Universiti Utara Malaysia

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYMENT SEPARATION VIA RETRENCHMENT

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Thesis Submitted to
Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business
Universiti Utara Malaysia
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Master of Human Resource Management

Pusat Pengajian Pengurusan Perniagaan
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Universiti Utara Malaysia

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Abstract

Employment separation is an experience that varies from an individual to another. Each one are unique as to the human nature's different background, traits and experiences. This qualitative exploratory inquiry is based on the personal and professional experiences of the researcher and downsizing managers in going through and managing separation exercises during decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of downsizing. There are limited existing literatures related to managing organizational change, decision making, and downsizing that yet to address managerial experience of downsizing or the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers. In-depth interviews were conducted on selected participants made up of downsizing managers that is in their current or prior organization during the last 10 years that would make their memories fresh and they are not in the midst of the process or related trauma. The participants are not currently residing under the same organization or department as to prevent researcher bias, avoid existing relationships, and maintain participant privacy and confidentiality. The research findings signify the researcher's assumption that downsizing managers face numerous personal and professional impacts because of the challenges and successes faced in their role as a downsizing manager during decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of downsizing. Through the researcher's experience in managing and treating downsizing humanely, management teams should consider opportunities to provide insight, structure, support, and time to downsizing managers, as these elements may minimize the challenges that downsizing manager's experience as well as potential exposure. The researcher recommends that future study should explore environment or organizations that utilizes formal downsizing training for their management teams, a similar design study focusing on outsourced service provider that implement downsizings for organizations, and/or further exploration of managers' humane treatment of employees during organizational change.

Abstrak

Penamatan perkhidmatan adalah satu pengalaman yang berbeza-bezabagi setiap individu. Kajian kualitatif ini adalah berdasarkan kepada pengalaman peribadi dan profesional penyelidik dan pengurus berkaitan dalam melalui dan mengurus aktivitipenamatan perkhidmatansemasa membuat keputusan, pelaksanaan, dan pengendalian prosesselepas penamatan perkhidmatan. Kajiselidik sedia ada adalah terhad berkaitan dengan pengurusan penstrukturan organisasi, membuat keputusan, dan pengecilan operasi namun belum ada yang menjelaskan tentang pengalaman yang dilalui atau pengalaman peribadi dan profesional pengurus berkaitan. Temu bual khusus telah dijalankan ke atas peserta-peserta yang terdiri daripada pengurus yang berkhidmat di organisasi mereka semasa atau sebelum tempoh 10 tahun lepas supaya ingatan mereka masih segar dan mereka tidak berada di tengah-tengah prosesuntuk mengelakkan trauma yang berkaitan. Para peserta semasa kajian dibuat tidak berkhidmat di bawah organisasi atau jabatan yang sama untuk mengelakkan penyelidik berat sebelah, mengelakkan hubungan yang sedia ada, dan mengekalkan privasi peserta dan kerahsiaan. Penemuan kajian memperkukuhkan andaian penyelidik bahawa pengurus terbabit menghadapi banyak kesan secaraperibadi dan profesional kerana cabaran dan kejayaan yang dihadapi dalam peranan mereka sebagai pengurus berkaitan dalam pembuatan keputusan, pelaksanaan, dan menguruskan isu selepas proses penamatan perkhidmatan. Berdasarkan kepada pengalaman penyelidik dalam menguruskan dan mengendali secara cermat dalam mengambil kira aspek emosi dan kemanusiaan, pihak pengurusan perlu mengambil kira pendekatan untuk memberi pandangan, struktur, sokongan, dan masa untuk Pengurus berkaitan membuat persediaan kerana ini boleh membantu mengurangkan potensi cabaran yang perlu dihadapi oleh Pengurus terbabit. Penyelidik menyarankan kajian-kajianakan datang supaya mempelajari dan mengkaji organisasi serta persekitaran yang menerapkan penggunaan latihan khusus berkaitan penamatan dan perberhentian kerja pengecilan untuk pasukan pengurusan mereka; kajian keatas organisasi penyedia perkhidmatan perlaksanaan penamatan dan perberhentian kerja, dan / atau penerokaan lanjut pendekatan yang lebih mampan dalam menangani isu-isu pekerja secara lebih rasa hormat dan prihatin ketika proses penstrukturan organisasi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the name of ALLAH, The Most Gracious and Most Merciful.

Alhamdulillah, praised to ALLAH S.W.T. for the completion of this project paper. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to those who helped, supported and encouraged me, and made this accomplishment possible. I would like to acknowledge the guidance and advice of my supervisor, Puan Norizan Haji Azizan and the many friends and colleagues in my class who shared the trials and tribulations of pursuing a part-time Master degree. I am grateful to my loving wife and children who tolerated my long hours on working on my thesis. Thank you for their sacrifice in supporting and believing in me.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution and participation of those who had agreed to participate and or answered the interviews. Finally, my sincere appreciation to every one of my relatives and friends who have contributed in one way or other towards making this dream a reality.

I would like to give a very special gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Puan Norizan Hj. Azizan for her professional commitments, guidance and invaluable help which led to the completion of the project paper.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

HR	:	Human Resource
R	:	Respondent
VSS	:	Voluntary separation scheme
HR	:	Human resource
HRM	:	Human resource management

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Employee separation is one of the very important and crucial process in the Human Resource (HR) role. If not handled efficiently, it can lead to various impact including emotional distress. In normal circumstances, the separation between employer and employee can be due to both voluntary and involuntary reasons such as resignation, termination and abscondment. Separation may also occurs due to lay-offs and downsizing; in the process of mergers, acquisitions and take-over; or any other legal business rationalization or intervention.

The researcher have always believed that retrenchment should not be viewed as reactive but should be a proactive exercise. With proactive measures in managing retrenchment, the separation or cessation of the employer-employee relationship is expected to be facilitated in a better and more signified manner. A proactive approached that surface a more humane and empathetic element may better facilitate to manage down the emotional content.

Generally, an employment separation describes any event that discharge or ends the relationship of an employer and its employee(s). Separation can occur naturally or in some instances even when the employee doesn't necessarily want to leave, but for reasons other than leaving the company for a better opportunity or embarking upon a new career path which at time could be due to death or even retrenchment.

HR practitioners generally distinguished the difference between involuntary from voluntary separation. In the case of voluntary separation, resignation is the most common way of separation. Employee leaves his job and employment with his employer to pursue better opportunities; a better position at a better compensation package in other companies. This is a common move which is initiated naturally by the employee.

