How Goal Setting Can Influence Goal Achievement: A Phenomenological Study

Submitted by

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Abstract

This research examines how goal setting can influence employees to achieve daily work/task goals at an adult daycare facility in the Midwestern United States. Before this phenomenological study, there was a lack of data in the literature about goal specificity and how to measure the degree of difficulty present in a given task, hence the need for effective goal setting implementation mechanisms. The research questions sought to identify the experiences of employees related to goal setting, goal achievement, and how goal setting can influence goal achievement in the workplace. The research methodology and design was a qualitative, phenomenological study method by capturing responses to interview questions from 20 employees of an Adult daycare located in the Midwestern United States. The research identified themes such as participation, involvement, time, attitude, and phrases relating to goal setting, while themes of action, commitment, persistence, effort, and training emerged when describing activities related to goal achievement. The themes of strategy and difficulty also emerged when describing how can setting goals affect your success in the workplace. The findings revealed in the research was that it was very problematic in a group to actually individually set goals without clients’ participation. Future research recommendations incorporate a need for further inquests into other factors influencing goal setting.

Keywords: Goal setting, subconscious goals, goal setting theory, implicit motives
Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my family and friends. An exceptional appreciation to my adoring parents who are late, Mr. Ayuba Sanni and Mrs. Muniratu Adunni Mabadeje whose inspirational statements and tirelessness ring in my ears regularly. I additionally commit this research work to my Asalatu family and the association of Yoruba descendants of Greater Kansas City who have upheld me all through the investigation procedure. I likewise need to express sincere gratefulness to my best schoolmate Dr. Olarenwaju Odulaja and his lovely wife Mrs Bimpe Odulaja whose statement of the challenge led me to apply admission into the program and for being there for me all through the entire doctorate program. Both of you have been my best team promoters.
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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand how goal setting could influence employees in achieving daily work/task goals at an Adult Daycare Facility in the Midwestern United States. Latham, Stajkovic and Locke (2010) defined goal setting as teaching people to set a desired level of performance for that behavior, monitoring their performance by testing results in relation to the preset standard, and selecting the right behavior to target. Direct effort and attention in this research were task-relevant action and behaviors that showed effective goal setting. This study was conducted because of the identified gaps or deficiencies of the goal setting process.

Dissanayake (2013) acknowledged that theories and models are results of research, but they often become obsolete with the passage of time and practical application can be problematic; hence, new research is needed to update old assumptions. The result of this research offers recommendations to employees who may need to set goals, and includes recommended variables likely to assure goal achievement. The researcher interviewed 20 employees at adult daycare in the Midwest to investigate the variables of goal setting and goal achievement. The study begins with a background of the study, problem statement, and purpose of the study. The study also includes an identification of the research questions, research methodology and design, and assumption. Finally, it ends with an analysis of the research and implications for future research.

Background of the Study

Locke and Latham (2002) developed goal-setting theory based on the review of nearly 400 laboratory and field studies. They identified specific and challenging goals leading to increased task performance. Goal difficulty effect does not always result in achievement, and
when it does, the size of the results varies widely (Motowidto, Dunnette, and Loehr 1978). Motowidto et al. (1978) stated that more variables are necessary to moderate the relation between task performance and goal difficulty.

Presently, the findings from the Adult Daycare employees on goal setting showed that hard and specific goals do not lead to higher tiers of accomplishment (Locke & Latham, 2002). This research investigated the degree of difficulty and goal specificity strategy as it affects employees in an Adult Daycare Facility related to goal achievement. This research also investigated theory of motivation, on how opportunities with the highest subjective probability effect goals in the Adult Daycare employees in the Midwestern United States.

**Problem Statement**

The problem is a lack of knowledge on goal specificity and measurability resulting in unsatisfactory performance. The struggle to understand the roles of culture, gender, lived experiences, racial differences and skill set needed to achieve desired workplace goals has led to volumes of research in the goal setting process (Cooper & Schinder, 2011). Locke and Latham (2002) drew a sharp contrast between assigned goals and personal goals, arguing that personal goals, along with the individual’s sense of self-efficacy decide a person’s actions.

Locke and Latham (2002) research did not state if upon assigning a challenging goal to an employee would raise self’s sense of efficacy and affect personal goals. Therefore, the result of the research remains inconclusive to represent that assignment of a goal is a clear sign of confidence until the intention of the supervisor and the results of goals are matched (Locke & Latham, 2002). Kleingeld, Van Mierlo and Arends (2011) added that the specifics of goals could influence goal achievement, but their study did not state how developing specific goals specifics can influence goal achievement.
Corker and Donnellan (2012, argued, “the purpose of boundary goals in achievement motivation are better predictors of performance than points of aspiration when these goals are matched against one another” (p. 3). Both models of creating target goals were associated with exam performance, but only boundary goals were linked with performance when both were used as simultaneous predictors. This study examined whether collaboration and competition on goal setting influenced goal achievement as exemplified by Kleingeld et al. (2011).

**Purpose of the Study**

The goal of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand how goal setting could influence employees to achieve daily work/task goals at an adult daycare facility in the Midwestern United States. The study comprised of 20 employees of an adult daycare facility in a Midwestern United State city. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the research data. The aim of the research was also to contribute to the field by enabling employees to realize that when core performance indicators, such as high conversion rates, are met, then the goal is achieved. The study method analyzed success levels and cultivated a sense of fulfillment for employees striving to achieve the set goal.

To understand lived experiences relating to goal setting, participants were asked to share individual job experiences within the establishment that relate to the themes of goal setting and goal achievement. The research design included factors such as group size, group type, and a moderator. Pencils and notepads together with computers for presentation and a stop clock were offered to the participants. The researcher recruited participants only from an Adult Daycare Agency in the Midwestern United States.
Research Questions

Four research questions guided this research:

RQ1: What does the term goal setting mean to employees?
RQ2: What activities do employees associate with goal setting?
RQ3: What activities do employees associate with goal achievement?
RQ4: How does goal setting affect the workplace?

The findings of this research are to contribute to research on the organizational behavior of adult daycare agency employees, and to offer practical suggestions for managing their behavior. The findings are to strengthen the view of Ryan and Deci (2000), that experience and competence influence intrinsic motivation. Goal setting theory was on the principle that, with a sufficient level of ability and commitment, a goal is achievable (Locke & Latham 2002).

Goal setting theory not only affirmed the link between goals and performance at workplaces, but it also states that commitment, clarity, challenge, feedback and task complexity are essential to effective goal achievement (Locke & Latham 2002). Applying this principle to representative employees at an adult daycare agency in a Midwestern United States city raised the question of the influence of participation in goal setting on goal achievement, the essence of a committed workforce in the organization, and the condition upon which assignment of challenging goals would raise selfs’ sense of efficacy and affect personal goals.

Advancing Scientific Knowledge

The study advances the literature by examining new insights relating to the research of goal setting theory in a workplace. Locke and Latham’s (2002) goal setting theory was on the idea that, with enough levels of goal commitment, skills, and ability, performance will improve
with increasing goal difficulty. This effect is greater for difficult, specific goals than for general “do your best” goals (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Brewer and Skinner (2003), and Klein, Wesson, Hollenbeck and Alge’s (1999), observational studies revealed that a difficult goal is set at 10% objective probability of achievement, modest goals at 16%-50% objective probability, and relaxed goals are those with 50% objective likelihood of success. It is essential that the goal setters make sure that all desired aspects of performance are taken into account and understand that setting a specific goal for the quantity of work can reduced job quality or isolated areas performance improvement unless a goal relating to the quality of output is stated (Brewer & Skinner, 2003).

Latham and Locke (1975) stated that careful planning is needed when deciding a specific goal. Their study examined advantages of creating specific goals and how clear, direct effort and attention toward actions and behaviors are necessary for strong performance (Latham & Locke, 1991). Similarly, Kleingeld et al. (2011) narrated that the specifics of goals influence goal achievement, but their study did not state how goal specifics can influence goal achievement. This study analyzed the impact of collaboration and competition on goal achievement as illustrated by (Kleingeld et al., 2011).

Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) stated that setting and achieving goals depend on establishing a collaborative learning culture in which goals are created, understood, and carried out with shared commitment both to the end. The researchers further stated that persistence and professional learning are necessary in achieving them. Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, and Bazerman (2009), asserted that goal setting has powerful and predictable side effects, and further argued that instead of offering goal setting as an “over-the-counter” (p. 4), salve for improving performance, goal setting ought to be prescribed selectively
with caution, and closely monitored. This study examined all the conditional effects of goal setting and inconsistent goal achievement in the workplace widening the gaps between goal setting and achievement.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was that it would help understand how goals are set and effect daily work/task goals and the effect values, desires, beliefs and the role of personal circumstance on goal achievement. This study would contribute to the depth of industrial and organizational psychology by expanding existing research theories or interpretation of data and information. This study would also contribute to the goal theory field by increasing knowledge of how goal achievement is perceived.

In relation to Ryan and Deci’s (2002) self-determination theory, the study could assist in determining the least cost effective way to gain mastery required to complete tasks. In relation to Hollenbeck and Klein’s (1987), goal commitment theory, this study could promote integration of these theories with goal setting theory to achieve set goals within a short period. Consistent with Ryan and Deci’s (2000) self-determination theory, Locke and Latham (2002) posited that goal setting affect performance by influencing motivation and persistence.

Within the psychological literature, goal-setting theory pioneered by Latham and Locke (2010) exemplifies well established and realistically supported approaches to behavior change. The key to its success is the treatment of behavior as a function of individual ability, skills, attitudes, and workplace systems of performance rewards and feedback. The study will assist in developing new policies, transformation of workplace systems, tasks review, roles and responsibilities.
Research Methodology

The research methodology used was qualitative. The reason this method was chosen is that qualitative techniques afford rich insight into workplace settings (Burns & Bush, 2012). Qualitative methods allow a formalized procedure for gathering data (Burns & Bush, 2012). In contrast to quantitative methods, qualitative research methodology entails gathering, analyzing, and decoding data by noticing what people do and say (Burns & Bush, 2012).

Qualitative study methods are organized in the form of structured, unstructured and semi-structured format, and produce more in-depth and comprehensive information (Burns & Bush, 2012). The qualitative method uses subjective data and participant observation to describe the natural setting of the variables being investigated. Qualitative methods are brief, easy to execute, analyzed, and inexpensive. Qualitative methods are flexible when compared to the rigid format of a quantitative survey. Several topics are deliberated, and many perceptions are gained, particularly those involving variations in behavior in different situations (Bush & Burns, 2012).

Nature of the Research Design for the Study

The research design for this study was a phenomenological study method. The goal of this study was to explore the interplay of factors related to goal setting and goal achievement of Adult daycare employees in the Kansas City area of Midwest United States. Yin (2003) argued that a phenomenological study design is appropriate when the focus of the study is to understand how and why questions of a small group and the behavior of the participants in the study are not manipulated. The research design can also be used to cover contextual conditions because they are relevant to the research (Yin, 2003).

The phenomenological study method supports the research questions for this study by attempting to investigate how goal setting influences greater clients’ functional ability goal
achievement in the workplace. The employees of an adult daycare facility represented a work unit or small segment of this population. The phenomenological study method reveals the research problem as it exists within the target population sample workplace environment (England, 2012).

A purposive sample of 20 employees at a facility located the Midwestern United States was chosen to take part in the research. Participants, who are elderly or women with a vision disability, were encouraged to use assistive technology such as a walker or magnifying glass to help them take part in the research. The data collection was by semi-structure because nominees are employees known for sharing experiences, opinions, and are willing to spend 2 hours of their time at the dedicated location. The times and location of the interviews were followed-up with verbal confirmation between the researcher and employees. The questions were non-threatening or embarrassing and were short and unambiguously worded.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of clarity, some conceptual terms are defined to provide consistency and unity. The definitions in this section provided a broad theoretical framework in which the study is conducted.

