by researchers Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in 1965. While conducting a study during this time, they came to the realization that current research methodologies focused more on theory verification than theory creation (Kenny & Fourie, 2014, p. 2). Glaser & Strauss felt that grounded theory would bridge the existing gap between theory and empirical research by creating a robust hypothesis grounded in the research itself (Kenny & Fourie, 2014, p.2).

Also, like most other qualitative methods, grounded theory studies are conducted using interviews. Grounded theories sometimes use observations, and documented materials, however, this study used interviews alone. The information gathered in the study used to create a grounded

theory will be gleaned from participant interviews followed by a detailed data analysis. This method has a very specific procedure to be followed to successfully conduct the study.

The theory developed from a grounded theory-based study is meant to be specific; not something that can be used globally in a variety of situations. Due to the lack of research and information available regarding the combination of healthcare management and remote employee management and how that merger impacts conflict between managers and their employees, I felt it most appropriate that a theory be developed from the data collected.

Pragmatism is a qualitative philosophy attributed primarily to the work of John Dewey and George Mead, who believe that the truth is equivalent to what we know for the time being, although this may change over time (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The essence of qualitative research is grounded in personal experience and interpretation, so the researcher must keep in mind that the truth that is revealed through the study will in some way be shaped by participant and researcher experience and the interpretation of it.

I found pragmatism to be of particular interest to me during the interview process involved in the study. As I analyzed the data, it occurred to me that the answers received were fluid, and would change over time. New scenarios, experiences, knowledge, responsibilities, etc. would continue to shape how the study participants would answer the questions posed to them in time to come. Also altering future responses would be new employees and the experiences, successes and challenges these new personalities would bring to the existing remote team, as well as current employee growth.

This realization highlighted the importance of a continual evaluation of managerial skills and competencies. It would do this, or any organization, no service to visit the topic of remote employee conflict management once, and without return to it in the future. The evolution of the

management team, employee needs, and organizational needs and expectations will all be factors in shaping conflict management in the years ahead.

Recruitment

To recruit participants for this study, I worked with the Director of Engagement and Organizational Development within the healthcare organization that I utilized as my interview site. She asked to be the one, per company preference, to send out a questionnaire to current managers that allowed me to identify which managers had remote employees as well as those willing to act as participants in the study. From the responses received, I reached out to those who were willing to participate with more detailed information about the study, and to confirm their participation.

The initial outreach did not result in enough study participants. For this reason, the recruitment process evolved into me reaching out directly to remote healthcare managers not included in the initial outreach, in an effort to gain the additional participants needed. To create a well-rounded grounded theory study, I gathered 15 study participants to interview.

Sample

All study participants were required to be current managers with remote employees. Participants were a blend of both male and female, each with varying levels of experience with remote employees. Although position titles varied widely throughout the participants, they were all from the Revenue Cycle Services (RCS) division of the company.

Some participants had extensive backgrounds with other companies in remote employee management, which they were able to translate into their current role. Others hadn't experienced managing remote employees and cited their current role as the first time they were faced with

this type of management. The variety in participants allowed for robust and unique discussions, all of which gave meaningful insight to the study and resultant theory.

Data Collection

Interviews are a key process in qualitative research that allow the researcher to discover personal thoughts, experiences, and ideas of respondents. It is then the task of the interviewer to understand the meaning of the answers received, as well as to draw out any patterns or themes that may arise when comparing respondents' answers to one another.

The data collection technique used for this study was virtual participant interviews. The research is focused around managers of remote employees, all of which are located in various states in the United States. Participants had the ability to choose how they preferred the interviews to be completed based on their comfort level. The interview options given to participants were phone, video phone, WebEx, Skype, or any combination of these options. Thirteen participants of the 15 asked to be contacted by phone. One participant was contacted using WebEx, and the other participant was contacted using video phone.

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

The interviews for this study were meant to be personal and opinion-based with the goal of respondents being truthful and willing to share their lived experiences and opinions on the topic being explored in the study. The type of interviews conducted were semi-structured, which allowed for a mixture of structured interview questions as well as questions that emerged from the respondents' answers and insights.

Every interview began with me introducing the study topic and verbally ensuring that the respondent did in fact qualify as a study participant. I also asked every participant if they thought

of any questions since signing the consent form, and reiterated the strict confidentiality being used throughout the entirety of the process, to include the final write-up of the study findings

I began the interview process with five set questions, which included “How do you feel that on-the-job training has impacted your success when working with remote employees? and “What types of conflict resolution training, specific to managing remote employees, do you feel would be helpful when faced with conflict?” I quickly realized that no managers had received conflict resolution training specific to remote employee management, and the conversations evolved instead to managers going into detail about their conflict resolution experiences. For this reason, I altered my future interview questions to embrace that topic and to explore it further.

The second set of questions that I posed to respondents included “What videoconferencing software/hardware do you find is the most valuable when navigating through conflict with a remote employee?” and “If you were coaching a manager new to remote employee management, what advice would you give? How would you coach them regarding remote employee conflict resolution?” These questions allowed for a deeper discussion about the respondents’ lived experiences as well as looking to the future to determine what strategies could be used for successful conflict management with remote employees in the healthcare field.

Data Analysis

In its most basic form, coding is the part of the study that “derives and develops concepts from data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 65). Coding requires the researcher to interact with the data that they have received from the study participants in a way that allows them to make comparisons and develop concepts; it is an exploration into the data to discover deeper meaning rather than a surface-level view. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Examining the data in this way also

allows the researcher to carefully review all that they have been given through the interviews, making it less likely that an important concept could be missed.

Open Coding

Open coding prescribes that the researcher “break data apart and delineate concepts to stand for blocks of raw data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 195). Open coding in grounded theory means that “data analysis is done in conjunction with data collection” (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). When constructing a grounded theory, the data guides the researcher from one interview to the next. This concept was reflected in the way in which I organized my interview transcripts and the codes that were created concurrently with them.

As the interviews were taking place, I wrote detailed notes for each participant. These handwritten notes were in addition to the interview transcripts, and allowed me to focus on key concepts that the respondents were emphasizing. This emphasis was drawn from the interviews by using participant body language where applicable as well as recurring words, phrases, and/or concepts. TapeACall was utilized for interview recording and transcript processing.