Involuntary separation is normally perceived as negative by employees as the discontinuation of employment relationship takes place against their own will. In termination, an employer uses their right to terminate the contract of an employment. Generally, there are two basic types of involuntary separation, it is either being "sacked or dismissed or fired" and "laid off or retrenched." Dismissal normally refers to situation where it is due to the employee's own fault. The common situation are relationship due to poor performance, violation of workplace policies, misconduct, absenteeism or other similar reasons.

Laid off or retrenched, normally refers to situation where the decision to cease the employment relationship are not entirely due to the employee's performance but more towards business related decision i.e. downsizing or closure. Employment termination and separation are both appropriate ways to describe when a retrenchment exercise occurs. Separation in the case of a retrenchment means the employment relationship ended due to business closure or redundancy due to lack of available work. In circumstances such as business closure, there exists is a slim possibility employees may be called back. Opportunities may still be possible in cases or business restructuring or reorganization.

In summary, the researcher describes employment separation as an event that marks the end of a relationship between an employee and employer irrespective of the separation circumstances whether voluntary or involuntary. While the voluntary separation is where the intent is naturally driven and being expressed by the employee themselves.

1.1 Background of Study

Employment separation in the form of retrenchment resulting from downsizing is one of the rationalization or change management strategy that has been adopted by many organizations. It aims to reduce the diversity or the overall size of the operations of the company and is used to cut expenses to create a more financially stable organization. While downsizing or manpower reductions were commonly carried out mainly to respond to organizational and economic crises, if managed well it can also be developed into a proactive restructuring strategy. Downsizing is an option to change the organizational landscape and influenced the lives of many people affected in its implementation.

Downsizing should be initiated with an effective human resource planning aligned with the organizational strategic business plan. The retrenchment exercise should be adopted as a last resort after limiting recruitment, reduction in overtime and working hours, encouraging early separation, offering of voluntary separation scheme (VSS), initiating outplacement exercise (helping the employees (workmen) to find alternative employment), and other measures have been exhausted. In the process many misconceptions and perceptions related to the initiative is expected to continue from the involved parties and observers.

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According to Oliviér Y. Flewellen, 2013, 'downsizing is a strategy commonly used to address operational efficiency issues and yield short-term, immediate cost savings (Budros, 1999; Gandolfi, 2008; Godkin, Valentine, & St. Pierre, 2002). However, it is disruptive to the workforce because it affects the individuals being terminated, the agent who delivers the news, and those who survive and stay with the organization (Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005; Shah, 2000). The transition, whether it is called downsizing, reengineering, restructuring, or rightsizing, impacts the entire work environment (Fong & Kleiner, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008; Parker & McKinley, 2008; Tourish et al., 2004).' Therefore, organizations need to actively anticipate and attend to the retrenchment due to downsizing proper.

This research study presents an overview of the consequences and implications for practicing managers following the downsizing exercise. More importantly, the study will showcase the researcher downsizing discovery and lessons that could be considered by dismissing managers who are contemplating on the adoption of downsizing through retrenchment.

1.2 Problem Statement

The research problem attended and explored in this study is the emotional experience of downsizing managers and the importance of proactive initiatives by organizations to facilitate the downsizing especially the systematic retrenchment approach.

In downsizing, not only employee; downsizing managers and those involved in the process too may experience physical and emotional stress. In understanding the actual impact of downsizing on downsizing managers, information that captures the

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experience(s) in the managing the whole process and the after effect is needed. The effects to downsizing managers and those involved could be minimized by providing helpful guide and resources to in facilitating the retrenchment or employment separation process. To realize this, organizational leaders must first understand the ramifications that the decision to downsize has on the employees.

According to Cameron, (1994); Gandolfi, (2008b), downsizing managers have a demanding role when faced with downsizing. The necessary decisions and actions that downsizing managers must make throughout downsizing are difficult, due to the resulting impacts on the organization, its clients, and its people (Keyes, 2005; Sahdev, 2003, 2004; Self et al., 2005; Tamaren, 1995). Although literature is abundant on why companies choose to downsize, and the effectiveness of downsizing, a gap exists in relation to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers involved in downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008c).

As a result of this gaps in the literature, the downsizing organizations may not realize the downsizing manager's actual experience and emotional impact entails. Few existing scholarly research studies documenting other groups of downsizing managers' experiences reveal a significant emotional toll (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Erickson, 2007), the likelihood of detachment or distancing as coping mechanisms (Armstrong- Stassen, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008a; Paulsen et al., 2005), that the role becomes somewhat easier with each downsizing experience (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Gandolfi, 2008a), and/or a

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strong emotional response when close relationships with victims and survivors are involved (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b).

There were also scholarly research studies that calls for greater organizational support of downsizing managers such as 'a lack of planning, policies, and programs' (Appelbaum, Delage, Labib, & Gault, 1997; Cascio, 1993; Gandolfi, 2008d); inadequate emotional support (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b); and/or a need for training materials (Cameron, 1994; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b).

The few doctoral or scholarly research studies available were quantitative (Armstrong- Stassen, 2005; Bonanzino, 2002; Erickson, 2007), related only to the executive management level (Bonanzino, 2002; Carritte, 2000), and/or focused on various types of organizational change (Bonanzino, 2002; Carritte, 2002), rather than downsizing specifically. Thus, downsizing managers face a challenging set of tasks (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). The duties involved may begin to take a toll on an individual's ongoing levels of commitment, loyalty, productivity, anxiety, frustration, and anger (Appelbaum et al., 1997; Mishra, Spreitzer, & Mishra, 1998; Richey, 1992; Sahdev, 2003; Self et al., 2005; Thornhill & Gibbons, 1995; Thornhill, Saunders, & Stead, 1997).

Richey, (1992) stated that downsizing managers are also survivors, at the time of carrying out their downsizing responsibilities. Downsizing managers' experiences of downsizing "will have a major impact on the attitudes of the employees in general and will affect the job performance, morale, and loyalty of the survivors".

Based on the scholarly journal and studies, it is apparent that without knowledge and understanding of the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, or training or support systems that prepare downsizing managers for downsizing, and their future downsizing managers will continue to lack the perspective of critical components to and assets for downsizing: the decision-maker, the implementer, and the surviving downsizing manager living within the aftermath. These facts further support the purpose the study.