**Focus group interview.** A method used to gain insight into lived experiences (Waters, 2015).

**Goal theory.** Founded on the principle that much of human action is purposeful and sets the standard for motivation in that it requires achieving more to be satisfied than low or easy standards (Locke & Latham, 2002).

**Feedback.** Data obtained from the performance behavior, indicating the goal is met or unmet and is given upon completion of a project (Ashford & Cummings, 1983).
Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

The assumptions of the study were that participants are honest, and would answer questions without bias. It was assumed that acquiring necessary on-the-job training would lead to goal achievement, decreased reliance on external aid, and enable employees to give the support needed to do desired skills across multiple environments (King-Sears, 1999). The assumption about group interviewing was that groups’ output is in some way superior to the output of individual interviews.

Several limitations about this study were noted. First, the sample for this study comprised 20 employees at a location in Midwestern United States city. As such, the size, nature of the sample, and its representatives are few so they cannot be generalized to all other employees in the firm or other firms in the United States. Another limitation was that participants’ fear of reprisal from the supervisor hindering honest responses.

Delimitations of the study included the fact monetary incentives could not be offered. Participation was voluntary because the main advantage of involvement in decision-making is cognitive because it promotes information exchange (Locke, Alavi, & Wagner, 1997). The study only included selected employees of one agency in the Midwestern United States.

Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research was to:

1. To understand how goal setting can influence employees in achieving daily work/task goals at an Adult Daycare Facility in the Midwestern United States.
2. To understand lived experiences relating to goal setting.
3. To contribute to research on the organizational behavior of Adult daycare Agency employees as well as offer practical suggestions for managing their behavior.
4. To advance the literature by examining new insights relating to the research of goal setting theory in a workplace

5. To help understand how goals can be set and effect daily work/task goals and the effect values, desires, beliefs and the role of personal circumstance on goal achievement.

This chapter began with an introduction, background of the study, problem statement purpose of the research, research questions, advancing scientific knowledge and significance of the study. Finally, the methodology section narrates the procedures, nature of the research design for the study, definitions of terms, assumptions, and summary in the organization of the remainder of the study. The findings of this study will contribute to research on the organizational behavior of adult daycare agency employees, and to offer practical suggestions for managing their behavior. Chapter 2 presents additional background information related to the problem. It provides a more in-depth discussion about the theoretical foundation for the research. The overview of the existing literature related to the problem and its relevance to the study.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to understand how goal setting can influence employees to achieve daily work/task goals at an Adult daycare Facility in the Midwestern United States. The literature review included examining past research addressing the process through which goal setting is transcribed or transferred into action. The literature review is a guide to understanding how a goal is framed, and the how specificity of the goal affects behavior. It aims to assist the reader in understanding how goal systems deal with and reacts to obstacles to goal pursuit and goal achievement.

This chapter begins with a brief historical background, provides a short review of how goal setting evolved, also points out the evolutionary underpinnings of the pursuit of goal processes (Latham & Locke, 2002). Several theoretical approaches reflecting motivational process and contribution to the motivational literature are presented. Research has identified core findings, causal mechanisms, moderators, and shows generality across tasks, research design, settings, participants, countries, and measures (Latham & Locke, 2002). The preceding sections begin with the layout of the findings of researchers, such as Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham (1981), relating to the theory of motivation, and other research in the area of workplace goal setting, assessment of advances in the goal setting theory. The final section provides a summary of the chapter.

The literature was surveyed using periodicals, peer review journals characterizing goals as knowledge structures, goal activation, as well as periodicals relating to commitment, and multi-goal management. Latham and Locke (2002) posited that a worker’s mental ability was as a medium of goal setting and goal achievement relationship; however, in a subsequent
publication (Latham & Locke, 2010), the reference to worker’s mental ability is omitted. Latham and Locke (2010) stated goal setting is an open theory, causing internal and external validity and the number of discoveries is measureless. It only directed efforts, attention, and action toward appropriate actions and warned against consequences of non-relevant actions (Locke & Latham, 2010).

**Background**

Latham and Locke (2002) formulated the goal theory inductively based on empirical research conducted over nearly 40 years. Their work unambiguously indicated that goal setting could be an extremely powerful technique to goal achievement. The two core findings from nearly 400 empirical studies that led to the development of the goal setting theory in 1990 shows there is a linear relationship between the degree of goal difficulty, and performance (Latham & Locke, 1990). The research found that specific, difficult goals lead to higher performance than no goals, as well as vague, abstract goals such as do your best goals (Latham & Locke, 1990). The research posited that the problem with doing your best goals creates ambiguity as to what constitutes performance effectiveness (Latham & Locke, 1990).

Ordonez, Schweitzer, Galinsky and Bazerman (2009), and Herzberg’s (1987) identified money as de-motivator of goal achievement, and that compensation systems often act as barriers to achieving productivity, quality, and intrinsic motivation, therefore goals, are not reached. Herzberg’s work on compensation is supported by Deming’s (1991) argument that wages are not an element of motivation. William (2011) also argued that goal setting does not work, and that stretching goals are a waste of time. Grant’s (2011) work on executive coaching noted that absence of an action plan designed to monitor and measure performance would result in the blind pursuit of a previously set goal.
Cyret and March (1963) stated that most organizational goals are influenced by the organization’s past goals, past performance, and past performance of other comparable organization. Sitkins, See, Miller, Lawless, and Carton (2011), stated “the paradox of stretch goals in the pursuit of the seemingly impossible” (p. 558); arguing that business literature has over-weighted the successes attributed to stretch goals and underreported the cases where setting stretch goals turned out to have no effect or were counterproductive. This finding supports the concern expressed by Latham and Locke (2013), that employees of organizations easily become demoralized if they believe the goals set for them are unachievable from several peers-reviewed journals.

Only three studies could be found that tested Locke’s (1965) conception of goal theory. Erez and Zidon (1984) detected moderating effects for goal achievement on the goal-difficulty-performance relation; whereas Frost and Mahney (1976) and Latham and Yukl (1978) could not. Explaining these inconsistent results proved to be difficult for some methodological reasons in that each of these studies adopted a single-item measure of commitment, and therefore, differences in the reliability of measurement could not be assessed. Although each research study adopted a different method, relative validity of each became doubtful.

The studies also differ in timing of measurement, in that Erez and Zidon (1984) and Latham and Yukl (1978) measured commitment before subjects engaged in the task; whereas Frost and Mahoney (1976) measured it after task completion. The studies largely searched for the determinants of goal achievement without the guidance of any wide-ranging theory. As a result, it cannot be said succinctly that employees of an adult daycare with high self-efficacy and goal commitment, are likely to work on the goals and develop tactics to achieve the goals. Locke (2002) re-launched research into the idea of goal setting and motivation. In this research, Locke
observed strong negative aggression in response toward setting goals because the concept was seen as “the legal philosophy” that must be preserved and never broken. Lee and Reeve (2013) revealed that proactive actions increase the sense of Agency, and that self-determined behavior of goal setting is closely related to an individual’s sense of agency, and is correlated with increased intrinsic motivation. Grant’s (2011) work on executive coaching noted that the absence of an action plan designed to monitor and measure performance resulted in blind pursuit of a previously set goal. According to Latham (2007), goal theory is still evolving, and most studies on learning goals have used simulations and business students as participants’ generalization can never be taken for granted, and in the end is an empirical question.

The present problem with goal setting and achievement evolved in the later part of the 60’s, when Locke (1965) extended the research into the idea of goal setting and motivation. The work of Locke mainly focused on ways to use goal setting effectively in an applied setting. Unfortunately, during the same era, there were many unrealistic goals that turned out to be mere dreams; necessitating the need to investigate how goal setting can influence goal achievement (Locke, 1965). Bazerman et al. (2009) argued that goal setting has earned a bad reputation in certain industries necessitating review of its theories to remain competitive and profitable.

Galanter, Miller, and Pribram (1960) originally applied an engineering model to human motivation, stating that when two objects meet, there is electrical or mechanical feedback, a detector to spot discrepancies between the standard, and the current condition of the object, and there is an effector to take corrective action. In contrast, Latham and Locke (1975) offered that goals alone are the primary source of a person’s motivation. However, despite strong commitment, individuals often fail to achieve their goals, hence the need for effective goal setting implementation mechanisms (Parks-Stamm, Gollwitzer, & Oettingen, 2007).
Theoretical Foundation

Latham, Locke, Saari, and Shaw (1981) identified goal setting as a powerful workplace motivator. Goal setting provide individuals with meaning, and a sense of having control over his or her environment (Latham et al., 1981). Goal setting connects the wants of a person to instrumental activity (cognitive and behavioral activity) and directs his or her commerce with the world (Latham & Locke, 2013). Goal setting theory describes why some people perform better on certain work tasks than others and can control their ability (Latham et al., 1981).

Hull (1952) asserted that under drive theory, motivations stemmed from necessity and deprivation, driving people to engage in a random activity until by chance the need was satisfied; the drive was thus reduced. The theory contributed to the understanding of influences of individual drives as it varied over time in a single person, and cautioned that it could be detrimental when a single drive dominates. In these cases, a single drive can cause unbalanced organizational outcomes, and can help to understand how structuring tasks to support interaction is an essential consideration in the workplace (Hull, 1952).

Hull’s (1952) theory is an applicable foundation for this research because it helped answer the question of whether someone requires reinforcements or motivation to set workplace goals, or if employees understand the essence of motivations to learn, acquire, defend and bond as fundamental to human psychology, and investigate conditional factors of motivation. Reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1953), is considered somewhat similar to drive theory, except it argued that reinforcements controlled behavior. Reinforcement theory is useful to explain appropriate behavior that contributed to achieved goals and objectives at minimal cost. Weiner’s (1992) attribution theory explains that people attribute goal achievement to the environment. The theory clarified sets of conditions that must exist in the workplace environment (Weiner, 1992).
Under expectancy theory (Vroom, 1994), cognitive variables reflect individual differences in work motivation.

According to Latham (2012), expectancy theory measures employee perceptions as they relate to motivational performance rewards measured by attainment goal outputs across cultures, also guided the influence of cultures on employee perception. Self-concordance theory (Elliot & Sheldon, 1998) refers to the extent to which a goal is aligned with a person’s natural interests, motivations, and values. Deci and Ryan (2002) wrote that self-concordance theory is derived from self-determination theory.

This theory aided the researcher in investigating essential foundations from which to understand reasons and motivations associated with goal selection and goal strivings (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Self-concordance model emphasizes the extent to which individuals perceive their goals as being defined by their true-self, rather than obliged by external forces (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The theory facilitated the researcher to investigate whether a single type of goal setting can explain changing physical activity behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Bandura's (1986) competence theory, which has its basis in socio-cognitive theory, is mostly applied as a paradigm in sports. The theory applies to people have an intrinsic need to be self-determining, competent, or have self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986).

Fredrick and Ryan (1995) likewise supported that an athlete's feeling of competence and self-determination has an impact on levels of intrinsic motivation. Thus, there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and motivation. The combination of competency and reinforcement theories helped understand how to develop effective manners by which goals are set to achieve desired results in a workplace. Bandura's (1986) socio-cognitive theory was included in this research because motivation theory postulates that external sources influence
motivation to perform satisfactorily, called extrinsic motivation (Frederick & Ryan, 1995), while feedback from the organizational manager can have either positive or negative influence on performance.