Comparative analysis was used throughout the coding process, staying true to grounded theory methodology. Comparative analysis is a process that allows the researcher to analyze data to determine if relationships exist. This was useful to the study, as it allowed for a standardized approach to data review, and ultimately aided in the coding process both during and after the interviews.

There were several versions of communication described by the managers that were interviewed, such as intentional communication, constant communication, and personalized communication. Study respondents also described types of employee engagement as being achieved by remembering personal details about employees and following up with them to show

personal interest. Grouping concepts came in the next stage of this process, known as axial coding.

Axial Coding

Axial coding pertains to “cross-cutting or relating concepts to each other” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 195). This is the stage in the coding process in which I created categories to place the codes in that were developed during open coding. It began with connections being drawn between the open codes, and the interpretation of the underlying data collected. Each transcript had its own groupings at this point. I actively scanned the groupings as I moved through the interviews to compile a master list of common concepts that presented themselves in the data.

Those codes which emerged throughout multiple interviews were kept, and those which appeared as outliers with no pattern among interview subjects were discarded. Categories were developed to encompass these codes, as they began to narrow and move toward selective coding.

These categories continued being analyzed and deduced in preparation for the selective coding phase. An example of a category that emerged during axial coding was communication. Much of the interview data described some form of communication being key to preventing and/or managing conflict with remote employees. Relationship-building was another category that emerged with the accumulation of open codes such as employee engagement, team building, respect, and trust.

Selective Coding

Once the open and axial coding cycles were completed, a final cycle of coding took place, known as selective coding. Selective coding is the final step in grounded theory. This step

takes into account the connection of all categories determined in axial coding to create one unified theory.

Throughout the process of open coding and axial coding, a deductive mindset was used to draw out the main concepts within the respondents' interviews. Once in the selective coding phase, I was able to develop "a core category, propositions, or hypotheses (Merriam, 2009, p. 200). As grounded theory methodology dictates, the questions asked of participants varied. These questions can be viewed in Appendix B. The questions transformed after the seventh interview based on participant responses, and again after the tenth interview.

The theory that emerged from this study is one that I have named the Foresight Leadership Theory. While reviewing interview data, it became readily apparent that the overarching strategy for conflict prevention and/or management was the idea of using foresight as a tool when communicating with employees, creating an environment of engagement, and ultimately enabling employee satisfaction in a remote working environment.

Memo Writing

Memo writing is a necessary step when conducting grounded theory research. Memos are a researcher's interpretive analysis that include thoughts and ideas that emerge throughout the early coding process. These interpretations are informal ways to help the researcher track intuitive ideas as they work to justify the study's findings.

To complete this crucial step, I took notes during every interview that I conducted. This allowed me to hone in on concepts that respondents described that I felt captured the central ideas behind their experiences. These memos were then compared throughout the coding stages to eventually result in the theory that was developed.

To organize the memos, diagramming was used as a visual representation to link the codes together. This step was used to flow from the codes in open coding to the categories developed in axial coding. From that point in the data analysis, diagramming was once again used as a visually descriptive tool to take the categories in axial coding and transform them to the resultant theory developed in selective coding.

The Role of the Researcher

The primary roles of the researcher are to formulate research questions, study current data, conduct participant interviews, code interviews to discover patterns among participant responses, to deliver the cumulative findings, and to discuss further research that may be needed. For the purpose of this particular study, I will also be developing a theory grounded in the research itself.

Researcher Biases

I am a current employee in the organization in which I have interviewed participants for this study. It was important to me, as a researcher, that I did not add bias to my interviews or data review. Before beginning the interviews, I felt that this could have occurred if I were to interview a study participant, for example, whom I know personally and whose management style I have personally experienced.

I felt confident that this bias would be avoided, as I am passionate about the study itself, and what its results could mean to the future of remote employee conflict resolution in healthcare. I was solely interested in what the interviewee responses revealed to me through the proper data analysis that a qualitative research study follows.

I worked alongside the Director of Engagement and Organizational Development within the organization for the purpose of gathering study participants. We discussed the importance of

not allowing participant employment status, reputation, or job performance affect participant selection. Together we decided that the best way to gather possible participants would be to use a current roster of managers of remote employees. From this roster, a survey was developed that allowed recipients to decide whether or not they were interested in participating in the study.

To avoid bias throughout the research process I used a semi-structured interview format during which I asked participants the same questions and used their responses to broaden the remaining questions asked during the interview. This allowed each interview to be personalized based on manager experience as opposed to my own thoughts, ideas or experiences.

Writing memos throughout the interview process helped to not only validate what the participants were communicating, but it also allowed me to remain neutral while allowing the data to speak for itself. Memo writing during the interviews allowed for neutrality by allowing me to reflect and comment on major findings based on the participant responses. I validated these findings through the subsequent questions that were posed throughout the remainder of each interview. I also remained mindful of possible bias as a current employee of the organization, and continued to review the data during all interviews and the coding process to ensure that no details were overlooked.

Ethics

When working with human subjects, ethical situations may arise. I have discussed some of these potential issues with the Director of Engagement and Organizational Development for the purpose of this study. To ensure the study was carried out in an ethical way, I had each participant first review and sign a consent form before we set up the appointment to talk. If it was requested by a participant that I set up an appointment on their work calendar, I marked it as Private so that no one in the organization would know the details of the meeting.

With further respect to participant privacy, I reiterated at the beginning of each interview that the participant's personal details would be kept completely confidential, and that no information published in the study would in any way allude to who they were, including their position within the organization. Each participant also had the ability to choose how they wanted to be contacted by me throughout the process, to ensure that their anonymity was respected.

Nova Southeastern University IRB Process

Nova Southeastern University (NSU) has an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that requires an electronically-submitted application by all students conducting research involving human subjects. This thorough process ensures that each study conducted is done so in an ethical manner. At the beginning of the process, I worked with my Dissertation Chair to ensure all necessary paperwork was complete and ready for submission to the appropriate College Representative. Documentation examples included Informed Consent Forms, Data Collection Instrument, and Recruitment Materials. Once my Chair felt that all forms and documentation were complete, she signed off on them, and I submitted them to the IRB for review.