Reason in adopting qualitative, exploratory study, is to gain broader perspective to understand and examine the researcher's experience as well as the personal and professional experiences of individual downsizing managers related to their role throughout the planning, implementation, and aftermath as to inform organizational practice and future related decision making. The personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers documented in this study begin to fill the gap that existed in the literature, which relates to what downsizing managers experience during downsizing, both from personal and professional perspectives. The results of this study also discovered an additional theme that not previously mentioned in earlier literatures referred to.

Band & Tustin, 1995; Cameron, 1994 did a study with the purpose to illuminate the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, as organizations and downsizing managers must be well equipped with knowledge of how to handle the difficult responsibilities that downsizing presents. There are other literatures such as by (Cooper & Schindler, 2006); study to address the management dilemma of how organizations prepare for and their managers cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath, and

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there area existing doctoral and scholarly research studies and articles related to downsizing tend to focus on the impact to the overall organization, the downsized individual, or surviving employees. However, (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008c) cited that there are limited literature exists relative to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers.

1.3 Research Questions

The central research question of this study is:

What is the downsizing manager's experience of downsizing? Does the experience affect the emotional state as a downsizing manager?

1.4 Research Objective

The objectives to be established are:

1. To establish if retrenchment affected the researcher emotional state as a downsizing manager

2. To identify whether retrenchment has brought about the researcher uncertainty, attitude towards work and general wellbeing as a downsizing manager.

3. To establish whether proper strategy and systematic deployment exercise in downsizing or retrenchment help ease and minimize emotional impact to dismissing managers.

1.5   Significance of the Study

Clair & Dufresne, 2004 cited that with the continuous use of downsizing in all industries, organizational leaders and downsizing managers must understand the managerial challenges involved in downsizing.

The results of this study is expected to illuminate the perspectives of the researcher and downsizing managers who have experienced downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. It will provide:

a) a voice toward various facets of the organization and its various stakeholders:

b) unveiling a detailed reflection of the challenges involved in the process and position of the downsizing manager, which informs executive leadership's high-level strategy and decision making on downsizing and its ultimate impacts from the perspectives of surviving managers to the organization's executive management team,;

c) to illustrate the complexities of the situation and avail an opportunity to reflect on the personal and professional experiences of others to better prepare for and cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath among and to other managers who may someday take on a similar role;

d) to provide understanding and appreciation of the challenges associated with the situation and role of a downsizing manager; and to the scholar-practitioner community, contributing to the academic and professional

literature related to downsizing, from the downsizing manager's perspective to all internal and external stakeholders

The outcome of this study is expected to be of great importance, as it will help facilitate and guide retrenching or downsizing managers with simple and structured reference, and even potential diversified retrenchment strategies. Based on the study findings, the researcher recommends proper planning, clear strategy, and early involvement of all relevant stakeholders, effective public relations work and stakeholder management; and most importantly the suave implementation of retrenchment. This will indeed help facilitate and manage the potential impact on both emotion and reaction. Recommendations for future research should include further study in organizations that utilize formal downsizing training programs for their management teams.

Retrenchment due to downsizing is a significant issue that needs to be continuously observed and examined. Its emotional effect on the concerned employees, the downsizing manager, and the employees who are retained can affect them deeply and even their family as well. The findings of the study could significantly provide better understanding among employers and future dismissing managers of the importance of proper planning, preparation and providing support resources after the retrenchment.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The research examined the researcher's personal experiences in managing downsizing and interviewed downsizing managers.

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Generally, the researcher himself has experienced managing a significant downsizing in 2010when one of the operating retail unit in an organization that the researcher's worked with, was decided to be closed. In 2013, the researcher experienced another separation exercise through early retirement incentive program, known to some as a golden handshake, and the next exercise was in early 2014 when the organization implemented significant downsizing in its retail business units, followed by managing employment separation due to a factory closure. The most recent event was in early 2015 where a major downsizing due to business restructuring exercise took place in a business unit located in Singapore. The initiative witnessed 95% of the workforce being laid off or retrenched. It was indeed a challenging experience for the researcher as a dismissing manager as the exercise impart an immediate effect approach seeing majority of the affected employees being retrenched immediately with 24 hour notice.

To further affirm the researcher's experience, the study was conducted on the researcher's self-exploratory notion and 14 other dismissing manager. This may limits the generalization of the findings. Seidman (2006) stated that 'the study design assumed that participants would provide open, honest and candid feedback. The researcher worked to establish rapport with and ensure privacy, security, and anonymity to the participants, to help build the level of trust they have in the project and the researcher, in turn providing an opportunity for further openness in telling their stories'.

Clair & Dufresne (2004) mentioned that 'this study is limited to the experience of downsizing managers within the organization versus outside individuals who may consult with the organization to assist with downsizing. This study assumed that the

experience of the downsizing manager is unique, as both downsizing manager and a survivor'. Since exploratory approach was used, the results of the research may not be used to make generalizations concerning other dismissing managers or survivors in similar situation or environment hence there are no data or numerical analysis that could be put-forward as analytical evidence. The limitation detail will be further elaborated in chapter 3.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Downsizing

For the purposes of this study, the definition of downsizing is the elimination of existing employees' positions. Downsizing begins when members of the organization consider downsizing as an option and ends with managing in the aftermath of the downsizing. Downsizing as described in this study includes downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of the downsizing (Clair & Dufresne, 2004).

Downsizing Manager

An individual "with responsibilities for planning, carrying out, and dealing with the aftermath of a downsizing" (Clair & Dufresne, 2004, p. 1598); employed by the downsizing organization, typically within middle- to upper-management positions, in both line (i.e., operations) and staff (e.g., human resources, as well as other staff roles).

Personal and professional experience

The "human experience in all its complexity, as it is concretely lived" (Finlay, 2009, p. 474). The study of experiences "aims to capture subjective, 'insider' meanings and what their lived experience feels like for individuals" (Finlay, 2009, p. 475), herein encompassing both the personal and professional experience of the participants. "Organizational behavior is the study of individuals and groups within an organizational context, and the study of internal processes and practices as they influence the effectiveness of individuals, teams, and organizations" (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2007, p. 5).

Organizational change

A process of planned change that results in a growth in capability, a seasoning, perhaps even an alignment of organization activity" (Walton & Russell, 2004, p. 133).

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"Organization development [OD] is system-wide process of applying behavioral-science knowledge to the planned change and development of the strategies, design components, and processes that enable organizations to be effective. OD addresses an entire system, such as a team, department or total organization. It also deals with relationships between a system and its environment as well as among the different features that comprise a system's design" (Cummings, 2004, p. 5).