**Literature Review**

The literature review for this qualitative phenomenological research included goal setting studies published in peer-reviewed, academic journals from 2010 to the present. It presented studies of mediators and moderators of effective goal setting, categorized by target audience focused research. Most of the studies relating to goal setting and goal achievement were consistent with qualitative phenomenological research; few were pre-experimental, quasi-experimental, or experimental (Horowitz, Shilts, & Townsend, 2007).

The literature review included the following themes related to goal setting and goal achievement: Feedback of performance, explicitness of goals, the difficulty of goals, monetary incentives, specificity of goals, challenging goals, proximal goals, and meaningful goals. Most of the peer-reviewed articles were categorized by a research group with organized interaction, and extracted data consisted of purpose, sample description, goal-setting interview questionnaires, responses, outcome measure, assignment, and findings.

Forty of the fifty goal-setting and goal achievement peer-reviewed journals used interviews to collect data from participants. Data analysis procedures included data reduction, writing a narrative of the change process, dividing the narrative for further analysis, coding of themes, entering information into a database, sorting and recording to separate important outcomes. The results of these studies justified the use of question and answer interviews as an instrument for collecting reliable data to establish a successful goal achievement program.
According to Shaw (2004), group discussions provide a consistent method to ensure that performance rating takes into consideration differences in goal difficulty among employees in the organization. Group discussion creates a conducive environment that puts subjects at ease enabling them to respond to questions in their own words (Shaw, 2004). The revelation by Shaw (2004) supports the use of group interviews for this qualitative phenomenological research. John (2004) conducted group research on the background of students who transferred from community college to four-year state university to understand the significant decline in grade point average.

The use of group questions revealed that the student's experienced transfer shock, and had no prior goal setting training at the community college (John, 2004). Groups can reveal deep insight and a wealth of detailed data (John, 2004). Tenbergen-Klaus (2010) applied group interviews to understand university policies and procedures from academic articulation officers and administrators for the orientation of community college students who desire to transfer to a four-year state university. The students freely shared own desire to abide by the rules, and to accelerate the degree completion period dramatically. Group discussion method provided university findings to improve implementation of university policies and procedures (Tenbergen-Klaus, 2010).

Goal-setting theory was supported in the reviewed literature to increase performance quality among individuals, groups, and organizations in Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, England, Japan (DuBrin, 2012), Germany (Bipp & Kleingeld, 2011), Spain (Braganza & Morelli, 2012), and Sweden (Thorgren & Wincent, 2013). In an attempt to unravel the gap between goal setting and goal achievement, Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl, and Shore (2010) identified that goals are effective, provided individuals are committed, provide an existence of a process to
track the goal or periodic feedback, requisite skill and knowledge, and the resources to attain the goal are known. Later, DuBrin (2012) added that goal setting is an effective method of improving and sustaining performance. Moskowitz and Grant (2011) argued that goals are a mutual representation that links to cues in the environment connecting a person to the situation through specific, desirable, and feasible goals. Similarly, Morisano (2013) argued for the role of self-efficacy as an important mechanism to which students respond to challenges and respond to setbacks.

Gendolla, Kreibig, and Scherer (2010) observed that as soon as self-relevant goals are achieved particularly among students, their success elicits positive emotions such as pride, interest, and joy. This sense of competence emanating from goal achievement motivated students to engage in more challenging goals, ultimately adopt goal-directed mindsets (Gendolla et al., 2010). Moeller, Theiler, and Wu (2012), conducted a quasi-experimental study to examine the connection between student goal setting and achievement in high school Spanish language classrooms. The subjects comprised of 1273 students in 23 high schools using language-learning software with a goal setting process. The research required students to establish personalized goals and follow action plans by chapter objectives by writing a reflection at the end of each chapter. Results of this research found a strong correlation between student goal setting, persistence and language learning achievement (Moeller et al., 2012).

Ferguson and Sheldon (2010) documented that individuals with clear, written goals are more likely to succeed than those without clearly defined goals. In that research, participants were asked to write ‘why’ and ‘how’ they would achieve a goal with the interaction between the level of initial goal relevant skills and effectiveness of writing why or how the goals would be achieved. The research found that students with initially low goal-relevant skills were
internalizing their goals over time and reported greater goal expectancies. Bavetta, Gist, and Steven (1995) investigated how MBA students’ salary negotiations are affected by two types of training: goal setting training and self-management training. Prior to any training, women had lower self-efficacy, largely saw the negotiation process as an uncontrollable, and set lower salaries than men. Following goal setting training, women still set lower salaries; however, following self-management training, women increased their salaries, and the pre-training differential between men and women was no longer apparent. According to Latham and Locke’s (2013), goal-setting theory supports motivating staff in meeting organizational goals and effecting change for diverse populations.

However, understanding the circumstances that motivates employees to perform desired work-related activities targeted in reaching organizational objectives is essential and critical to maximizing organizational performance, meeting strategic goals, and satisfying employees’ need (Mitchell & Daniel, 2003). Mclelland (1961) argued that past studies did not explain how the subconscious goal setting in the workplace contributed to goal achievement, and the results are contradictory and inconclusive with regard to essentials leading to achievement. Diseth and Kobbeltvedt’s (2010) abstracted that mediation analysis of achievement motives, goals, learning strategies, and the grades of undergrads in Norway, were positively correlated with both performance-approach and mastery-approach goals ($N = 229$). Conversely, the mediation analysis also revealed negative correlation with performance-avoidance goals (Diseth & Kobbeltvedt 2010).

Bodmann, Harackiewicz, Hullenman, and Schrager (2010) argued that an achievement goal is a future focused cognitive representation that guides behavior to a competence-related end state. With the increased prevalence of team-based structures within the workplace,
Kleingold and Van Mierlo (2010) argue that team goal setting allows for goal setting at multiple levels. Within a sales team, for example, each member has a specific number of sales calls he or she is striving to make, as well as a team goal of some number related to closed sales. The intention can be for every employee in an organization to contribute to a larger organizational goal. Alone, each person can only work toward a measurable goal at the individual level (Kleingold & Van Mierlo, 2010).

Van Ginkel, Van Knippenberg, and Pieterse (2011) highlighted that the composition of a team affects how individuals perform. Pieterse et al. (2010) explained that diversity of learning and performance orientations within a team works against the team and ultimately leads to a decrease in team performance due to differing orientations. Kinicki, Tsui, and Wu (2010) examined the effects of group-focused versus individual-focused leadership using a three-phase survey. The research found that differentiated leadership in teams diminished team effectiveness by creating divergence in leader identification, as well as both lower member self-efficacy and collective efficacy (Kinicki et al., 2010). Group focused leadership facilitated group identification and collective efficacy, which positively influenced team effectiveness overall (Kinicki et al., 2010). The finding suggested that in a team context, leader’s direct specific attention to the team as a whole to maintain collective efficacy (Wu et al., 2010).

According to Latham and Locke (1990), goal setting has been verified as one of the most positive motivators in many laboratory and field studies. Goals motivate by enlisting self-investment in the activity rather than directly. Bandura and Cervone (1986), presented that self-efficacy and affective self-reaction operate in concert in goal based motivation, and that individuals who were arbitrarily informed that they failed to accomplish an assigned challenging goal, and were displeased with the remark, subsequently intensified their effort and effectiveness.
to achieve the goal. Bandura and Cervone (1986) found that self-determination actually boosted the level of motivation. In light of the important nature of goals, Diefendorff, Hall, Lord, and Schmidt (2010) investigated antecedent goal setting, and provided that goals can be either self-initiated, participatively-set, or assigned by an authority figure such as a manager. In research of when people proactively set goals, Barrick, Mount, and Strauss (1993) found that when sales representatives had high conscientiousness, they set personal goals and subsequently had higher sales volumes and supervisor-rated job rated performance. However, the research did not examine the level at which the goal was set.

To investigate the issue, Gellatly (1996) examined how conscientiousness influenced personal goal levels on arithmetic tasks, and found that individuals who had higher conscientiousness tended to set higher goals. However, this relationship was indirect and mediated by the feeling that they are capable of effecting the actions necessary the task. In another research study, Shantz and Latham (2011) increased the productivity of call center workers by displaying a photograph of a woman winning a race on the page of instructions. Latham and Piccolo (2012) expanded the research and found that the displayed photograph increased the workers’ productivity across the course of a work week, but an achievement prime that was not task-relevant did not have the same positive impact on employee productivity (Latham & Piccolo, 2012). Latham and Locke (2013) posited that when the task is specific, it positions an individual’s attention and energy toward goal-relevant actions and away from those that are deemed by that individual to be irrelevant.

A second mechanism, or mediator of the goal-performance relationship, is effort mobilized and expended in proportion to the difficulty level of the goal (Latham & Locke, 1975; Locke, 1968). The third and the fourth mechanisms are persistence, or the time spent to achieve a
goal and knowledge or task strategy respectively (Latham & Locke, 2013). Latham and Sue-
Chan (2012) distinguished between promotion and prevention goals as a central point for
coaching, and the role of implicitly fixed beliefs about ability and implicit incremental beliefs on
coaching outcomes.

Beck, Car and Gregory’s (2011) contribution to control theory was that feedback is
central to workplace effectiveness and can provide an essential framework for coaching. Grant
(2011) argued for establishing an integrative goal-focused approach to executive coaching.
Kirkman, Steel, and Taras’s (2010) meta-analysis showed that job performance could be
predicted more strongly by personality traits than by culture or neuroticism. In addition,
conscientiousness is correlated to workplace motivation (Bipp & Kleingeld, 2011; Ilies & Judge,
2002).

In contrast, Latham and Locke (2013) claimed that there is little evidence that personality
affects the success of goal setting. Despite the effectiveness of goal setting, Clutterbuck (2010)
and Grant (2011) argued against the use of goal setting in coaching. The research observed that
goal setting is associated with coaches cajoling coachees in the blind pursuit of previously set but
inappropriate goals, leading to ‘lazy’ join-the-dots mechanistic coaching. Clutterbuck (2008)
further stated that where goal setting focuses on subjects that are difficult to quantify, then goal
setting is of little significance.

Reviewed literature also showed that goal theory could provide a framework to help
organizations explore and identify unhelpful workplace activities or facilitate improved
discussions on how actions can be initiated through employees such that goals can be achieved
easily (Aarts & Custers, 2010). In the area of self-management strategies (also referred to as self-
monitoring and self-evaluation), Grossi and Heward (1998) wrote that participants who
monitored their performance periodically and notified the outcome to a supervisor complete
tasks accurately.

Graham, Harris, and Johnson (1997) explained that setting a standard is essential to
selecting precise strategy to achieve a goal, as well as monitoring the performance toward the
goal and evaluating if the goal was met. If needed, the subsequent performance should be
adjusted accordingly. Graham et al. (1997) identified that subjects with mental retardation must
have in possession clear, unambiguous instructions for goal setting to have a meaningful effect
on achievement and performance. The research further suggested the use of visual cues to stand
for expected goals or provide feedback on subjects' progress towards goal achievement
(Copeland & Hughes, 2002).

**Feedback on Performance.** According to Latham and Locke (2013), feedback play two
roles in the goal setting process. First, feedback stimulates individuals to set subsequent goals for
their performance. Second, feedback interacts with goals such that performance is improved
most when both feedback and goals are present. In this way, feedback moderates the relationship
between goal setting and performance (Latham & Locke, 2013).