The College Representative reviewing my documentation felt that there was no further review needed, so I received an exemption letter as notification, signifying that I could move forward with my study. The study did not indicate that an Expedited Review was required, so there was no need for the completed submission to be forwarded from the College Representative to an IRB Chair.

Chapter Summary

The current literature specific to conflict resolution in the healthcare setting for managers of remote employees is scarce. This study's purpose was to explore this concept further by interviewing current healthcare managers of remote employees in an effort to explore the conflict

resolution skills used in the healthcare field when a manager leads a remote team of employees. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants for this purpose.

Grounded theory qualitative research was used to analyze participant responses. Open coding, axial coding and selective coding were used to uncover codes, categories, and the resultant theory. The Foresight Leadership Theory was developed from the study, and is explained in greater detail in Chapter 4. It is my hope that this theory will help both current and future generations of healthcare managers with remote employees successfully navigate the complexities of conflict prevention and resolution.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter contains the results of the grounded theory methodology study conducted to answer the research question:

RQ1: How do managers in the healthcare management industry experience dealing with conflicts with remote employees?

This chapter includes a discussion to address the analysis that was conducted and how it addresses the research question, as well as an overview of how the analysis remained true to grounded theory methodology. The analysis began during the interviews with study participants, and continued throughout the transcription review. From the transcriptions, codes and themes were uncovered, which will be discussed in detail within this chapter.

Three levels of analysis are required for a grounded theory study: (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding. The information obtained from the participants was continuously compared throughout the interview process to further develop the emergence of themes, which ultimately aided in the development of the resultant theory.

Sample

For this study, 15 participants were interviewed. All met the criteria of being current managers employed by a healthcare organization, and with remote employees. A semi-structured interview process was used that allowed participants to openly discuss their thoughts and experiences of being managers with remote employees while dealing with conflict.

An underlying factor that emerged throughout the interviews was the current Covid-19 pandemic. This added a dimension to the study that I had not anticipated when first developing the research topic. I found this to be particularly interesting due to the fact that the entire workforce of the company from which my participants are employed, was forced to work from

home within a matter of days in March of 2020. The interviews revealed that this brought with it its own set of challenges.

Throughout the interviews, common themes emerged that revealed both positive and negative aspects of manager experiences. It became clear as well, that all participants felt compelled to make the workplace as inclusive and productive as possible. This was not for the direct benefit necessarily of the company, or themselves, but for the satisfaction of their employees. This internal drive emerged in numerous ways throughout the interviews as well, as participants described their successes and struggles as healthcare managers of remote employees.

Data Collection

The 15 study participants were a mix of male and female – 2 males and 13 females, had a varied career and educational background, career level, and years of experience. All work within the same division for the same medical management company. Each interview was coded immediately after the interview itself took place. This allowed for continuous evaluation and an adjustment of interview questions as needed, which also ensured that the grounded theory methodology was woven throughout the data collection process. Appendix B details the interview question evolution as the study progressed.

Data and Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews was coded using a three-step process. This process began with open coding, transitioned to axial coding, and ended with selective coding. These processes and the steps within each level of coding are to follow.

Open coding. During the open coding phase, all interviews were manually coded and analyzed at the conclusion of each interview. This process allowed for the identification of any

emerging codes. This also allowed for the evolution of interview questions, which is detailed in Appendix B.

Axial coding. Axial coding was the next phase to take place in the analysis process. I used the transcripts in conjunction with the manual notes that were taken during the interviews to complete a second cycle of manual coding. From the codes that were decided upon during open coding, further narrowing took place as codes were merged or discarded based on the patterns they presented in the transcripts.

There were three categories of axial codes that emerged: individual-centric codes, workplace-centric codes, and individual and workplace dependent codes, which are included in the sections to follow. Individual-centric codes are those that were related personally to the manager, workplace-centric codes are those that were related only to the workplace, and individual and workplace-dependent codes were those that incorporated both the individual and workplace-centric codes.

Selective coding. Selective coding was the final coding phase that allowed for the emergence of the connection between the study participants. This coding method acted as a link throughout the open and selective codes that had been developed, and those codes that had the highest commonality among the participants initiated the beginning of theoretical coding.

Constant comparison was utilized throughout the interviews to remain consistent with grounded theory, which resulted in questions being asked of some participants but not of all. For example, conflict prevention became a code after the first five participants were interviewed so questions related to this topic then emerged.

The selective code that emerged from the data was managerial foresight. This finding resulted in what I have named the Foresight Leadership Theory. All codes formed in the open

coding phase evolved into categories in the axial coding phase, which then led to the overarching realization that managerial foresight was interwoven throughout every successful action that managers took to prevent and/or resolve conflict with their remote employees.

Individual-Centric Codes

Self-Confidence. Self-confidence is a term used in this study to describe a personal quality that managers exhibit, more specifically, a “can do” attitude that is used in both positive and potentially negative workplace situations. The longer the participant had been in the management field, the stronger the relationship to confidence, as was seen throughout the interviews.

Participants discussed this trait when speaking about how the COVID-19 pandemic, and the rapid workforce changes that took place because of it, impacted them on a personal level. One participant noted how believing in yourself and picking yourself up no matter what obstacle is thrown your way has helped shape their career.

You can throw me a curveball and I might stumble, but I will get back up from it. You own it, you learn from it, then you move on. Just like this remote working – I can't even say it is a struggle, it's just looking at things differently now, and looking at engagement in a different way. (Participant 8)

When asked about what challenges they face as remote managers, respondents described personal thoughts, experiences, and ways in which they push themselves to succeed. No managers interviewed discussed this topic from the standpoint of needing the assistance of others to get them to where they felt they needed to be in their ability to manage conflict with remote employees. All participants related their successes and struggles solely to their personal growth, abilities, and internal drive to help their employees succeed.

Adaptability. This was a personality trait discussed by some participants when asked how they felt they were able to keep conflict from becoming an issue during the rapid shift to remote work due to COVID-19. The primary way in which this code revealed itself was through the changes in management style that took place, as well as the change in employee needs related to communication. One of the participants discussed in greater detail how their management style changed when the shift from in person to remote only management occurred.