Psychological contract	An individual's belief in mutual obligations between that person and another party such as an employer (Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005).
Restructuring	Changes in an organization's formal bureaucratic structures, which may include cutting hierarchical levels and divisions, consolidating and merging units, and reorganizing work tasks (Budros, 1999).
Resizing	A broad, strategic term to describe organizational transition that is primarily strategic in nature (as opposed to financial); part of an ongoing organizational transformation (not a one-time event) (De Meuse & Marks, 2003).
Survivor	An individual who remains within an organization after a significant cut in the workforce (Baruch & Hind, 2000).
Survivor syndrome	A phenomenon that describes the shared reactions and behaviours of individuals who have survived an adverse event. A term used to describe the anxiety, depression, fear, and, at times, the physical illness that employees feel as a result of the implementation of layoffs in organizations (Baruch & Hind, 2000).
Victim	An individual who involuntarily leaves an organization as a result of getting laid off as part of a significant cut in the workforce (Noer, 2009).

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1.8 Summary

In the modern and volatile economic environment, organizations are striving to remain profitable and maintain a competitive advantage. Organizational downsizing has become a common strategic tool to enhance profitability, improving efficiencies, and strengthening business competitiveness. In some literatures, it was cited that 'In times of recession, when organizations face ongoing financial challenges and strive to sustain operations, downsizing is often implemented (Gandolfi, 2008; Pfeil et al., 2003; Sahdev, 2004; Zatzick et al., 2009).Employers, by streamlining the organization, refocus efforts on core operations executed by a leaner workforce, resulting in a more efficient, productive, and profitable organization (Beylerian & Kleiner, 2003; Mirabal & De Young, 2005; Tourish et al., 2004). Downsizing, however, is not achieved without consequences to the victims, the layoff agent, and the survivors (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Beylerian & Kleiner, 2003; Godkin et al., 2002; Parker & McKinley, 2008)'. As the purpose of this study was to understand the emotional impact of downsizing on the dismissing manager, the results of the study is expected to positively impact emotional and social change by helping to provide guide in mitigating the emotional stress of dismissing managers.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the existing literature related to downsizing and the impact that downsizing has on the entire workforce: the affected employees and the dismissing managers. The literature review discusses the various emotions, referred to as survivor syndrome, experienced by the remaining employees as well as the need for support programs and the responsibility of organizational leaders. This review demonstrates a gap which exists specific to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, with the (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003; Gandolfi, 2008a).

In the literature review the researcher explored (a) downsizing as a universal strategic tool; (b) the experiences of employees leaving and those left behind, since downsizing represents a life-changing event; and (c) the need for supervisors and managers to receive proper training and support, since they are responsible for delivering the message and motivating survivors to ensure that organizational goals are met.

2.1 Downsizing

Downsizing has become a common business strategy in both private and public organization. Over the last 2 decades, downsizing has expanded to include professional, managerial, and service workers, and organizations now use it as a proactive approach to efficiency and effectiveness with the organization and as a strategy to maintain a competitive advantage in the industry (Bhattacharyya &

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Chatterjee, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Koeber, 2002). Downsizing has moved to the forefront of survival strategies for organizations as "the quickest way to cut costs and bring about immediate, visible improvements to the bottom line" (Smith, Wright, & Huo, 2008, p. 74). The increase in globalization, technological advances, deregulation, and growing domestic and foreign competition, led to an increased use of downsizing to reduce expenses and achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness (Cameron, 2004; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005; Datta et al., 2010).

Downsizing also affects the individual responsible for laying off employees; managers feel guilt as a result of carrying out the organizational directive (Gandolfi, 2008; Mishra, Mishra, & Spreitzer, 2009). A gap exists in the literature specific to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, with attention given instead to the experiences and impacts on downsizing victims and survivors (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003; Gandolfi, 2008a).Makawatsakui and Kleiner (2003) determined, in a study of the effect of downsizing on morale and attrition, that "only rarely does it [downsizing] achieve its original financial objectives" (p. 52).

Downsizing is a multifaceted problem that affects the entire organization: the victims, those laid off; the surviving workforce remaining behind; and the lay-off agents responsible for delivering the message. Communication is critical when change occurs because it alleviates the element of surprise for the workforce. Early communication provides an opportunity for management to share the rationale for change and provides an opportunity for employees to contribute cost saving alternatives.

Downsizing research and literature have increased vastly over the last 2 decades, coinciding with the increased use of downsizing within organizations across the globe. Seven common themes emerged within the downsizing literature:

Themes	
communicating a shared vision	(Farmer et al., 1998; Farrell & Mavondo, 2004; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Hitt et al., 1994; Newcomb, 1993; Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004; Sugarman, 2001);
managing resistance to change	(Bovey & Hede, 2001; Bryant, 2006; Cameron, 1994; Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008; Klein, 1994; Macri, Tagliaventi, & Bertolotti, 2002);
securing the commitment and loyalty process	(Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Meyer, Allen, & Topolnytsky, 1998; Richey, 1992; Self, et al., 2005; Thornhill , Saunders, & Stead, 1997);
maintaining or restoring morale and motivation	(Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; O'Brien, 2008; Saksvik et al., 2007; Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002);
maintaining productivity and job performance	(Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Cascio, 1993; Lewin & Johnston, 2000; Lewis, 1994; Travaglione & Cross, 2006);
coping with survivor syndrome	(Appelbaum, Delage, Labib, & Gault, 1997; Appelbaum & Donia, 2000; Sahdev, 2004; Travaglione & Cross, 2006);
coping with the emotional experience	(Allen et al., 2007; Bordia et al., 2004; Gandolfi, 2008d; Paulsen et al., 2005).

2.1.1 The Survivors Experience

Gandolfi (2009) mentioned that downsizing, which continues to be adopted around the world, impacts the entire workforce and can have a negative effect on the organization and the people: the victims, those who find themselves out of a job involuntarily; the survivors, those remaining with the firm; and the lay-off agent who must deliver the message. The longitudinal study conducted by Armstrong-Stassen (2005) indicated that middle managers are negatively affected by downsizings. Middle managers experienced an increase in their workload demands as well as feelings of job insecurity. Beylerian and Kleiner (2003) surveyed 1,500 human

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resource managers and determined that, as a result of downsizing, morale declined, workforce productivity slowed, absenteeism increased, and organizational survivors accepted other job offers.

Kim (2003) concluded that survivors experience declining commitment to their jobs, decreased job satisfaction, and decreased productivity. Six months after the conclusion of layoffs in one company, Devine, Reay, Stainton, and Collins-Nakai (2003) conducted a survey of downsizing victims and surviving workforce employees. The victims appeared to experience a greater sense of control than the survivors did while the survivors exhibited higher levels of stress. The victims received support in transitioning and outplacement assistance, but survivors received little or no support.