Illies, Judge, and Wagner (2010) showed that individuals’ behavioral inhibition system, a
disposition reflecting individual differences in the ways in which people process feedback
information, influenced their resilience after receiving negative feedback and subsequent goal
setting. Employees with strong behavioral inhibition systems tend to feel hurt and worry when
they think they did something wrong. Illies et al. (2010) showed that small discrepancies yielded
low levels of negative emotional reactions, regardless of employees’ behavioral inhibition
system. In a study of members of common and high power-distance cultures and individualists
and low-power-distance cultures, Taras et al. (2010) showed the former seek feedback from
peers rather than from superiors, because they feel uncomfortable about approaching their superiors. The research by Kirk et al. (2010) also revealed that collectivists and individualists differ in how they respond to negative feedback. Cross and Zhang (2011), found that Euro-Americans were less persistent on a task in the face of receiving negative feedback on performance. In contrast, East Asians were considered being more persistent on a task after negative than positive feedback (Cross & Zhang, 2011).

Cianci, Klien, and Seijts (2010) examined the interaction of learning versus performance goals and negative feedback on resulting tension and fulfilment in a laboratory setting. The research found that subjects with a learning goal both felt less tension and performed better following negative feedback than those assigned a performance in their negative feedback context (Cianci et al., 2010). Similarly, Cianci, McGill, and Shaubroeck (2010) found that performance on a complex task in a lab research study declined when positive feedback was combined with assigned learning goals, but had the opposite effect with assigned performance goals. Negative feedback, on the other hand, favorably influenced performance for individuals assigned a learning goal, whereas performance declined when negative feedback was combined with performance goals (Shaubroeck et al., 2010).

Ashford, Buyens and De-Stobbleir (2011) argued that knowledge workers who seek more feedback and seek feedback more broadly are generally rated as exhibiting higher creative performance. Similarly, Ashford, Northcraft, and Schmidt (2011) argued that the more frequent and specific the feedback for a given task dimension, the higher the task’s salience for the individual, the individual’s efficacy for that task, and performance. Finally, Jung, Schneider, and Valacich (2010) summarized that groups that were given feedback and an explicit difficult goal (versus do your best) outperformed all other groups of both quantity and quality of ideas.
**Explicitness of Goals.** Mace’s (1935), empirical research on explicitness illustrates that raising the goal level above previously set operations was more efficient to increase degrees of achievement than instructions to students to do your best. This technique of comparing do your best goals with other types of goals has served as the foundation for more recent surveys. Mace (1935) compared experimenter-set goals to self-set goals. The research revealed that self-set goals resulted in a much better performance than experimenter set goals. In a continuing investigation, Locke, (1966) asked University students to generate uses for a given object and each student was assigned to one of three established groups consisting of self-set goals, experimenter-set soft goals, and experimenter set hard goals. The experiment found that scholars who defined their goals out-performed other students who received easily fixed targets, but much less outcome with the university scholars who received challenging set goals (Locke, 1966).

Bryan, Kendall and Locke (1968) concluded that self-set goals were superior to experimenter-assigned goals, provided the goals established by scholars were appropriately challenging and precise. Latham and Locke (2010), asserted that where do your best is required in performance, the experimenter is obliged to ask the subjects to do best by giving the subjects a free hand to interpret the goal in any manner deemed appropriate, but in a concrete and quantitative goal setting, goals are defined in terms of qualification required and expected outcome is usually stated by the experimenter to the subjects (Latham & Locke, 2010).

Jung et al. (2010), found that groups given an explicit difficult goal (versus do your best) outperformed all other groups of both quantity and quality of ideas.

**Difficulty of Goals**

The core aspect of goal theory is that goals that are challenging lead to a higher level of performance than non-quantitative goals such as do your best goals. Locke (1968) compared the
effects of natural and challenging goals for the performance of computational tasks using employed college students as the subjects, revealed that as goal difficulty increases, the level of performance rises. Closely in line with goal achievement is the impact of goal orientation on creative performance (Locke, 1968).

In general, learning goal orientation is believed to affect creative performance in that it is essential to acquisition creativity-relevant skills, domain-relevant skills, and intrinsic motivation (Hirst, Van Knippenberg, & Zhou, 2009). In another research by Lee and Reeve (2013), proactive actions actually increase the sense of Agency and self-determined behavior related to goal setting. The research found that people’s sense of agency is also correlated with increased intrinsic motivation (Lee & Reeve, 2013).

Hirst, van Knippengberg, Chen, and Sacramento (2011) examined the moderation effect of bureaucratic team practices on the goal orientation-creativity relationship. Centralization (i.e., distribution of power within the team) and formalization (i.e., extent to which specified rules and procedures exist) were the two contextual factors considered in this research. Hirst et al. (2011) found that learning goal orientation was positively related to creativity only when there was low centralization, and a performance-prove orientation was positively related to creativity only when formalization was low. The negative relationship between performance-avoidance orientation, and creativity became stronger in contexts of low centralization. Together, these findings indicate that bureaucratic team practices influence individuals’ goal-directed behavior to activate or inhibit the creative expression of goal orientation. Impossible goals motivate organizational creativity or hopelessness-driven inertia (Law et al., 2011).

**Monetary Incentives**
According to Locke, Feren, McCaleb, Shaw, & Denny (1980), goal theory does not specify how best to tie a monetary reward to goal achievement. However, their research posited that when monetary incentives are used appropriately, it can be a powerful motivator, but when the reward is tied to an easy goal, it can result in rewarding people for not working hard. On the other hand, goals that are so hard that they cannot be reached, can hurt, rather than increase, performance when a monetary bonus is only paid for goal achievement (Lee, Locke, & Phan, 1997).

Jeffrey, Presslee, Vance, and Webb (2011) found greater goal attainment associated with the possibility of tangible rewards (points redeemable for items including electronics and travel) than cash rewards. Bryan, Kendall and Locke (1961) found a relationship between monetary rewards and behavior, but when the goal level was controlled, the effect of the incentives was minimal. Bryan and Locke (1967) conducted 20 laboratory studies where two area surveys were compared to determine how monetary rewards were linked to goal setting. Bryan and Locke’s (1967) submitted that monetary rewards had no significant impact on performance that was independent of university students' goals. Similarly, Deci (1970) argued that rewarding people for engaging in a task tended to undermine intrinsic motivation.

In a weight loss research study, Mahoney (1974) found that adding self-administered monetary rewards to self-monitoring and goal setting conditions led to significantly greater weight loss than just monitoring and goals alone. Curtis and Pritchard (1973) argued that goals plus a small money incentive led to no better performance than goals alone, but goals plus a large payment incentive resulted in better performance than either of the first two conditions. Monetary rewards can be powerful motivators when tied to goal attainment (Latham & Locke,
Participation in goal setting can increase the understanding of how to perform a task (Latham & Saari, 1979).

Barsky (2004, 2008, 2011) suggested that assigned goals are more likely to lead to unethical behavior. Although participants in this research stated they allow a degree of discussion with their staff when presenting goals, a higher degree of participation lessens the incidence of unethical behavior by enhancing understanding of how to perform the task and decreasing the possibility of individual moral disengagement from the results (Barsky 2008, 2011).

Shantz and Latham (2011), explored whether personality, self-efficacy, goal orientation, values, and conflicting goals predict professionals’ annual salary over a 4-year period, as mediated by occupational self-efficacy, career advancement goals, and contractual work hours. The results showed that except for openness to experience, personality traits significantly predicted the subsequent annual salary of master’s degree graduates from several German Universities (Shantz & Latham, 2011).

**Specificity of Goals**

A specific, high goal activates the knowledge and skills a person possesses that are necessary to attain the goal and eliminate ambiguity as to what constitutes high performance (Latham & Locke, 2012). In research conducted by Schunk (1990), elementary school children were provided with instruction on arithmetic operations and opportunities to practice problem-solving. In this research, some students received a specific goal instruction stating the number of problems to complete, whereas others were given the general goal of working productively. The research showed that students who received the specific goal showed greater self-efficacy and measurable improvement achievement (Schunk, 1990).
Clearly stated goals increase persistence and self-efficacy, making individuals less susceptible to the undermining effects of anxiety, disappointment, and frustration (Schunk, 1990). The learning benefits of goal setting are not restricted to a specific topic; in language learning domain; Chang (2012) examined the effects of specific goals versus vague goals on English as a foreign language students’ self-efficacy and performance of vocabulary learning. Students in the control group were told to work hard and do their best, whereas the teacher designated students in the experimental group a clear individual goal (Chang, 2012).

The experiment revealed the specific goal group performed better than the nonspecific goal group in performance and self-efficacy (Chang, 2012).

**Challenging Goals**

In research with chess players, Abuhamdeh and Csikszentmihalyi (2012) showed that challenge is of particular importance to the enjoyment of intrinsically motivated and goal-directed activities. In a similar vein, a recent meta-analysis of 30 years of research on self-regulated learning showed the establishment of a goal level correlated strongly with learning (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2012). The higher a student’s achievement goals (e.g., desired grade, as in Kendall & Vancouver, 2006), the more they tended to learn (Sitzmann & Ely, 2011).

**Proximal Goals.** In an attempt to unravel the gap between goal setting and goal achievement, Morisano et al. (2010) identified that goals are effective provided individuals are committed, and there is an existence of a process to track the goal or periodic feedback, requisite skill and knowledge and the resources to attain the goal. Similarly, in Morisano’s (2013), argued for the role of self-efficacy as an important mechanism through which students respond to challenges and setbacks. In Morisano et al. (2010), there was no indication of how the subconscious goal setting in the workplace ensure contribution or did not contribute to goal
achievement, but Morison (2013) argued that the finding of the investigation is contradictory and inconclusive concerning essentials that could lead to achievement. Many researchers have suggested that additional scholarly inquiry is needed in subconscious goal (Latham, Locke & Stajkovic, 2010).

The proximity of goals created at the beginning of the semester can make a difference in student motivation and achievement. Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman (2010), and colleagues suggested that instructors who set small achievable and regular goals can likewise space learning sessions apart as opposed to massing them together (which students typically use as their most basic examination practice).

**Meaningful Goals.** According to Lang (2013), one way to achieve meaningful goal setting and goal achievement is to relate topics to students’ beliefs, values, and assignments together. This would help construct meaningfulness (Lang, 2013). In Thorgren and Wincent’s (2013) questionnaire, research of 134 Swedish leaders argued that excessive desire to set high goals led to negative motivational effects on project teams. Thorgren and Wincent (2013) argued for diversity in personality, projects, and perceptions when working in group settings toward multi-faceted assigned and self-set goals. A positive correlation was reported by Thorgren and Wincent’s (2013), between perceptions of team member competence and their passion for engaging in and remained committed to setting and achieving high team goals. Goal-setting speed, mediated the goal-challenge relationship by proving that among the 134 Swedish leaders, the obsessive passion was negatively correlated with team goal-setting ability because it can lead to a rushing of the goal-setting process (Thorgren & Wincent, 2013).

Braganza and Morelli (2012), conducted semi-structured interviews with Swedish Pharmaceutical sales representatives to show 11 key goal setting impediments that did not yield
achievement. In their research, variables such as fairness, goal-setting participation, reward, feedback, and comprehended unreasonable targets showed a positive effect on goal achievement (Braganza & Morelli, 2012). Bipp and Kleingeld (2011), and Hofer, Jonas and Wetter (2013), compared 65 European airport security employees and their effect on productivity using performance. The research concluded that pre-intervention goal-setting by leadership resulted in improved performance among staff committed to achieving employer-set, short-cycle goals (Hofer et al., 2013). Hofer et al. (2013) also claimed that with their population, feedback was unnecessary to achieve high performance in short-cycle goals.