I had to fall on my face a little bit to understand that you have to have a different approach to manage remotely. The second the phone conversation ends or the [virtual] meeting ends, the employees are off on their own, but in the office that's not the case. In the office you can continue to collaborate in the hallways, breakroom, etc. So now remote communication has to take a different approach and you have to try to, in some way, make it resonate with everybody. (Participant 6)

Another participant discussed an innovative way that they found worked best for their team while adapting to a remote training environment:

I set up a video recording of me doing the actual process prior to the education so they actually have a resource to go back on outside of just me talking to them and showing them; they have a library of videos, I guess you would call them. They can always basically have me on their side like they used to have me in person. So that's something that was important - is that I made sure that they didn't have a gap. (Participant 13)

Intentional Communication. Communication was one of the primary factors that remote managers felt they had to adapt to quickly. Some managers found their way through this change by working directly with their staff and asking what they needed in terms of communication and support. Others derived strategies from past experiences as remote

managers, and some found their way through trial and error. One participant further described the importance of this type of communication.

Communication needs to be planned now, and must be intentional. Communication is no longer organically happening. Allowing remote employees to feel out of sight out of mind cannot happen. To someone new to remote employee management I would tell them to be very prescriptive about communicating their expectations, clarify, and be unafraid to over-engage. (Participant 11)

Another participant discussed how personalized communication is important to helping them make connections with their employees:

I think the biggest thing with managing people is finding out how they respond and relate to other people. So, some people are very social people, and if they don't have that day-to-day communication with other people on the team, they don't feel like a team. I think that making sure that you know your employees and that you're in sync with their communication abilities and their needs to be able to function as a team, is probably the most important skill of being a manager. (Participant 12)

Intentional communication is how all managers interviewed have noted as the way in which they are able to keep conflict to a minimum with their remote employees. Being clear, precise, timely, and thorough are all ways in which managers described intentional communication, as well as customizing outreaches to match employee needs.

Workplace-Centric Codes

Videoconferencing Software. All participants spoke of the importance of using videoconferencing software and hardware as much as possible when communicating with employees. The software used within the company is WebEx and Skype, and the hardware used

is video-capable desk phones issued by the company. All participants noted that these communication methods allowed them to create a 1:1 atmosphere when speaking with employees, and proved valuable in adding a personal touch to their outreaches.

Some participants also noted that videoconferencing software used by remote employees made them feel even more connected to each other. One particular participant went into detail about why they feel this way.

You get to be a part of their lives that you may ordinarily not be. You get to see peoples' children, pets, sometimes even spouses, when their video is on. I almost feel like I know my employees better now that they are remote because of this. (Participant 8)

Also mentioned by several participants was that videoconferencing software is also valuable when trying to read employee body language and facial expressions, which can be especially useful when having difficult conversations. Difficult conversation in this study refer to those that include disciplinary action and/or performance improvement strategies.

To me, the only the only issue with being remote is when you don't take advantage of the camera. As a manager, I really look for not only the verbal communication, but I also look at the body language of my employee when I'm counseling, to make sure that they're understanding what we're talking about and the coaching is helping. (Participant 12)

A struggle noted by managers as related to videoconferencing software, is that some employees have not been issued laptops. This impedes a manager's ability to see their employees, and vice versa, since desktop monitors issued by the company do not have webcams. One participant discussed this struggle in greater detail.

They are on desktops right now, so they can't show themselves on video if they even wanted to. Now, that is something that the company is transitioning my employees to;

where everybody will have a laptop so that they can benefit from being on video. Also, there are struggles with meetings that don't have call in lines for audio because they can't hear from their desktop computers. (Participant 7)

Leadership Outreach. All but one participant felt that leadership outreach surrounding the quick shift to remote work for all employees once COVID-19 restrictions were put into place in Spring 2020, was not as robust as they would have liked it to have been. Many participants expressed increased stress out of fear of how to move forward and how to best support their team. One participant expressed how they feel the general remote workforce is viewed and treated due to a lack of preparation.

I really don't feel that we have done a very good job in preparing people for being a remote workforce. Prior to COVID they kind of ignored the [remote] workforce. It was sort of like the entity was there but was ignored, and there wasn't a push to include them in team activities. (Participant 3)

Another manager shared how lack of preparation caused them to discover the realities of remote employee management are different than the assumptions they once held.

Working at this company is my first time I have ever managed anyone remotely. I didn't realize at the time that I was going to need to adjust my management style. I assumed it was just going to be the same as if they were in the office with me, but I quickly realized how different perception can be with electronic communications. (Participant 6)

This area of discussion proved that leaders crave leadership as well. It also highlighted that some managers that had been tasked with a remote staff did not have what they felt was an adequate comfort level of managing a remote team. These managers felt that a greater presence

of their leadership team would help to create greater managerial comfort, engagement and abilities.

Individual and Workplace Dependent Codes

Conflict Management. Every participant was asked about their conflict management style, and if it varies as remote managers from what it was when they worked in the office with their employees. All participants stated that the amount of conflict has decreased significantly since beginning to work exclusively remote. One participant felt that this is because of the removal of the “human factor”.

From a communication perspective, everyone being remote puts them on a level playing field. Being remote has calmed down messy human nature. Human resource activity has decreased substantially because of this. (Participant 11)

As far as resolving conflict, however, this same participant felt that the discussions had with employees as steps taken toward conflict resolution were more meaningful if done in person.

When counseling on conflict, remote is not the best option. In-person feels more respectful to the employee. (Participant 11)

One participant talked about conflict management from a prevention standpoint, setting clear expectations to be successful:

I would probably mostly say that you need to set the guidelines straight up, like you need to set up how things need to work; how you're going to communicate with each other. Set up that that dialogue first, don't let it be where 'Oh, well, we'll see how it goes'. Set it up first and make sure that they fully understand that. You know, you can't just take a three-hour break without letting somebody know, and it's still a communication piece. Set up

the parameters behind your flexibility, your lack of flexibility, what your expectations are. (Participant 12)

With respect to conflict in the workplace, all managers interviewed expressed the importance of conflict prevention as opposed to addressing conflict reactively. As one manager put it, “I have made it so that conflict has no place here” (Participant 4). This statement was used to describe the manager’s confidence in creating a work atmosphere that they felt would not promote conflict. “They know what to do and they know what’s expected of them. I’ve stated very clear expectations from the beginning, and give them constructive feedback. They have the autonomy to do their work” (Participant 4).