Layoffs have a traumatic effect on the surviving workforce and can cause physical and psychological issues for employees who remaining with the organization (Kim, 2003; Noer, 2009). Empirical evidence indicates that, in the aftermath of a downsizing, survivors experience an increase in work load and job responsibilities (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Virick, Lilly, & Casper, 2007). The surviving workforce generally assumes additional job responsibilities and an increase in workload without the benefit of extra resources, training, or support (Gandolfi, 2008; Makawatsakui & Kleiner, 2003).

Using AT&T as a case study, Fong and Kleiner (2004) illustrated the importance of open communication with employees throughout the restructuring; communication was identified as crucial for ensuring that the organization's goals

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were properly shared among all employees (p. 12). The AT&T restructuring was successful because employees were included in the process, not alienated.

2.1.2 Survivor Syndrome

Noer, (2009) cited that the employees who remain behind are affected by an array of emotions referred to as survivor syndrome. The main symptoms observed in survivors are feelings of (a) insecurity, uncertainty, and fear; (b) resentment, anger, and frustration; (c) guilt, depression, and sadness; and (d) injustice, distrust, and betrayal The term survivor syndrome is used to describe the impact that downsizing can have on the remaining workforce. The leadership team, including managers, supervisors, and human resource staff must, therefore, be cognizant of the effects of survivor syndrome because the responsibility for moving forward with implementation of organizational goals and objectives falls on the shoulders of the surviving workforce.

Ciancio, (2000) stated that the occurrence of the identified symptoms can impede the performance and productivity of the workforce. In addition, the organization's goals and objectives can be undermined by survivor syndrome as the remaining workforce begins to experience mental and physical fatigue and stress caused by the attempt to carry out the mandates of the organization. Beylerian & Kleiner, 2003; Brockner et al., 2004; Kim, 2003 stated that the workforce tends to display higher stress levels resulting from the addition of new, unfamiliar tasks; to become more risk-averse and more conservative; and to exhibit declines in morale, creativity, and openness to change.

Molinsky & Margolis, (2006) stated that employees who feel they were treated unfairly or disrespectfully could claim wrongful termination, and such claims are costly for companies to defend. Disgruntled employees could also sabotage company computers, cause damage to the facility, or physically harm the employee who delivered the message. Treating employees who have been laid off with dignity helps organizations minimize the reduction in survivors' morale, commitment, and productivity.

Ciancio, (2000) stated that while downsizing may result in an immediate reduction in payroll costs, employers should not overlook the emotional strain on surviving employees, which could cancel out some of the savings. Managers should recognize and address the symptoms before productivity and creativity are adversely affected; an unmotivated workforce is an unproductive workforce.

2.1.3 The Support System

Fong & Kleiner, (2004) stated that downsizing is a difficult process that requires decision makers and managers to show empathy toward employees, "see through another's eyes and try to understand the individual's emotions and thinking". The importance of the organization treating its employees with respect throughout the downsizing process has been emphasized in the literature (Fong & Kleiner, 2004; Greenspan, 2002).

Beylerian and Kleiner (2003) conducted a survey of 1,500 human resources managers to examine the impact of layoffs on survivors. They noted that 31% of the downsized companies experienced a "severe decline" in morale, and 48% indicated that morale had worsened. The companies experienced a slowdown in productivity

and an increase in absenteeism. Existing research also indicates that survivors experience high levels of stress, low levels of organizational commitment, and decreased motivation (Carbery & Garavan, 2005; Devine et al., 2003), as well as a drop in morale (Gandolfi, 2009; Makawatsakui & Kleiner, 2003).

Devine et al., 2003; Kim, 2003; Gandolfi, 2008, 2009 mentioned that organizations generally prepare well for the anticipated needs of the layoff victims, providing transition support, severance packages, and outplacement services to assist during their transition. In contrast, workforce survivors receive little or no support.

Sahdev (2004) recognized the need for concern for the surviving workforce. He suggested that survivor management programs be implemented in addition to the typical outplacement programs offered to individuals leaving the organization. Sahdev also noted that the quality of support given to survivors is critical to maintaining their trust in and loyalty to the organization.

Gandolfi (2008) reinforced the importance of training, assistance, and support for survivors, both during and after downsizing. A focus on training for the survivors should not be underestimated, since the success or failure of the downsizing effort rests with the remaining workforce (Ciancio, 2000; Fong & Kleiner, 2004; Weakland, 2001). Sufficient training will provide confidence and equip survivors for the new job responsibilities and the increased workloads that will be encountered in the new environment. If survivors represent the key resources needed to achieve the organizational goals and objectives after a downsizing, then adequate training, support and assistance is imperative; organizations should be proactive and invest in their workforce.

Ciancio, 2000; Fong & Kleiner, 2004 stated that because the success or failure of downsizing relies on the surviving workforce. Organizations should be proactive and implement programs that encourage and support the remaining workforce. The significance of the emotional stress and the effects of survivor syndrome should not be ignored. An investment in and commitment toward the well-being of the surviving workforce could result in productivity efficiencies, managerial trust, and improved morale.

2.2 Downsizing Decision Making

This section provides a review of the downsizing decision-making literature specific to the organization's decision to downsize, alternatives to downsizing, and deciding who goes and who stays. Mishra, Mishra, & Spreitzer, (2009) mentioned that two decision-making perspectives are at play in downsizing: the executive management's decision that downsizing is an appropriate method (including the exploration of potential alternatives), and the downsizing manager's identification of which employees to terminate and maintain. Initially, the executive management team decides there is a need for strategic change, reviews the alternatives, such as a change in business model and/or scope, downsizing, or closure, and decides that downsizing in an appropriate method.

Once a decision is made to downsize, the challenge of deciding who goes and who stays begins for downsizing managers (Gandolfi, 2008e). The followings are literatures on alternatives to downsizing, as well as the common implementation methods for downsizing practiced by organizations.