However, it was observed that the more specific the goal was, the higher employee performance resulted. Similarly, Thorgren and Wincent (2013), as well as Bipp and Kleingeld (2011) argued that team goal achievement is dependent upon leadership self-efficacy, while extrinsic rewards are related to role satisfaction, and the personalities of group stakeholders. Burton, Gillham, Weigand, Weinberg and Yukelson (2013) built the unique model that endeavors to coordinate motivational styles with discrete goals to understand how personalities such as goal-setting style influence goal patterns and effectiveness. Based on Dweck's (1999) work on learned helplessness, Burton (1992), Burton and Naylor (2002), and Burton and Weiss (2008) hypothesized three goals-setting styles: success, failure, and performance-oriented. The effect of each style on how athletes set goals is frequency, effectiveness, commitment, and barriers (Burton & Weiss, 2008).

These are the types of goals preferred (Burton & Weiss, 2008). Although the influence of goal setting style related variables has been examined in several studies by Hardy and Kingston (1997), Lerner and Locke (1995) and Burton and Pierce (1998), measurement capacities have been the restrictive element in testing these predictions, and no previous study has investigated
goal setting style in elite athlete populations. Thus, the motivation behind this examination was to analyze whether speculated objective setting styles could be recognized, identified empirically in an elite sample of athletes and to assess whether goal setting style profiles influence performers' goal patterns in ways consistent with theoretical expectations (Burton & Weiss, 2008).

Lin and Chen (2013) posited that goal commitment influenced goal achievability, and apparent support facilitates the causal effect of goal-setting characteristics on goal achievability. Goal commitment has the partial mediating effect of goal-setting attributes on goal attainability (Lin & Chen, 2013). De Massis and Kotlar’s (2013) research on goal diversity is articulated in the proximity of generational changes, activating social interaction processes through which structural members contrast their goals. The findings of De Massis and Kotlar indicate that distinctive sorts of social cooperation led to various practices, with familial, social communications being more effective than professional social associations in overseeing goal differing qualities toward the arrangement of aggregate responsibility to family-focused goals. (Bressler, Bressler, & Bressler, 2010).

Bressler’s et al. (2010), research on the role and relationship of hope, optimism and goal setting in achieving academic success revealed that hope in student success not be overlooked. Lin and Chen’s (2013) goal-setting attributes, such as individual determinants, social determinants, and situational determinants, have a firm prediction on goal attainability and goal commitment. Perceived support mediates the causal effect of goal-setting attributes on goal attainability (Lin & Chen, 2013). In other words, goal commitment has a partial mediating effect of goal-setting attributes on goal attainability.

Summary
The purpose of Chapter 2 is to present research from existing literature, to support the role of goal setting in goal achievement, and identify the elements of effective goal setting in organizations. The literature review showed that in a workplace environment, goal setting is the process of establishing a specific standard of performance, developing an action plan, and evaluating the performance (Latham & Locke, 2013). A well-designed goal-setting concept could promote satisfactory completion of socially valued everyday activities, assist individuals to regulate behavior, and decrease reliance on external assistance (Latham & Locke, 2013).

Goal setting can result in significant damage to performance if not applied properly (Latham & Locke, 2013). This study could contribute to the development of workplace tasks, policies, roles, responsibilities, and transformation. Despite the positive effects associated with goal setting, the reviewed journals also presented inconsistent results in goal setting, and the variances in goal achievement at many organizations were due to methodological errors (Latham & Locke, 2013). Goal setting theory does not account for actions motivated by subconscious (Latham & Locke, 2013), and does not consider how socially shared cognition can lead to increased job performance. This lack of defined translation between job performance and goals requires further research to refine (Pennsylvania State University, 2012)

Ordóñez et al. (2009) argued that goal setting focuses on ends rather than the means, hence the need for the use of focus group interviews as the ideal qualitative research tool to investigate if goal setting can influence goal achievement and ultimately close achievement gaps. Three theories dominate the reviewed literature: goal setting, expectancy, and social cognitive. The theories provided insight on the adverse impacts of stretched goals, which are conditional factors that can influence and predict motivation in the workplace. The reliability of the data
collected by John (2004) from community college students to reveal causes of transfer shock and the decline in grade point average justifies the use focus group interviews in this study.

Similarly, Tenbergen-Klaus’s (2010) application of interviews to improve implementation of university policies and procedures justify the use of interviews in this study. In the Latham’s (2012) expectancy theory explanation, the level of commitment impacted goal and performance causal relationship. The peer-reviewed journals used simulations and business students as participants. The results obtained in the laboratory setting on goal setting were generalized to field settings.

Thematic analysis was used across the goal theory literature for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data collected. The common tests of results were that failures to reproduce effects are usually due to errors, such as not matching the goal of the performance measure, and not conveying task knowledge, or setting a performance goal when a specific high-learning goal is required (Latham, 2002). Hirst’s et al. (2011), investigation on learning goals used feedback that focused on the outcome measure, but no studies have investigated whether performance is enhanced when learning goals include feedback, such as feedback on task and relationship related aspects. DuBrin (2012), Greenberg (2011), and Newstrom (2011), stated that merely asking organization members to improve, to work harder, or to do your best is not helpful because that sort of goal does not afford them a focused objective. Specific goals (often quantified) let organization members recognize what to reach for and allowed them to evaluate their advancement (Latham & Locke, 2002). The key point is that a goal must be difficult, as well as specific for it to raise performance (Lunenburg, 2011).

Organization members often find goals difficult to accomplish when the goals are not within their capacity (Lunenburg, 2011). As goals become too difficult, performance suffers
because organization members reject the goals as unreasonable and unachievable (Lunenburg, 2011). Participation in the goal-setting process tends to enhance goal commitment. It helps organization members better understand the goals, ensures that the goals are not unreasonable, and helps them achieve the goal (Lunenburg, 2011). The factor of self-efficacy mentioned above comes into play regarding imposed goals. Some individuals reject imposed goals, but if they have self-efficacy, they still maintain high personal goals to accomplish the imposed goals (Bandura, 1997).

Feedback could support organization members in attaining their performance goals (Lunenburg, 2011) by showing people ways to determine how well they are doing. For example, sports teams watch video reproductions of a game and adjust their play; a sharpshooter can adjust his shot; a golfer can adjust her swing, and a CEO of an organization can gauge the growth, profitability, and quality of a product line (Lunenburg, 2011). In contrast, if plenty of time remains for attaining the goal, the employee is likely to slow down his or her pace to fill the available time (Lunenburg, 2011).

When deadlines are too tight, particularly with complex tasks, the quality of work suffers. A person with a learning goal orientation wants to develop competence by mastering challenging situations (Lunenburg, 2011). The person with a performance goal orientation wants to demonstrate and validate competence by seeking favorable judgments (Lunenburg, 2011).

Considerable research has indicated that a learning goal orientation has a positive impact on work-related behaviors and performance (Button, Mathieu, & Zajac, 1995; Jansen & Vanyperson, 2002; VandeWalle, 2001; VandeWalle, Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1999; VandeWalle, Cron, & Slocum, 2001). The learning goal orientation is particularly relevant in today’s work
environment, which requires employees to be proactive, problem solve, be creative and open to new ideas, and adapt to new and changing situations (Luthans, 2011).

A related concern is when a team member perceives that other team members share his or her personal goals, the individual usually become satisfied and productive (Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001). A recent research of project teams indicated that a perceived fit between individual and group performance goals resulted in greater individual satisfaction and contribution to the team (Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001). Despite the benefits of goal setting, there are a few limitations of the goal-setting process (Latham & Locke, 2002). William (2011), posited that the moment a goal setter entertains fear of failure, the probability of achieving the goal diminishes, and that brain is naturally wired to seek incentives and avoid discomfort.

In conclusion, Latham and Locke (2013) provided a well-developed goal-setting theory of motivation. The theory emphasized the significant relationship between goals and performance. The motivational impact of goals could be affected by moderators such as ability and self-efficacy (Latham & Locke, 2012). Deadlines improve the effectiveness of goals (Lunenburg, 2011). Goal setting can be a powerful technique for motivating organization members (Dubrin et al., 2012).

Chapter 3 presents how goal setting can influence goal achievement, and how goal setting and achievement was conducted and reproduced. It also explained the rationale for selecting the specific methodology, and described the methods chosen as opposed to alternative methods.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Chapter 3 presents the methodology for this research, which is a qualitative phenomenological study. A qualitative research methodology was chosen because qualitative interviews allow the subjects to share their lived experiences and the methodology can provide a rich insight into workplace settings (Englander, 2012). There was a lack of knowledge regarding appropriate goal-setting mechanisms among 20 employees at a mid-western United States adult daycare facility. Yin (1994) supports the use of qualitative methodology because the method affords a solid strategy to answer the questions of “how” and “why.” Adopting the qualitative group interviews approach would allow for a deeper exploration and understanding of the potential effectiveness of goal setting theory in the general Adult Daycare organization. This study focused on the “how” and “why” motivating elements influencing employees to complete tasks and showed what the performance was within the time frame set for the given tasks.

Creswell (2007) similarly argued that group interviews are the best method to investigate the most efficient manner of setting and achieve goals in an interpretive paradigm. This study was needed to promote further research by which the use of goal setting in organizations motivates employees, and to create a sense of fulfillment for employees striving to achieve the set goals. This chapter is organized by a statement of the problem, research questions, methodology, design, reliability, data collection, analysis procedures, ethical considerations, limitations, and the summary.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is a lack of knowledge regarding goal specificity and measurability resulting in unsatisfactory performance in the workplace (Latham & Locke, 2010). The need for this study
is to determine effective goal setting implementation mechanisms in the workplace (Parks-Stamm et al., 2007). Gollwitzer and Wicklund (1985) noted that goals could achieve a priority status based on closeness to a person’s underlying sense of self. However, if the structures, including goal structures, were not closely-linked to the representation of self, goal attainment would not be considered significant. Shaffer, Wei, Young, and Zakalik (2005) wrote if individuals believe that maladaptive strategies are the only way to satisfy psychological needs, then they tend to show resistance to goal setting.

**Research Questions**

To understand the objective of the research, four research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What does the term goal setting mean to employees?  
RQ2: What activities do employees associate with goal setting?  
RQ3: What activities do employees associate with goal achievement?  
RQ4: How does goal setting affect the workplace?

Locke and Latham’s (2010) goal setting theory, established that with sufficient levels of ability and commitment, a goal is achievable. The theory not only affirmed the link between goals and performance at workplaces, but it also outlines that intrinsic motivation is essential to effective goal achievement (Locke & Latham 2010).

Applying this theory to 20 employees at an adult daycare organization raised the question of other conditions upon which assignment of challenging goals ultimately raise one’s sense of efficacy and effects personal goals. This study follows a qualitative phenomenological design, and the data collection included responses from employees interviewed in a group setting using an interview questionnaire. The procedures included a two-hour time slot apportioned to the employees to understand the interview guidelines. Yin (1994) and Creswell (2004) support the
use of qualitative methodologies in goal setting research. Merriam (1998) also argued that qualitative group interviews could produce information that was unknown in a narrative format. The researcher collected substantive data for subsequent analysis of the phenomenological study and presented meaningful descriptions and explanations of the research.

**Research Methodology**

A qualitative phenomenological research method was used in this research. According to Grays, Del Bosque, and Costello (2008), the stages of qualitative methodology are comprised of conceptualization, logistics, preparation, pre-session, session, analysis, and reporting. Goal theory was developed inductively from nearly 400 studies (Latham & Locke, 1990).

Creswell (2002) wrote that in a qualitative study, the researcher does not begin with a theory to test or verify. Instead, consistent with the inductive model of thinking, Creswell posited that theory emerging during the data collection and analysis is used relatively late in the research process as the basis for comparison with other theories. According to Douglas (1982), qualitative research posited a different assumption regarding the nature of reality, logical design, transferability of findings, and holistic examination of cause and effect relationships. The reason this method was chosen over others is that the qualitative techniques allow valuable perception into workplace settings (Burns & Bush, 2012).