This participant was new to a management role at the time of the interview, and expressed that they do not micromanage their employees, nor are they very strict. This being the case, they stated to me that they were “open to feedback. I have made it clear to them [the employees] that I have an open-door policy. I always ask their thoughts before changing any of their processes too” (Participant 4).

All managers also expressed that, should conflict arise, they feel confident that they have the skills and/or resources necessary to handle it professionally and with minimal impact to the overall team. One of the ways in which managers felt supported when facing conflict with their remote employees is by contacting Human Resources for guidance.

I definitely reach out to HR each time I have issues with an employee, just to make sure that I haven't missed anything, or maybe they have some ideas that I haven't thought of.
(Participant 12)

One participant did, however, expressed frustration with the Human Resource process within the company. In the particular example discussed, the manager felt they should be permitted to discipline an employee without the input of the Human Resource department.

The HR department makes it so that they want you to go through them before correcting the action. Usually, HR is there to support you after you done this or they'll be like, "Okay, this is the paperwork that you need" or, you know, "this is the consequence of the action", and that's not what we have here. (Participant 1)

Past Work Experience. Some participants interviewed had extensive remote management experience, and used those experiences to quickly adapt to the remote workforce that they gained when the COVID-19 pandemic began and forced all employees to work from home. They felt that this was also a helpful personal attribute because with proper preparation comes less of a likelihood of conflict. One participant explained this further.

Group morale is easily tarnished by conflict. It's important to get your hands dirty and to have an open-door policy – both build trust and respect. Always stand behind what you believe in and ask lots of questions. Making sure there is no perception of favoritism amongst employees is also very important. (Participant 7)

Additional Findings

Most study participants mentioned concerns related to patient confidentiality. As employees of a healthcare company, most of the staff that work from home, including those sent to work remotely within three days' notice due to the Covid-19 pandemic, have access to sensitive patient information. With this in mind, managerial concerns revolve around the potential that employees may set up their home office in an unsecured location where family members or guests could potentially see patient information on the employee's computer. The

same concern was related to phone calls, during which employees may need to communicate with other employees while discussing confidential patient information.

This was a finding that I had not anticipated, and broadened my understanding of the struggles that healthcare managers of remote employees face. The concern related to patient confidentiality is relevant to conflict management and resolution as it relates to the prevention of issues that could arise should patient information be exposed. This also carries with it ethical concerns that need to be addressed to ensure sensitive information is kept secure at all times.

Another finding that I had not anticipated was the need for managers to mediate conflicts between their employees and employees in other departments. This issue was only discussed by one participant, but it became clear to me, based on their description of the scenario, how difficult and sensitive of a topic a situation such as this would be to mediate in a remote setting.

To resolve this particular conflict, the manager worked closely with the manager from the department in which the other employee involved in the conflict worked. The manager ultimately made the decision to place the employee on a performance improvement plan, and to regularly discuss ways that their employee could still have a professional relationship with the employee from the other department. This involved a great deal of coaching, but resulted in a more productive and professional relationship between departments.

Conclusion

This chapter details the results of the analysis as they relate to the research question, and displays consistency with grounded theory methodology. Fifteen participants were interviewed for the study. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, and all interview questions were developed to understand how managers of remote employees deal with conflict.

Participants were a mixture of male and female at different stages in their careers, and with varying levels of remote management experience.

There were three levels of coding that took place which remained consistent with grounded theory methodology; open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Constant comparison was used to continuously evaluate participant responses to interview questions to uncover emerging codes in the open coding phase. Categories were created during axial coding which encompassed the codes developed in open coding. These categories were then evaluated to arrive at a central category, or theory, at the conclusion of the selective coding phase. This study resulted in the development of the Foresight Leadership Theory, which is the accumulation of codes, memos, and diagramming.

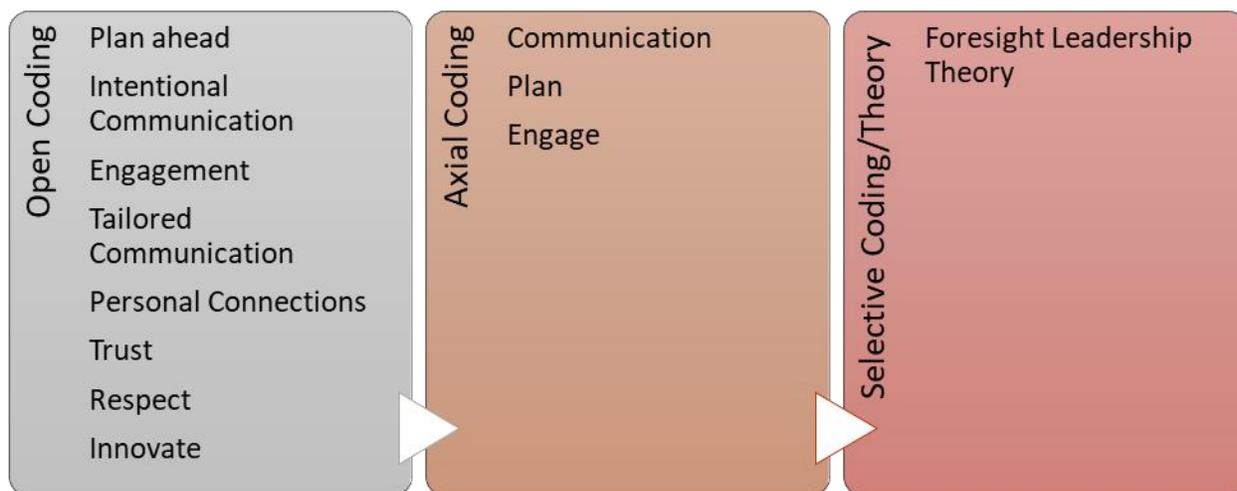
Memo writing is a necessary step when conducting grounded theory research, and were used throughout the analysis portion of the study. They allowed me to capture words and phrases during the interviews that participants placed the greatest emphasis on. They were also used to track my own thoughts regarding how the codes for each interview were relating to the other participant responses. Memos also helped me recognize the importance of altering interview questions in subsequent interviews based on the depth of the responses I was receiving.