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Table 2. *Decision-Making Theories in the Literature*

Theories	Description	Models
Normative (prescriptive)	Maximize rewards and minimize costs (rational)	(Abbas & Matheson, 2005; Brown & Finstuen, 1993; Hofmann,Hoelzl, & Kirchler, 2008; Nutt, 2008; Terek, 2009; Tomer, 1992)
Behavioral (descriptive)	Compare/contrast actual to normative model (boundedrationality)	(Agosto, 2002; Bazerman, 2006; Hammond, Keeney, & Raiffa,1998; Harrison & Pelletier, 1995; Hoffrage & Reimer, 2004;Langley, Mintzberg, Pitcher, Posada, & Saint-Macary, 1995; Manson, 2006; Radner, 2000; Shubik, 1997; Tiwana, Wang, Keil, & Ahluwalia, 2007)
Naturalistic	Observe limitations on decision maker due to structure/norms	(Bordley, 2001; Clemen, 2001; Lipshitz, Klein, Orasanu, &Salas, 2001; Whyte, 2001)

Deciding to downsize

Organizations look for opportunities to decrease expenses and increase efficiencies as much as possible. As discussed before, doing so during turbulent economic times becomes more necessary in order to sustain (Kazem, Adcroft, & Willis, 2005; McLean, 2004; Vakola, Soderquist, & Prastacos, 2007; Victor & Franckeiss, 2002). There are numerous methods in which organizations can choose to act, such as by normal attrition, early retirements, pay cuts/dark days, or downsizing (Freeman, 1999). That choice is dependent on the top management team and its willingness to deal with the planning, decision making, implementation, and evaluation that is involved in these processes (Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005).

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Alternatives to downsizing

Organizations have a myriad of methods that may allow them to avoid downsizing (Hornstein, 2009; Roth, 2009). Businesses use certain alternatives for slowdowns expected to last up to 6 months, while other alternatives are preferred for slowdowns estimated to last between 6-12 months (Gandolfi, 2008a). The more time an organization has to implement alternatives to downsizing, the more alternatives available (Tomasko, 1991). Downsizing occurs when the organization expects the business slowdown to last longer than 12 months (Gandolfi, 2008a).

Alternatives for an organization that expects a slowdown to last less than 6 months include temporarily reducing salaries or hours, or freezing hiring (Cascio & Wynn, 2004; Daniel, 1995; Gandolfi, 2008a; Kawaguchi & Ohtake, 2007; Lautsch & Scully, 2007; Roth, 2009). The negative side of these alternatives is the impact on the livelihood of employees' lives, and decreased morale. Additionally, reduced hours and hiring freezes (Lautsch & Scully, 2007; Levy, 2009) leave no time for members of the organization to develop or initiate new strategies. Despite the negative impacts, these alternatives provide cost savings to the organization, in turn allowing the organization's headcount to remain unscathed (Daniel, 1995; Kawaguchi & Ohtake, 2007).

Cascio & Wynn, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008a; Hanks, 1990; Herrbach, Mignonac, Vandenberghe, & Negrini, 2009; Mirabal &DeYoung, 2005; Monippally, 2003 mentioned that alternatives for an organization that expects a slowdown to last between 6 to 12 months include extended salary reductions, voluntary sabbaticals, and exit incentives. Cascio & Wynn, (2004) cited that although highly unpopular,

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salary reductions are one option for employers to decrease costs to avoid downsizing. Voluntary sabbaticals, whether paid or unpaid, help employers attract and retain employees, as they enable employees to focus on something else of interest and rejuvenate. Employers also use early retirement incentives as a means to decrease costs, while offering eligible employees an opportunity to exit the organization gracefully with retirement benefits. These alternatives are less intrusive options for organizations to consider in contrast to the organizational and personal impacts that downsizing involves.

According to Cascio & Wynn, (2004), one organization came to a point in which they faced the likelihood of downsizing. The entire executive management team met to explore alternative options and came up with a list of positive and negative effects of layoffs and five alternatives: "pay cut/shutdown, special one-year unpaid sabbatical, voluntary severance, early retirement, or regular unpaid sabbatical". This shows that, while it is important to evaluate the alternatives to downsizing, there may be no alternative appropriate for the given situation. Choosing to downsize is difficult.

Fryer, Stybel, Peabody, Dormann, & Sutton, (2009) mentioned that it does not get any easier once that decision had been made, as downsizing managers must then determine the fate of their employees'. Who goes? Who stays? Now that the organization has chosen to downsize, downsizing managers must decide who will go and who will stay within the organization.

Pfadenhauer, 2009 stated that it is critical for the downsizing manager to be as objective as possible in determining the criteria for downsized employees, in order to

avoid questioning and discrimination accusations. Pfadenhauer added that from the available literature, it was found that organizations use one or more methods to downsize, which include seniority, position, or performance.

Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; Dewitt et al., 2003; Kidder, 2005; Seo & Barrett, 2007 stated that regardless of whether downsizing managers decide to use one or more of these methods to downsize, it will impact the lives of the organization's employees.

Schraeder et al., (2006) stated that downsizing managers must demonstrate that the method selected is consistent with previous decisions, does not reflect bias against any one person or group within the organization, is accurate in what it purports to measure, opportunities have been provided to make any needed corrections, the interest of those parties reflected have been taken into consideration, and, finally, that the method follows ethical and moral standards, the organization will have a greater likelihood of creating both a perception of procedural justice and a legally defensible plan.

2.3 Downsizing Implementation

After decision is reached to downsize, management will then work with downsizing managers to determine the appropriate methods and respective employees to downsize. Mirabal & DeYoung, (2005) stated that "Management needs to be proactive rather than reactive in implementation of an organizational downsizing program,"in order to reduce uncertainty. Appelbaum, Everard, & Hung, 1999; Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, (2005) mentioned that other critical elements include communicating clearly, consistently, and as much information as possible, to

all levels of the organization; helping employees to deal with the trauma associated with the downsizing experience; choosing, motivating, and supporting downsizing managers; and/or acknowledging the potential need for outsourcing processes.

Dewitt et al., (2003) stated that the downsizing manager's approach to and management of downsizing implementation is linked to the level of support survivors provide to the downsizing manager and the organization, as well as their level of productivity, in the aftermath of the downsizing. The literature reflects that downsizing managers must take a careful approach to downsizing implementation due to the trauma and uncertainty that employees within the organization experience associated with the downsizing. The use of communication, motivation, support, and additional decision making (e.g., outsourcing, process redesign) must be strategic in order to respect employees and ensure the organization's success.

2.4 Managing the Aftermath

Appelbaum et al., 1997; Gandolfi, 2009 cited that downsizing managers are required to make and implement difficult decisions within their organizations, an actions that significantly affect people's lives. This section focuses specifically on the downsizing manager's experience managing in the aftermath.