**Research Design**

The research design chosen was a phenomenological approach. Face to face, group interviews were used to gather information about lived experiences about how goal setting can influence goal achievement. The phenomenological research method was selected because of the small sample being used. Tasks related to answering the research questions are simple,
Commitment to the study was easily obtained, and participants are observed instantly (Lock, Mento, & Wood, 1987).

The phenomenological research method involved the use of face-to-face group questions with employees of the workforce, in addition to a detail investigation through observation during interviews. The method provided discovery, insight, and interpretation relative to successful goal setting and goal attainment (Merriam, 1998). The main advantage of this technique according to Landrum and Mulcock (2007) is that a high response rate is usually obtained, and a brief blank can easily be filled by asking follow-up or probing questions for clarity.

This phenomenological study design is best for the study because it enabled the researcher to be in direct contact with the respondents and discover how participants saw their reality. The president of the target organization nominated 20 employees as study participants. Nominees were employees known for sharing experiences and opinions. All 20 employees agreed to volunteer for the study. The times and location of the interviews were followed-up with a verbal confirmation. The participant employees were asked the research questions, which are short and unambiguously worded. The questions were neither non-threatening, nor embarrassing.

Homogeneity was ensured to encourage disclosure among the employees. Langer (2001) suggested that research participants interviewed by a moderator and inclusion standard be aligned with the purpose of the study. Consistent with Burns and Bush (2012), some of the questions specifically measured goal achievement based on lived experience and activities while the remaining were based on goal related theories. According to Corbin and Strauss (1998), the uniqueness of the group interviews is the participants’ ability to bring meaning, rather than search for the truth. Carey and Krueger (2000) wrote that group interviews are systematic,
sequential, verifiable, and continuous. Carey and Krueger’s (2002) theory is consistent with Locke and Latham’s (1990) argument that goal theory is an open-ended theory.

**Population and Sample Selection**

This study consisted of face-to-face group interviews to collect research data. The participants ranged from 34 to 55 years of age and were working approximately 35 hours a week at the target company. All participants volunteered to participate in the study. Informed consent was collected before completion of the questionnaires, and an assurance that personal data obtained would be kept confidential.

To gain respective cooperation, and ensure diversity, the researcher spent a two-hour interview session with 3-6 different subgroups; each comprised of an equal number of men and women in a size of 4-6 at a time. This study sample represented employees with a strong belief that commitment to a specific goal had affected their ability to reach that goal, and had previously given greater effort for difficult goals. Participants were encouraged to answer truthfully without pressure or haste in the sense to which they understood the questions. At the conclusion of the process, the responses garnered from the participants were analyzed according to themes that emerged from participants.

**Sources of Data**

The source of data collection for this study was interviews conducted using a guide (Appendix B). Eight open-ended questions were used to during each interview. The first four questions were formulated by the researcher to reveal activities of employees, three research questions relating to the theory of goal setting, and one general question about what factors participants considered valuable in the interviews. The employees agreed to an informed consent
agreement, and were asked to provide demographic information related to age, gender identity, education level, summarize current term of service and the number of years of employment.

**Validity**

The validity of this research method was ratified by peer verification. Each employee reviewed what was observed by the other. Employee feedback refined assumptions and served as a catalyst to support the study questions based on the lived experiences of the participants. In order to avoid the element of bias, interviews were conducted over a period of two separate days. Multiple respondents were interviewed with subsequent follow-up and probing questions during the interview to gain clarity of the responses. A tape recorder was used to reduce observer bias; especially when the narrative is presented verbatim rather than summarized. Following Van Maanen (1979), in order to deter untruthfulness, information was only sought from the most knowledgeable employees of the organization.

Participants’ statements were compared to organizational documentation to ascertain the truthfulness of participants, and the lead informant was asked to review the draft phenomenological study report. Informal and private correspondence between staffs, correspondences between research subjects and researcher was compared. These various documentary records constitute a significant source of insights into different employee and group interpretations of organization life.

**Reliability**

According to McClutcheon and Meredith (1993), the use of multiple measures, drawn from different data sources, points out a way of improving the reliability of a phenomenological study finding. Interview responses have a greater degree of reliability to generate credible data or information based on the synergy of the group interaction, and questionnaires can easily
eliminate discrepancies (Green, Draper, & Dowler, 2003). Tape recordings, directly taken field notes.

Typed notes were made after fieldwork was conducted to document responses. The overall reliability of using the interviews and questionnaire in goal setting, and its practicality in the workplace, were attested to by enumerative reviews of (Latham & Yukl, 1975), meta-analyses, and comparative analyses of goal setting with other theories of motivation. Pinder (1984) concluded that interviews and the use of questionnaires in goal setting demonstrate more scientific validity to date than any other work to work motivation.

Data Collection Procedure

This study used a face-to-face group interview to collect data from participants. Other data sources included field notes, meeting minutes, and transcripts. Participant responses during the group interviews are useful in obtaining diverse views about a topic from a predetermined limited number of people where statistical projections are not required (Yin, 1994).

An introduction to the research work and one orientation question was given to the participants to learn what the term goal setting in the workplace meant to respective employees of the organization. In order to gain respective cooperation participants were informed that participation is voluntary, their responses are only accessible to the researcher, private information would remain confidential. Participants were also informed that they would not be identifiable in the reports or in conversations with persons outside of the research team.

The computer-assisted analysis was used to store and organize data text, thus creating an index system for collected data. The technology was also used to organize data by categories or patterns and display information about goal setting aspect of the study. Procedures included a 5 minute’ time slot, assigned by the organization’s site manager, to reiterate the interview
guidelines. Next, the researcher spent 2 hours each with 4 different groups. The population sample was asked to identify trends and patterns in perceptions and accommodate different points of view.

The interview was non-directive. One of the objectives of this interview was to gain respective cooperation. During the study, data collection, analysis, and interpretation occurred simultaneously because the focus was to use spoken words to enhance the credibility of the study setting and its participants. Participants were required to answer truthfully without pressure or haste. At the conclusion of the process, the responses garnered from the participants were analyzed in the course of a table and kept for 3 years in a password protected cloud-based application to prevent theft and subsequent disclosure of legally protected private information by unauthorized individuals. All data will be destroyed after three years, and deleted documents to protect participant confidentiality.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The first data analysis procedures included data reduction, writing a narrative of the change process, dividing the narrative for further analysis, coding of incidents, entering incidents in a database, and sorting and recording to separate important events. The second set of procedures identified a logical relationship between goal performance and participation in setting goals. The third data analysis included checking for authenticity to identify if the data was from primary or secondary sources. The fourth data analysis was to determine if data is an accurate record of events or the process described, and if author’s document are believable. During the data collection phase, participant discussions were facilitated to generate data from the interview, and complemented by observational field notes. Consistent with Leedy and Ormond (2010), data
was categorized, individual instances were noted together with identification of patterns, synthesis, and abstractions.

In order to verify factors that have caused differences in the effects of setting goals, and achievement disparity, the study applied question and answer method to gather expectations of participants on feedback on performance, explicitness of goals, the degree of commitment, and why commitment disparity occurred. The research included gathering phrases, ideas, or concepts arising from the interviews. According to Cooper and Schinder (2011), the effectiveness of this method lies in the depth of information. The tertiary stage included indexing, sifting the data, highlighting, and sorting out quotes, making a comparison and rearranging them in order. This method sorted out relevant from irrelevant information in the interview, disclosed the relevant information into smaller segments (e.g., phrases or sentences), and reported participant feedback and data.

To examine the experiences of employees of the target organization that are related to goal setting and goal achievement, information related to a prior goal setting program within the organization was collected. The information was re-examined during the interviews using stimulated recall and key event reporting. To investigate how goal setting harms intrinsic motivation to work harder, data relating to the importance of pride, and increased knowledge was collected by in-depth discussions.

To understand how goal-setting can influence goal achievement in the workplace, data relating to job satisfaction, energy, effort towards proper goal action, behaviors, persistence in the face of obstacles and difficulties were collected during the interviews, and then stored for inductive analysis. The research collected during interviews, should review the content in efforts to understand and coordinate data for reporting feedback categories by theme identification and
coding procedures (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Merriam, 1988). The rationale for this approach is that it affords a way to compare views across different groups, subjects, or settings. In addition, the approach distinguishes the goal setting type for each employee of the target organization and the degree to which employees utilize other types of goal setting criteria.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations for this study included protection of human subjects during the interview. Researchers adhered to state and federal laws and rules relating to ethical conduct during all human subject research (Bell & Bryman, 2007). Bell and Bryman (2007) point out that where human subjects or private data about human subjects are being investigated; obtained information is publicly revealed to the discomfort or harassment of the person. Researchers are required to follow these ethical standards. Occasionally projects need approval without regard to how the research is funded. Scholars whose study is directed under a faculty member are held to the same ethical standards (Bell & Bryman, 2007).

The Columbia Southern University’s Institutional Review Board reviewed this research proposal, including subsequent changes in previously approved research methods. In order to protect the public interest, the Institutional Review Board provided oversight over approval and on subsequent modification in a manner consistent with federal or state regulations. Participants were treated as autonomous agents and persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to special protection following the Belmont Report (1978). Researchers are not to harm participants, and good outcomes are maximized for participants. Research is not exploitative, and there is fair distribution of risks and benefits. Participants are not selected based on convenience. According to Cooper and Schindler (2011), the risk to participants must be minimized using standards, which are in line with sound research design such as those previously enumerated in the design
steps. No employee of the organization was asked to disclose privately protected information about the organization.

**Limitations**

The sample for this study comprised 20 representatives of an adult daycare facility located in the Midwestern United States. The findings of the study are not sufficient to generalize that when goals are set, the method automatically led to goal achievement because of the population limitation. The findings are not valid and reliable for other organizations, like service agencies or education, where workers with unique demographic backgrounds or cultures demonstrate different job attitude (Schaefer, 2008).

Consistent with Locke et al. (1994), goals that are set wrongly would promote extreme rigidity and setback. The research participants are a small group of people involved in a research interviewing process specifically designed to uncover insights regarding the research focus. The group interview is distinctive in that it uses a set of questions deliberately sequenced or focused on moving the discussion toward concepts of interest to the researcher (Casey & Krueger, 2000). Phillips (1987) similarly argued that methodological bias is always a concern because there are no procedures that regularly or always yield either sound data or accurate conclusions.

According to Casey and Krueger (2000), all data sets are biased by decisions about what to observe or count, how to categorize, what to record, and how to interpret. There is usually no immediate confirmation of responses through interview of others, however, through documentary evidence and patterns of occurrence, descriptive validity of the data could be obtained from the interviews (Casey & Krueger, 2000). In spite of these limitations, once a specific goal is accepted and subsequently set at the appropriate level of difficulty, it can lead to
higher levels of goal achievement and task performance than vague or easy goals (Latham & Locke, 2013).

Summary

Chapter 3 illustrates that research methodology ideal for this study is qualitative, face-to-face, group interviews. This method is socially oriented, and it provided an essential tool to study participants in an atmosphere more natural than artificial experimental circumstances (Morgan, 1997). The chapter was topically arranged by a statement of the problem pointing out strategies and constraints of goal setting and goal achievement, research questions, data collection, analysis methods, ethical considerations, limitations, and summary.

Consistent with Creswell (2007), a qualitative phenomenological study method was utilized to interview employees at an adult daycare facility to understand how best goal setting can influence goal achievement in the workplace. The central focus of the study was to understand how goal setting could influence goal achievement among the target population. The initial set of analyses applied goals as a case, while the second round of analyses applied individual employees as an example in order to understand how overall impact of difficulty, and participation are related to performance.