An example of the memo writing that took place during the study is the writing of exact phrases that the participants emphasized as the interviews were taking place. While doing so, I found parallels between participants' responses related to their experiences with conflict prevention and management. I also notated any unique features about participants and their experiences that they discussed without being prompted. Some examples of this are prior remote healthcare management, length of time in their current role, and any management style changes that took place as a result of leading a remote workforce.

Diagramming was used as a visual way to organize the memos that were written. This served as a necessary tool that allowed me to link codes in the open coding phase, to create categories in axial coding, and to develop the theory in the selective coding phase. Below is a graphic representation of the process that I completed to uncover my theory.

Figure 1

Diagramming



The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic before the interviews for the study took place greatly influenced respondents' responses and experiences. The pandemic quickly forced the entire workforce within the company to work remotely, which caused both challenges and successes for all managers interviewed. Chapter 5 includes the summary of the analysis on the resultant theme.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter reviews the results of the analysis which abide by grounded theory methodology. The purpose of the study was to identify how healthcare managers with remote employees successfully navigate through conflict. This study combines the unique scenarios faced in both healthcare leadership and remote employee management with the central focus being conflict resolution.

This chapter includes major findings related to remote employee conflict prevention and resolution with healthcare managers and their remote employees. Also included is a discussion related to the importance of communication, as this served as the basis for the majority of the study's resultant codes. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research, study limitations, and a brief summary.

This chapter contains details from the study to help answer the research question:

RQ1. How do managers in the healthcare management industry experience dealing with conflicts with remote employees?

The theory for how managers in the healthcare management industry experience dealing with conflict with remote employees is multidimensional, but all based within managerial foresight: (a) Intentional communication is a necessity for preventing conflict, (b) Having key job functions and expectations clearly outlined for remote employees is essential to preventing conflict, and (c) Employee engagement, trust, and relationship-building all begin with communication-both professional and personal. Ultimately, a successful approach to conflict prevention and management is a combination of factors related to the person as well as the workplace, and contribute to an environment where employees feel confident, secure, and appreciated.

Interpretation of the Findings

Fifteen participants were interviewed for this study. Interview questions were designed to discover strategies that healthcare managers use with their remote employees to deal with conflict. The participants were both male and female, and had differing levels of experience and comfort with remote employee management.

The primary theory that emerged from the interviews is the need for managerial foresight. This resulted in the creation of the Foresight Leadership Theory, which I have named as such to encompass employee communication and engagement in conflict prevention and resolution. Foresight is a skill that requires managers to think ahead as a predictive measure, and to have a plan of action for potential results. An example of this that was shared by study participants was a new process being introduced to the department. Managers used foresight to predict how this process would alter employee functionality, and communicated, engaged, and trained their employees accordingly.

A point that was also made by study participants is that healthcare is a multidisciplinary field in which no position is siloed. Every function that a non-clinical healthcare employee conducts affects not only others on their own teams, but also employees working in other interlocking departments. Foresight is crucial in keeping conflict to a minimum, because without it, a manager would not foresee how their employees' actions, processes, and communications could affect others.

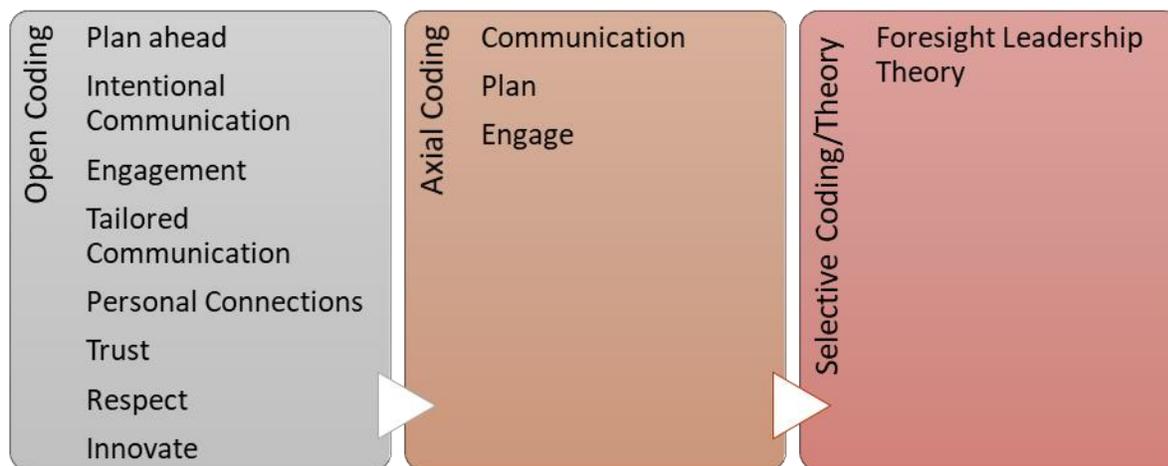
Intentional communication was deemed to be essential to remote relationship success with a 100% response rate from all participants, and all stated it by name. This type of communication was noted as having a conflict prevention undertone, as well as a way to decrease or eliminate conflict once it occurred. This code emerged in open and axial coding and

carried throughout the interview and analysis process. All participants explained their position of what intentional communication is to them, and how it plays a major part in their personal success with their employees.

Throughout all responses the same idea emerged, which is that when an employee is remote it is easy for them to feel isolated if the manager is not reaching out to them regularly. All participants also made it known that this type of communication need not be purely professional, and encouraged the use of frequent outreaches to also be personal in nature. This was noted as having a relationship-building and trust-building effect. Overall, communication-based codes and categories emerged frequently throughout the analysis of participant interviews. Below is a graphic to show a high-level overview of how the theory came to realization.

Figure 2

Diagramming



Intentional Communication is a Necessity for Preventing Conflict

The study's conclusion of intentional communication serving as a necessity for preventing conflict is in agreement with remote management literature that suggests that management styles, namely transactional leadership, can create a loss of organizational synergy

(Mulki et al., 2009). A transactional leader is not one that focuses on the relationship-building aspect of leadership, but rather focuses on tasks and uses rewards and punishment as a motivating factor. This is a concept that is reflected in my research as well, as it relates to the importance of balancing tasks with relationships, and how relationship-building creates a stronger workplace.