Appelbaum et al., 1997, p. 278; Isabella, 1989 mentioned that one of the most common reasons why companies that downsize perform so poorly is that they often are successful at anticipating and preparing for the employees who are to be released, but they may not be prepared for the low morale and lower productivity experienced by survivors of the downsizing.

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Gandolfi, 2009 stated that although scholarly studies have shown that a positive correlation exists between T&D and organizational performance, executive management views T&D as a monetary and opportunity cost. T&D would take time away from an organization that now has a smaller workforce, and is managing increased workloads that may or may not be the same functions that the same employees performed prior to the downsizing. The greater an understanding a downsizing manager has of the signs, impacts, and methods to alleviate survivor syndrome, the more likely they will be able to play a greater role in a more efficient and effective work environment.

Cascio, 1993; Myers, 1993; Richey, 1992 stated that in addition to managing survivor syndrome among employees in the downsizing aftermath, downsizing managers must identify methods by which to maintain adequate levels of productivity before, during, and after a downsizing. Even during periods of change, organizations and their respective managers must maintain a focus on their internal and external customers in order to maintain steady operational flows and profitability. Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Cascio, 1993; Lewin & Johnston, 2000; Lewis, 1994 mentioned that downsizing managers must stay abreast of individual and team performance to ensure that standards are met or adjusted for an appropriate alignment with the changed environment

The existing downsizing literature reflects that downsizing managers are unlikely to receive training and development, yet there is an expectation that they must (a) manage employees suffering from survivor syndrome (while also possibly experiencing it themselves), and (b) manage processes to stable or increasing levels of productivity.

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2.5 Personal and Professional Experiences of Downsizing Managers

Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1996 stated that downsizing managers "will not be aware from the start what they will have to face during the process: others' and their own unexpected emotional reactions". Yet downsizing managers' reactions influence employees' attitudes and behaviors (Dewitt et al., 2003; Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1996). Armstrong- Stassen, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004 cited that existing literature related to a downsizing managers' experience focuses on impacts to the downsizing manager's emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being, as detailed below:

Experience	Impact	Reference
Emotional well-being	▪ Downsizing managers will undergo emotional experiences similar to others, such as guilt, anger, anxiety, and uncertainty. Emotions affect all members, regardless of position: downsized employees, survivors, downsizing managers	(Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007; Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004; Clair &Dufresne, 2004; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Gandolfi, 2008c; Paulsen, Callan, Grice, Rooney, & et al., 2005; Sahdev, 2003, 2004)
	▪ During times of downsizing, "managers can choose to lay low—or they can play a vital role in empowering people to deal with change"	(Miller, 1992, p. 57)
Mental well-being	▪ The role of the downsizing manager is comparable to a physician or death teller, in that each is responsible in the role for relaying negative news	(Clair & Dufresne, 2004)
	▪ Downsizing managers used the following descriptions related to their involvement: "deceiving others; making tough, uncertain decisions; dealing with others' emotional pain; empathy for victims; and being stigmatized"	(Clair & Dufresne, 2004, p. 1608).
Physical well-being	▪ Some managers report health-related symptoms. such as stomach aches, chest pains, or exhaustion, when faced with making human resource decisions	(Brockner et al., 2004; Deery et al., 2006; Devine, Reay, Stainton, & Collins-Nakai, 2003; Dewitt et al., 2003; Kidder, 2005; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004; Seo & Barrett, 2007)
Social wellbeing	▪ Occasionally, employees may have a close bond with their manager, whether in a professional manner due to close work on a project or professional development, or tenure with the organization; or personally through prior or concurrent friendships. Employees may view downsizing as a breach of the psychological contract between the employee	(Turnley & Feldman, 2000)

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Experience	Impact	Reference
	and the employer, which often results in the employee having a poor attitude, decreased trust, and diminished performance	
	▪ The results of the breached psychological contract may also prove detrimental to the professional or personal relationships between the employee and the downsizing manager.	

Within this limited literature on the downsizing manager's experience, one article pointed to the popularity of distancing as a coping mechanism (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). Distancing allows the downsizing manager to remove himself or herself from the "emotionally taxing and difficult-to-deal-with experiences of carrying out a downsizing" (p. 1606). Distancing allows the downsizing manager to step back from the potential emotional, mental, physical, and social impacts. Thus, the organizational change and downsizing literatures inform, but do not fully address the question of the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, as there are very few documented experiences. Of the downsizing managers' experiences that are documented, it is known that downsizing managers experienced impacts to their emotional (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Gandolfi, 2008c; Sahdev, 2003, 2004), mental (Clair & Dufresne, 2004), physical (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; Seo & Barrett, 2007), and social (Turnley & Feldman, 2000) wellbeing in relation to their downsizing experience.

2.6   Summary

The literature review provided detailed information on the organizational contexts, as well as the three main bodies of literature, and their intersections, informing this study's research questions.

Probst & Brubaker, 2007 stated downsizing decision making requires downsizing managers' awareness of the impacts on productivity within the organization.While Cameron, 1994; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006 cited that downsizing implementation planning must include how to communicate changes, and timing of announcements and layoffs. Lastly, Appelbaum et al., 1997 stated that the aftermath of the downsized environment presents challenges such as the emotional responses of survivors, or survivor syndrome, and the organization's needs to adjust to the changes, strengthen the business, and strategize for future success (Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005). Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008c stated literature relative to the personal and professional experiences and impacts of downsizing on individuals has dealt with victims or survivors of downsizing. Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003 cited that although downsizing managers are survivors, they are a special class of survivors due to their dual role of a downsizing manager and a survivor; yet research on downsizing managers' personal and professional experiences of downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath is limited. In summary, the literature is rich in organizational change and decision-making models, reasons and alternatives to downsizing, as well as downsizing methods (e.g., determining who goes and who stays), but there is a gap in the literature relative to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers. Accordingly, this study was designed to elicit downsizing managers' experiences specific to downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath, to augment the literature on the topic and document additional and potentially new experiences.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This study utilized qualitative, exploratory, in-depth, semi-structured interviewing to gather the personal and professional experiences of participants to inform the research questions.

Creswell, 2007; Weiss, 1994 cited that qualitative methodology is the best fit for this particular study due to the need to explore and elicit a descriptive understanding of the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers. Qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviewing allowed study participants to describe their personal and professional experiences to me. Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited "Words, especially organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavour that often proves far more convincing to a reader – another researcher, a policymaker, a practitioner – than pages of summarized numbers".