Primary data collected consisted of meeting minutes, interviews, observation, and field notes. Secondary data were sourced from a review of several academic journals. Procedures included a two-hour time slot apportioned organization’s manager to reiterate interview guidelines. Chapter 4 presents in-depth coverage of how the research is conducted in a way the study can be reproduced. In addition, the chapter also detailed the data analysis and results of the study. The research commenced in August 2016 and end October 2016.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of the qualitative case study was to understand how goal setting could influence goal achievement among 20 sampled employees who are not minors or mentally impaired of adult day care facility in the Midwestern United States only. The methodology is qualitative, capturing responses to group interview questions from selected employees of the target organization. The research design was phenomenological. This research adds to the literature by providing an analysis of goal setting as a mediation for goal achievement among employees of an organization located in the Midwestern United States.

This chapter comprised responses to each research question, a summary of characteristics of the sample population, demographics, and description of the process employed to collect and analyze the data. The methods used to substantiate reliability and validity of research was included with the findings of data analyses. The following questions were utilized in the phenomenological study after conducting a literature review relating to goal setting and goal achievement among employees at Adult day care:

Research Questions

RQ1: What does the term goal setting mean to employees?

RQ2: What activities do employees associate with goal setting?

RQ3: What activities do employees associate with goal achievement?

RQ4: How does goal setting affect the workplace?

Descriptive Data

According to Teegavarapu & Summers (2008), a sample of 20 participants can be sufficient in a research study design because it has a prescriptive, systematic method. Participant
employees \((N = 20)\) were recruited from a regional, urban, adult day care facility in the Midwestern United States after obtaining Institutional Review Board approval from Columbia Southern University. The organization director recommended participants who are over 25 years of age who are not a protected class of the society, do not need assistive technology to participate in the research and can read and write in English.

Participants signed the consent forms (Appendix B), and were informed that the tape recording interview would take approximately 1 to 2 hours. Coherent with Bogdan & Biklen, (1992), the study was structured to enable participants to give answers to interview questions, and subjects were free to speak individual phrase responses. This approach provided insight of different goal setting plans, which participants previously practiced at the organization. No particular question was emphasized more than another and participants were allowed to seek clarification.

The demographic data revealed that 65% of the respondents were female. The ages of the respondents showed a concentration of 35% between 21-40 years, followed by 51-60 years-olds (30.0%). This meant that about two-thirds of the interviewees are between 21-60 years old. The majority of the participants were High School diploma holders. In all, 60% obtained High School diplomas, 40.0% obtained a nursing license. Analysis of the length of service showed that 55% of the participants had between 1-5 years of work experience, and 45% had more than five years of work experience. The number of years of service was necessary for gathering lived experiences at target organization.

**Data Analysis**

The interview responses from the study participants provided the qualitative phenomenological data collected for this study. Group interviews lasted approximately an hour.
The data collection process continued until it became clear that no new heights were emerging from additional interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). Teegavarapu and Summers (2008) added that organized interviewing be it structured or unstructured, aid collection of data from research participants by way of question and answer process with opportunity to ask follow-up questions.

Data analysis of the procedures included content analysis, information reduction, and the process involved identifying major themes from the narratives using the process of preliminary data analysis, or thematic analysis. Research analysis also included report writing of succinct sub-narratives related to the individual’s experience of the phenomenon, and relating it to the interpretive themes that emerged from the participant statements. The interpretational analysis was used for qualitative evaluation of data because it does not require a commitment to all principles associated with grounded research theory (Glazer & Strauss, 1967). Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell (1993) similarly argued that interpretational examination enables the components, types, designs, and associations to emerge from data. The interpretational analysis in this research enabled categories or associations, types, and components to arise with minimal overlap between groups.

**Data Reduction**

According to Côté et al. (1993), the validity of the interview responses could be optimized by manually tagging quotation in transcripts and noting individual perceptions. Consequently, the researcher assembled the interview transcripts, reviewed literature relating to goal setting and goal achievement in the workplace, and found an agreement on the important themes of each person, hence classification by goal themes. During the analysis, results were arranged into a raw data themes, goal claims, and accompanying goal themes as suggested by Côté et al. (1993).
This method was described as “creating labels”; illustrated as separating important parts of information from their context (Côté et al., 1993). Patton (2002) and Strauss (1987) emphasized that the objective of the inductive content analysis is to team the goal themes presented by subjects into substantively integrated concepts. The raw data themes for the participants were assembled into a pool and then sorted into teams linking related goal themes.

**Establishing Quality and Credibility**

In a phenomenological study, the credibility of the data is related to the credibility of the author (Patton, 2002). The researcher investigated the subject of qualitative interviewing methods, reviewed several kinds of literature relating to goal setting and goal achievement, and probed the research participants’ responses directly to determine if they understood what the study was about. Patton (2002) recommended several processes are performed in a research investigation that is qualitative, including peer review, identifying similar conclusions and the screening of competing details to those derived from the literature reviews to enhance the standing and the validity of the results. Participant statements were compared to organizational documentation to ascertain the truthfulness of participants, and the lead informant was asked to review a draft phenomenological study report.

**Reliability**

In qualitative research, the reliability of the data is related to the reliability of the author (Patton, 2002). Throughout the interview, the focus was on goal setting and influence on goal achievement, rather than motives. Feedback was requested regarding the reliability of the content to ensure the participants and researcher read and understood the transcript. In order to minimize any intrinsic error, the reliability was affirmed by a review of previous organizational meeting minutes, related to organizational goals, internal white papers on motivation, hard copies of
electronic messages on productivity, and identifying causal relationships and causal mechanisms were compared for consistency

**Context**

The target organization is an adult day care agency located in the Kansas City area of Midwestern United States. It is a freestanding center offering practical assistance for clients aged 16-55 years. Clients are primarily elderly isolated and need companionship. Clients normally reside with someone who works outside the residence, cannot structure daily activities, and are left in the house alone. The agency receives clients with a broad range of disabilities from physical and mental disabilities. Employees who participated in the study consisted of a social worker, activity assistants, licensed practical nurses, drivers, secretary, program assistants, a bookkeeper, and center director.

Since 2010, all personnel at the organization were required to participate in clients’ functional ability goal setting training and meetings. The families of the clients and caregiving staff were permitted to attend an activity workshop where they learn arts and crafts for improved cognitive abilities and satisfaction with goal setting. At the end of each week client’s autonomy are reviewed and feedback was deliberated. If client progress was not made, a modified or new goal toward greater autonomy was selected with a specific date to report back. The chosen goal for a client was dependent upon the client’s physical or mental condition as stated in the care plan.

The facility director assisted in recruiting 20 research participants for this study over a 2-week period, provided they gave informed consent, had less than 4 years of college education, and work a minimum of 35 hours a week. Questions were non-directive to encourage free discussion. The responses were recorded for later transcription, after which the tapes would be
saved for 3 years in a password protected cloud-based data storage application. The researcher informed participants that the research report would incorporate their age, gender, and the number of prior goal setting gatherings they had attended, with excerpts from their notes. The descriptive phrase for each theme was noted, participants were invited to review transcripts, and confirm the researchers’ interpretation of themes.

At the conclusion of the research, the transcript was checked against the tapes, and data was examined for content analysis. This approach is consistent with a systematic research method of analyzing textual information in a standardized way that allowed an examiner to make inferences about the whole exercise. The advantage of this research design, according to Leedy & Ormrod (2010), was the researcher and participants could work together to arrive at the “heart of the matter” (p. 3), by looking at several perspectives on the same subject. The researcher made generalizations of what the phenomenon appears to be from a participant’s perspective. Interviewers could also make a note of participant’s facial expressions, body language, and intonations, which are helpful in interpreting verbal utterances (Witt, 2011).

**Interpretation**

Participants were quite willing to discuss desirable features of a goal setting. Foremost among the features were factors relating to goal setting. Participants cited specific examples such as putting plans together, time, self-efficacy, feedback, and decreased reliance. The participants answered the research questions satisfactorily with acceptable notions of goal setting and goal achievement which were based on some past experience either as an employee or as an adult.

The first characteristics mentioned as essential to goal setting was meaningfulness. Other mechanics were subordinate to meaningfulness of goals at adult daycare facility. In addition, commitment, action, participation, and clarity surfaced repeatedly during the interviews.
Participants believed that for set goals to be achieved, adult daycare facility employees must foster action, commitment, persistence, and time to achieving the goals.

**Results**

**Research question 1.** The first research questions focused on identifying what the term goal setting means to employees of the target organization. Many employees used the phrases “meaningful”, “setting target”, “putting plans together”, and “being realistic” to define goal setting. P2 stated that goal setting was “an art or element of dedication to work or engaging in anything meaningful at work.” These views align with Lang (2013), who explained that goal setting is related to a meaningful objective, setting targets, and putting realistic plans together. This implies that the participant’s understanding of goal setting aligns with the academic view on the topic.

**Research question 2.** The second research question asked about activities employees associate with goal setting. Many of the employees used the phrases clients’ participation in “aerobic exercise,” “time management training,” “personal characteristics,” and “attitudes.” P7 stated “we always get them involved, otherwise goal setting is just an idea.” These views align with Barsky (2004, 2008, 2011), who emphasizing participation to increase task performance and enhance goal commitment. This implies that employees understand participation is a condition of goal setting in the workplace.

**Research question 3.** The third question focused on identifying activities related to goal achievement. Many of the participants used the phrases “action,” “commitment,” “persistence,” and “time” to illustrate a path to goal achievement. P1 said “I rely on associate (sic) responses, so group effort and access are essential to me at work”. This view aligns with Bandura (1986), who posited that self-efficacy promotes action needed to pursue goal achievement.
**Research question 4.** The fourth question focuses on identifying the influence of goal setting on employees in the workplace. Many of the participants used phrases such as “strategy”, “difficulty”, “decreased reliance” to explain how goal setting impacts employees in the workplace. P18 stated “I enjoy challenge and change, which is why I frequently ask for the tough assignments.” These themes align with Ordóñez et al. (2009), who posited that goal setters emphasize finished products rather than methods.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the research. Chapter 5 also details the theoretical and practical implications, and conclusions. Recommendations to the body of knowledge to fill the research gap and concluding remark are stated.
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Chapter 5 presents the summary, conclusions of the investigation, and recommendations to the body of knowledge of how goal setting can influence goal achievement. It provides a discussion about the theoretical implication of the findings of the research questions. This study was important in that it presented the effects of goal setting as an intervention employees needed to achieve goals realistically in an applied setting, as well as mechanisms goal-setting researchers would likely need to set goals, and prescribe variables that are necessary for goal accomplishment.

This study used qualitative interviews to investigate how goal setting can influence goal achievement among employees of an adult daycare facility. The outcomes measured in the research included priority leadership behavior and the self-efficacy among the samples. In this instance, the exploratory research included the gathering of qualitative data from the 20 employees of an adult daycare center located in the Midwest United States. The justification for the use of the qualitative interviews was that they are beneficial by permitting the researcher to acquire deeper information about past goal setting experiences and activities among employees. By asking employees to reflect on their past strategies, experiences, and activities, the research uncovered qualitative information related to goal setting as an intervention to goal achievement. Furthermore, the findings of the research also revealed some barriers to goal setting and strategies to overcome those obstacles. The results of this study illuminated how the environment, commitment, clarity, challenge, task complexity, client’s involvement, and participation are essential to effective goal setting and result in goal achievement.

Summary of the Study
The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to understand how goal setting could influence employees to achieve daily work/task goals. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What does the term goal setting mean to employees?
RQ2: What activities do employees associate with goal setting?
RQ3: What activities do employees associate with goal achievement?
RQ4: How does goal setting affect the workplace?