The most prevalent discussion with participants regarding communication was the idea of intentional communication, which means contacting remote employees with a purpose and making communication meaningful in some way. All participants discussed that intentional personal, non-work-related communication is a building block for trust- and relationship-building. To that point, work-related intentional communication proves crucial in preventing conflict by creating an environment of clear expectations and desired/required outcomes.

Foresight was a manager attribute that appeared to directly affect employee trust and satisfaction as well. Foresight, for the purpose of this study, is used in the context of anticipating employee needs, both personal and professional, and staying ahead of those needs with solution-driven ideas and actions. Per the managers interviewed, they felt that this allowed a deeper connection of trust between them and their remote employees.

Having Key Job Functions and Expectations Clearly Outlined for Remote Employees is Essential to Preventing Conflict

Clearly outlining key job functions and expectations is another area of critical importance to a successful remote workforce, as determined by this study. In Greenbaum's 2019 study, it was determined that certain job tasks are better suited for remote work than others; often those found in positions that require problem-solving and concentration because a remote environment takes away the distractions of an office.

Considering the purpose of conflict resolution in a remote setting, it is also important to explore the idea of group dynamics. After all, even though a team of employees is remote, they are still a group of people completing tasks to the best of their knowledge and abilities, so the group dynamic principles apply. A study completed in 2008 cited that “focusing on the content of interpersonal interactions, explicitly discussing reasons behind any decisions reached, and assigning work to members who have the relevant task expertise” (Behfar et al., 2008, p. 170) are successful ways to maintain group performance and satisfaction.

Within my study, participants discussed the importance of relationship-building with individual employees, but did not explore the idea of group dynamics as they relate to remote employee management. What participants often did mention, however, is that they developed their overall leadership strategies based on employee feedback.

Also important to the idea of group dynamics is the way that tasks, relationships, and processes intermingle with conflict and how the structure of the group impacts conflict resolution. The researchers described task conflict as a disagreement about ideas and opinions related directly to the group’s task, relationship conflict relates to interpersonal friction, and process conflict was described as conflict that arises when determining the best way to get the work done (Behfar et al., 2008). Without clearly defined expectations, the group could be left to interpret a task which may result in conflict if the interpretation is incorrect in relation to the task itself, or, interpersonal conflict could ensue due to a differing of opinions as to how the task should be completed.

A less desirable task to carry out from a management perspective while being remote is an employee performance review. The managers interviewed for this study stated that video software such as Skype, WebEx, or a video-enabled desk phone is a necessity when having these

types of discussions. The reason for the use of video is so that managers can read employee body language to better adjust as they move through such a discussion, especially when the employee is being given opportunities for improvement.

Some of the managers interviewed stated that they have come up with their own solutions to prevent conflict that can arise from miscommunication by detailing conversations had with employees in a follow-up email. For example, if the manager discusses a project with an employee to include the project scope, expected outcome, and due date, the manager will detail that information to the employee in an email to ensure all pertinent information has been clearly communicated to the employee.

Employee Engagement, Trust, and Relationship-building all Begin with Communication-Both Professional and Personal

An aspect of remote work that several managers mentioned as potentially taking a toll on themselves and their employees is the idea of feeling isolated. A 2014 study written by Maher cited challenges of remote work while exploring “the feeling of isolation of remote employees or lack of management control over them” (Maher, 2014, p. 160). This is in direct relation with the discussion had with the managers interviewed for the study.

Maher’s study also mentioned challenges related to emotional support and technical support for remote employees, which are two areas of discussion that also were explored during the interviews. One manager noted that they personally had a particularly difficult time making the transition to remote work but felt that they had to put on a brave face for their employees. This ended up helping the manager realize that their employees could be feeling the same, and it prompted additional outreach that strengthened the bond of the team.

Echoing these findings is an article written by Kevin Sheridan stating that the three areas of consideration in a thriving remote workplace are communication, connectivity, and technology, all of which are intertwined for the overall successful functionality of the team (Sheridan, 2012, p. 1). As it related to technology, all managers interviewed for this study mentioned that technology has proved to be both a way to create deeper bonds with employees as well as a potential hinderance when systems are not working properly.

Leadership development is used by organizations as a way to “create managers with the skills and characters of leaders, capable of guiding healthcare organizations through the crises of the 21st century workplace” (Ford, 2015, p. 261). Ford points out that modern leadership development often is in the form of surveys given to employees in which they rate leadership characteristics. Leaders are then left to interpret these findings based on their own perceptions of the results, and ideas of ways to improve them. He notes that these findings can only be effective if the leader develops a way to use them to improve the bond between themselves and their employees. At the time of this study, the managers interviewed stated that they did not have access to remote employee management tools, although they did have the ability to enroll in leadership development courses that were developed by the organization.

Advancement of Knowledge in Conflict Resolution

The study outcomes proved how crucial the human factor is in conflict prevention and resolution. Foresight is the central theory that all other study findings were based on, which calls to action the need for managers with remote employees to be intentional in the ways that they communicate and engage with them. Per this study, the results-driven “out of sight, out of mind” concept with remote employees is a guaranteed way to diminish employee respect and trust.

Relationship-building with remote employees is a necessity in preventing remote employees from feeling isolated and forgotten – two factors alone that can foster conflict. The managers that were interviewed for this study all reported some level of employee engagement that incorporated non-work-related discussions as a team and/or on a 1:1 basis with remote employees. This small effort resulted in a big return, as many managers feel that they know their employees even better since becoming remote.

I feel that based on the study findings; the conflict resolution field overall could consider the addition of this as a subject area discussed in future coursework. Living now in a world that is so deeply affected by a global pandemic that changed the way in which everyone within it works, discussing remote employee conflict management and resolution has never been more relevant.

Study Implications

The results of the study can be translated into practice through the development of a management training program. This type of training could take place during an in-service event in the workplace, during an informal “lunch and learn”, or in the form of a consultant being hired to speak to a management team. I have also considered creating a written guide based on the outcome of the study, which could be sold to the public and used by managers who wish to improve upon their conflict management and resolution skills, or to introduce themselves to the idea if they are not yet familiar.