Participants ranged from 34 to 55 years old and who regularly work 35 hours a week. The researcher adhered to federal and state government laws and principles overseeing moral behavior amid all human subject examinations (Bell & Bryman, 2007). Participants viewed goal setting positively; however, expressed reservation as to its effectiveness in the adult daycare industry due to barriers that were encountered in the past, including clients’ willingness to welcome change and employees’ knowledge deficiency about mechanisms required to implement successful goal setting.

**Summary of Findings and Conclusion**

The effects of the research serves as supplementary information for categorizing assignments, the transformation of goal setting and achievement related programs, assessment, guidelines, and responsibilities. The purposive sample of was 20 employees from an adult daycare agency served as the focus of the research. The findings included a revelation that resumption to full work commitments would accomplish goal-setting results. The value of inspirations or motivation derived from coworkers provided a higher feeling of fulfillment when set goals are accomplished.

The research findings were consistent with literature, which had previously investigated
employees’ engagement and interest in goal setting impacted goal achievements. The findings confirmed the claims of Latham & Locke (2002), that goal setting theory relating to pre-requisite skills as a necessary mechanism. In addition, the finding align with Bandura (1986), who posited that social cognitive theory supports relating goal setting strategies to goal achievement. In relation to Ryan and Deci’s (2002) self-determination theory, the research indicated that there is a cost-effective way to acquire necessary competence needed to project implementations. In relation to Hollenbeck and Klein’s (1987) goal responsibility theory, the study would help join the results of goal-setting theory to accomplish set goals within a brief period.

The research results also affirmed Locke & Latham’s (1990) finding that motivation, determination, and endurance can influence goal setting. Within the psychological literature, the research findings would enable future researchers to understand that workplace behavior is a function of ability, attitude, reward, and feedback. The interviews with employees at the organization facilitated expression and, henceforth, enhances the quality of service delivery since employees have now understood that inability to satisfy an objective offers a legitimate concern of perhaps one or more of the interventions associated with the goal, and the participation of the clients. Participant’s statements were validated by inviting the lead informer to read a rough copy of the phenomenological study report while the reliability was confirmed by relating participant’s responses to notes of organizational goals, internal-white papers on the motivation for consistencies.

Research question 1: What does the term goal setting mean to employees? From data examination, it emerged that the study participants understood goal setting. However, the most succinct answer related to the term was anything meaningful. The term goal setting was comprehended as setting a specific target. Although, none of the participants provided any
printed organizational definition for the term goal setting; this have contributed to the distinction
in the explanation of the term goal setting.

Research question 2: What activities do employees associate with goal setting? In
general, participants provided constructive answers when talking about their goal setting
activities. They used various terms, such as participation, involvement, time, and attitude to
describe their experiences. These phrases suggested that personality style and behavioral change
have been barriers to goal setting; however, oral inquiry, gaining participants’ perspective,
brainstorming, and participants are effective tools in achieving the desired target. Compared to
the research literature, these themes were consistent with those of Latham & Saari (1979).
Involvement in the goal-setting process tends to enhance goal commitment, organization
members need enhanced comprehension of the goals to ensure the goals are not unreasonable.
On the contrary, Lunenburg (2011) and Locke, Alavi, & Wagner (1997), cautioned that
participation is voluntary designed because the primary advantage of participation in joint
decision making is cognitive rather than motivational in that it only promotes information
exchange. On the other hand, the absence of a formal theoretical structural context for goal
setting, and a standard approach to goal setting was evident during the research interview.

Research question 3: What activities do employees associate with goal achievement?
Research subjects were exceptionally affirmative when deliberating behaviors related to goal
achievement. They applied different terms and articulations to depict their encounters consisting
of action, commitment, persistence, effort, and training. These themes affirmed training as a
necessary mediation to goal achievability or attainability (Lin & Chen, 2013). These themes
certified earlier research work of Bayetta, Gists & Steven (1995), who concluded that
achievement is effected by goal setting training and self-management training. The finding also corroborated Bandura’s (1986) theory of self-efficacy.

**Research question 4: How does goal setting affect the workplace?** This is significant in that the analysis produced themes of strategy and difficulty. These themes were consistent with Ordóñez et al. (2009), who urged goal setters to focus on the finished product as opposed to the methods. Latham and Locke (2013) likewise articulated that a properly designed goal-setting concept bolster employees to manage conduct and decreases reliance on external help. The theme of difficulty also upheld Latham & Locke’s (2013) findings that employee abandon goals that are considered too difficult to achieve or that make them feel useless. Therefore, employees’ skill and level of competencies must be taken into consideration.

**Conclusion**

The responses of the participants answered the research questions for this study. The responses revealed that goal setting is an intercession to goal achievement. Goal mechanisms are motivational for example, the research showed that a specific goal adjusts an individual’s devotion and exertion toward important goal accomplishments and away from those that are believed to be unrelated. The results of this research did confirm that goal setting enhances capabilities, improve skills, and help maximize potential. If similar method were replicated, same results would be found.

Goal setting provides the framework for how service is performed every day. Ideally, in an adult day care setting, goals must involve employees, as well as client’s participation, otherwise there will be resistances. Employees must discuss differences in drafted goals from time to time with superiors. There is a value not only in the adult daycare, but also for employee’s own growth and innovation. Goals that are aligned with employee strength and
interests produce additional commitment.

Implications

Theoretical Implication. Locke & Latham (1990) articulated that goal setting is a cognitive theory and that effort is mobilized and expanded in proportion to the difficulty level of the goal. In the research of goal setting, there is a problem of measurement of subjective goal difficulty because there is no mathematical method to calculate real difficulty and performance; particularly when the objectives are qualitative and employees are not aware that a goal is difficult enough to demand a motivational contribution. Locke and Latham (1990) advised that subjective difficulty measurement is not automatically used in goal setting studies, particularly when conducting field studies. Locke and Latham suggested that difficulty is rated in the context of employee abilities, while performance is rated in the context of how employees have chosen to prioritize responsibilities, and the standards expected to be met. To improve subjective difficulty measurement in field studies, researchers have to engage taking more subjective and objective ratings of performance and difficulty distinctly to understand the connections between them.

Practical Implication. Although only 20 participants participated in this research, the depth of the findings has brought other issues related to goal setting that need to be examined in the future. This includes the way similar studies from other adult daycare organizations in other regions can be enriched through goal setting method. In light of this research, communication must be enhanced for a participatory goal setting. Teaching and training of specialists regarding goal setting is indispensable particularly in relation to methods of including clients with cognitive deficiencies, and must be considered. Educating clients about goal setting could improve their involvement in goal setting, and, therefore, integrated as part of goal setting.
This research correspondingly showed that goal accomplishment accepts a central role in choosing the degree to which people are satisfied with their life. The extent individuals fulfill goals affects the dynamic state. An employee who is discouraged by company goal setting methods may require new orientation to restore strength. Discouragement tends to change how employees process data. Discouraged individuals can have bitter recollections of the past, making it harder to discover positive outlook during the time spent designing new goals.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendations for future research.** There is a need for additional inquiries into factors influencing goal setting, such as familiarity with goal setting, readiness to change the target behavior, and cognitive problems relating to memory. Future research is needed on subjective and non-survey construct research in light of the diversity of goals between Adult Daycare establishment and its employees, so as not to excessively duplicate discoveries, however, recognize different goals or objectives or intentions. Future research recommendations are indispensable about the measurement of various levels of goal commitment as it influences goal achievement because the commitment variable must be measurable.

Future research recommendations are required for the right tools employees need to be able to measure difficulty as it influences effective performance and goal achievement. If an employee can not measure goal difficulty arithmetically, the employee may become uncommitted, and subsequently forsake the goal. Future research must include definitions of the main concepts related to client goal participation, development and identification of effective models that increase goal setting participation, attributes that enable the employee to use collaborative methods, outcome research that tracks involvement, models to check client readiness to participate and continuing goal setting education.
**Recommendations for practice.** Goal setting intervention design must have a dedicated schedule to teach clients goal-setting mechanisms, explanations of the value of participation, attentiveness during goal setting, a purposely-designed goal setting log book and goal-setting follow-up. Periodic training is recommended as a method of enhancing time required to achieve the desired target. An employee bringing a list of to-dos to a goal setting session is seen as prescriptive, inhibiting activities of the day if the clients are the category who favor taking one step at a time or perhaps feel inundated by a checklist. The feelings of individuals cannot be dismissed and are a part of the goal setting process. Therefore, a reference to a client’s record of improvement is recommended, because it suggests their opinions are appreciated and that goals to be reached had not been previously fixed without their input. Structured goal setting tools are considered during a formalized activities session to assist them in understanding what is meaningful and to facilitate discussion between the clients and employees on goal setting.

**Concluding Remarks**

The research believes that the participants responded to prompting questions sincerely, and were convinced that goal setting is a necessary intervention for goal achievement to achieve daily work/task goals in their organization. Participants indicated to the researcher that they could deliver mechanisms that are effective to resolve goal achievement problems. However, the organizational leader must develop collaborative strategies to handle possible discouragement or frustration with goal setting program. Goal setting must be widely inclusive in its procedure. Setting goals as a strategy rely on upon working towards a future result. Goal setting must be understood as important, and the participants must understand the mechanisms and have the ability to think forward in time
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Appendix A
Organizational Consent

April 30, 2016

Haskee International Agency
11301 Hickman Mills Dr.
Kansas City, Missouri 64134

Gentlemen

I am a Doctoral student at the Columbia Southern University in Orange Beach, Alabama. I am seeking your acknowledgment that I am interested in doing informational interview with a number of your organization employees for a phenomenological study. The informational interview may be responded to by text message, email and social media platforms. The exercise will not interfere with your operation in any shape or form and no one will be asked to disclose privately protected questions. It is entirely about “How Goal Setting Can Influence Goal Achievement among employees.”

This dissertation shall be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ramona Armijo of Greater Los Angeles, California and she can be reached at 805 228 7446. Upon completion, I shall provide your organization with a bound copy of the full research report. Please contact me on 816 328 7321 or at oduekos@prodigy.net. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Adeshina Odueko
Appendix B

Employee/Participant Information Letter

April 30, 2016

To Whom It May Concern

I am a doctoral student at Columbia Southern University. I am conducting a research study to understand how goal setting can influence goal achievement among employees and would like you to participate in the case study interviews. You have the right to refuse to answer any question and to stop the interview at any time. You will be expected to share your experiences, opinions, and be willing to spend one-two hours of your time at a dedicated hall within Haskee International Agency.

Your participation is voluntary and may decline to participate without penalty. There are no potential physical risk or financial benefits to you personally, and your responses will be anonymous and confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, publications, or presentations, but your name will not be disclosed. The responses may be tape recorded, however, it will not be recorded without your permission. You can also inform me at any time during the interview if you change your mind and want tape recording stopped.

All data is destroyed after three years, via shredder to protect participant confidentiality. If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact me on 816 328 7321 or at oduekos@prodigy.net.

Sincerely,

Adeshina Odueko
May 2, 2016

Dr. Ramona Armijo
Columbia Southern University
Orange Beach, Alabama 36561

Dear Dr. Armijo:

Mr. Adehina Oduko informed me that he’s researching, “How goal setting can influence goal achievement among growing numbers of older persons at Adult Care facilities,” for his doctoral dissertation. He presented proposed interview questions; I reviewed and approved the interview questions as stated.

I also grant and assign to him the right to quote or paraphrase all interview responses and to publish the interview responses in a scholarly literature. In our service sector, goal setting and achievement require management and staffs to develop a plan customized to client’s unique circumstances.

Sincerely,

Rakiya Bello
President and CEO

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Phone: 816.761.3969 Fax: 816.761.0049
Email: r_bbello@yahoo.com