As of the time of this study, I have submitted a proposal for consideration to be a speaker at an upcoming conference during which I would discuss the relationship between foresight leadership and its outcome related to remote employee management in healthcare. I would also

like to further explore the idea of having the study's findings translated into future healthcare administration coursework in future college courses.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

I still believe that a qualitative study design was the best method for this study. However, with the Covid-19 pandemic emerging in the process of the study, I feel that a quantitative component would have given more depth to the magnitude of the workforce that was affected. To this point, the organization that the study participants are employed by had to move all in-office employees to a work-from-home environment in less than a week when the pandemic began and the government required it. To have surveyed all affected employees, not just managers, I feel could have given an even deeper view into the struggles of remote work and how conflict can be successfully prevented and managed.

A tension that arose with the transition from in-house to remote work was the lack of employee personal resources. This included employees who did not have adequate internet access at home. There was no plan in place for such an occurrence, so this was something that the company had to face on a case-by-case basis. I believe further research can be done to discover all of the potential struggles that a company could face with a rapid workforce transition to remote work as a way to ensure that an adequate plan is put into place.

The quantitative component could also be used to distinguish between manager success rates among different demographics and employment backgrounds. Throughout the study I found that those who had been in management longer, regardless of whether they had experience with remote employee management prior to their current position, had a more thorough understanding of employee needs. These more experienced managers also had a more positive outlook on the

challenge of remote employee management overall, and had developed ways to be proactive rather than reactive.

A final suggestion for future research is to further explore the unexpected finding of ethics related to remote employee management in the healthcare field. In a remote working environment, healthcare employees are tasked with sensitive patient information that has the potential of being seen or heard by non-employees. There is no current verification standard that is used to ensure the potential for unnecessary exposure is avoided.

Also, the interviews were conducted in one healthcare organization of its kind. To gain a deeper insight into how conflict plays a role in remote employee management, I feel that a greater number of participants from several other healthcare organizations would need to be considered.

The final component of study limitations is due to the study focusing only on non-clinical healthcare experiences. Doing a similar study that involves clinical employees such as doctors, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants could help organizations such as the one that the study was conducted in, to better serve the needs of the medical personnel that they employ.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic proved that the workforce must be prepared for a radical change in the workplace environment, which could occur at any time. The pandemic also brought with it the realization that a work from home model can be possible, and even desirable, for many industries, including healthcare. Non-clinical healthcare employee roles can be successfully conducted from the employee's home with the right management strategies in place.

The Foresight Leadership Theory developed as a result of the study's findings. This theory serves as an umbrella encompassing all codes and categories that were uncovered

throughout the analysis of participant interviews. At the very basic level of all conflict prevention strategies was managerial foresight; the ability of a manager to foresee issues that may arise, and to implement strategies to help prevent those issues from surfacing.

The human factor must be taken into account, and managers benefit from the understanding that employee needs will likely shift in a remote environment. This shift has been shown, per this study, to elicit a change in management style among participants. Intentional communication is a necessity for employee satisfaction in a remote setting, and personal connections help to build relationships and trust with managers and their employees.

Remote employee management can be even more personal than the connections made with employees in a traditional in-office format. Employees can now share parts of their lives that were not possible before remote work, as pets, spouses, and children often make guest appearances during video calls. Remote work is an opportunity for managers to explore new ways of engaging employees, and for creating an entirely new team environment. The connections made virtually help to diminish conflict when the satisfaction of the employee is kept at the forefront and serves as a domino throughout the team to create a positive space for employees and managers alike to fulfill their potential.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



IRB No.: 2020-446	Sponsor(s):
Committee: Institutional Review Board	Sponsor Id:
Category:	Grants:
Department: Halmos College of Arts and Sciences	
Agent Types: Interview • Survey/Assessments	CRO:
Study Title: A Grounded Theory Study of the Conflict Management Experiences of Healthcare Managers with Remote Employees	Year: 2020
Notations:	
Expedited/Exempt Review Category:	Exempt 2: Interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations of public behavior, and other similar methodologies
Comments: The purpose of this study is to investigate remote employee management in the healthcare industry. I hope to discover patterns of successes and failures among managers in the reduction and management of conflict, and with that data, to formulate a grounded theory of best practice development for use by current and future managers.	

IRB No.-Site	
Site(s): Non-NSU - Non-NSU	PI: Van Campen, Desiree
Status: Exempt	Additional: N
Approval: September 12, 2020	Expiration: Exempt
Initial Approval: September 12, 2020	Other Expirations: Exempt Check-In - 09/12/2021
Comments:	

▼ IRB No.-Site Contacts (2)							
Name	Role						
Cooper, Robin Ph.D.	Faculty Advisor						
Roopnarine, Deanne D.P.M.	College Level Reviewer						
▼ Events (1)							
Event	Att	FE	Instance/UDF	Start	Complete	Last Mtg	Group
New Exempt Submission	6			09/18/2020	09/18/2020		

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Original Questions Asked

1. In what ways do you feel that higher education has prepared you for leading a team of remote employees?
2. How do you feel that on-the-job training has impacted your success when working with remote employees?
3. What types of conflict resolution training, specific to managing remote employees, do you feel would be helpful when faced with conflict?
4. To what extent do you feel that you have access to trusted resources that you can rely on when facing conflict with your remote employees?

Questions Introduced in Interview 7

1. Did you manage remote employees before the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. What communication strategies do you use to create employee engagement? To create an informal atmosphere parallel to what you would experience in the office?
3. What videoconferencing software/hardware do you find is the most valuable when navigating through conflict with a remote employee?
4. If you were coaching a manager new to remote employee management, what advice would you give? How would you coach them regarding remote employee conflict resolution?

Questions Introduced in Interview 10

1. What helped you prepare to lead a remote team?
2. Have you experienced direct conflict with a remote employee, or have you had to mediate an employee-employee conflict? If so, what strategies did you use?

3. Are your conflict resolution methods the same with your remote employees as they would be if you were working in the office with your employees?
4. Has your management style changed since becoming remote?
5. What concerns and/or fears remain for you regarding remote employee management?
Remote conflict resolution?
6. What are some of the challenges you have faced and/or anticipate facing as a remote manager?