The researcher designed this study to highlight and address the dilemma of how dismissing managers prepare for and cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath. Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003; Gandolfi, 2008a) cited a gap exists in the literature specific to the experience of downsizing managers, with significantly more attention given to the impacts on downsizing victims or its survivors.

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), qualitative research is considered valid in so far as it is useful and worthwhile in assisting me, participants and others to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Findings of the present study provide rich, reflective material for the implementers of retrenchment with regards to raising their awareness of the experience of having to implement the retrenchment as well as the means by which they choose to cope with their task.

While this study focuses on the researcher own experience as a downsizing manager, the researcheradded sample of 14 managers to be appropriate in the qualitative context. Participants were selected with variety of orientations to retrenchment implementation. All 14 participants were personally involved as implementers in at least one retrenchment intervention.

An interview guide, divided into three sections representing self-contained themes, was developed after extracting the following themes from the literature review:

1. Participants' procedural experiences regarding planning and retrenchment decision making;

2. Participants' personal experiences of their role as implementers, with specific reference to their emotions; and

3. Participants' experiences of organisational enabling strategies and their personal preparation for facilitating retrenchment conversations.

Semi-structured interviews through casual approach were conducted. The response were noted with consent and the assurance of anonymity. Reliability of the

qualitative data was ensured by describing the research question and design of the study in a clear and non-contradictory manner, such that every step of the research was congruent and consistent with the former.

Regarding data gathering and analysis, multiple observer bias was avoided since only the researcher's self-collected and analysed the data. Validity was furthermore attained by clarifying and checking the participants' responses both during the interview (i.e. by way of probing and crosschecking) and at the end of the. To this end, the researcher made available copies of the transcripts to all the participants for validation of their experiences as implementers of retrenchment.

The present study can be generalized insofar as the themes identified from the findings are tied with the broader themes as unearthed in the literature review. Such themes can therefore be transferred to and have a bearing on other contexts, as related to the individual experiences of the retrenchment implementers.

3.1 Philosophy and Choice of Inquiry Methods

The topic of this qualitative, exploratory study aligned with the social constructivist research tradition, as participants "seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" and "develop subjective meanings of their experiences" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). The ontological assumption is that multiple realities exist with numerous participants to gather information about each participant's personal and professional experiences (Creswell, 2007). For this study, the researcher anticipate that he would not be able to interview all participants face-to-face due to geography or time, but the use of the 3- phase interview approach enabled me to

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work towards building a trusting relationship with each participant. The assumption deals with the open discussion of the researcher own values in relation to the topic.

3.2 Research Design

This study used purposive, criterion recruiting (Creswell, 2007) to identify participants, and a 3-phase interview approach (Seidman, 2006) to gather details of participants' experiences. Purposive, or criterion-based, recruiting approach identified prospective participants based on their ability to "purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon to the study". Purposive sampling is an efficient sampling method that ensures that the pool of potential participants is more likely to meet the study's criteria.

Miles & Huberman (1994) cited that in-depth interviewing allowed study participants to describe their personal and professional experiences and insights in detail. The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, nor "evaluate" as the term is normally used. Seidman (2006) cited that at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the personal and professional experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.

Table 3. *Research Process*

Action & related	Appendices	Phase & timing
References Researcher bracketing (Appendix A)	Prior to proposal approval	Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Ruona, 2005
Participant selection criteria, recruiting, screening interview (#1), and selection	Permission to Recruit Study Participants prior tosubmission of IRB Application Call for Research	Creswell, 2007; Eland-Goossensen, Van De Goor, Vollemans, Hendriks, & Garretsen, 1997; Noy, 2008;

(Appendices B and C)	Participants(Appendix B) and Interview #1: Participant Screening (Appendix C) immediately following all approvals ofproposed research; ongoing until selection of12-15 participants (and number of participantsapproved by mentor) Informed consent form within 2-3 days afterParticipant Screening	Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994 Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994
In-depth interview (#2; Appendix D)	Interview #2: In-depth interview (Appendix D) within 1-8 weeks of participant selection	Seidman, 2006
Transcription	Within 2-3 weeks of data collection	Ruona, 2005; Weiss, 1994
Transcription Review Request	Following transcription; request feedback and approval from participant within 2 weeks	Bryman, 2001; Creswell; 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985
Member checking interview (#3; Appendix F)	Interview #3: Member checking (Appendix F), within 2-3 weeks of transcript review request	Rubin & Rubin, 2004; Seidman, 2006
Data analysis	Individual analysis within 1-2 weeks of follow up session Overall analysis within 1-2 weeks of last follow-up session, until text is approved	Boyatzis, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ruona, 2005

3.3 Researcher Bracketing

According to Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Ruona, 2005; reflexivity allows the researcher to record his or her related experiences, thoughts, questions, pre-conceived notions, and perspectives, as a method to avoiding personal bias within the study. Realization of these assists me in coming to terms with what is known and freeing the mind to focus as objectively as possible on the subject, participants, and topic at hand. This work, done prior to seeking approvals of the research proposal, is recorded in Appendix A.

3.4 Participant Selection Criteria, Recruiting, Screening, and Selection

Clear identification of the criteria that study participants must meet enables the researcher to focus participant recruitment efforts toward the most appropriate organizations, groups, and locations. This study's selection criteria and recruiting processes are detailed below.

3.4.1 Participant Selection Criteria

As noted above, purposive, criterion sampling by (Creswell, 2007; Eland-Goossensen, Van De Goor, Vollemans, Hendriks, & Garretsen, 1997; Noy, 2008; Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994) was used to recruit and select participants who met criteria specific to the personal and professional experiences described in the research question.

Eligible participants for this study met the following qualifications, per the rationale noted for each: downsizing managers (as defined in Chapter 1) in their current or a prior organization during the last 10 years, so that participants' memories will be fresh; the downsizing experience must have occurred at least 3 months prior to recruiting, to ensure participants are not still in the midst of the process and/or related trauma (DeLisi et al., 2003); and not previously known to nor employed in the same organization as the researcher, to prevent researcher bias, avoid existing relationships, and maintain participant privacy and confidentiality (Costley & Gibbs, 2006).

The researcher also sets the criteria that they resides within Klang Valley as to address the challenges faced on logistic and availability for meet up and reach out.

The researcher contacted the individuals directly by e-mail or phone, and a participant screening occurred to determine the potential participant's eligibility. In order to maintain confidentiality, the researcher will not disclose the selected study participants to anyone.

The Call for Research Participants included these criteria to ensure awareness of potential participants prior to the screening process.

3.4.2 Participant Recruiting

Interview 1: Participant Screening and Selection

The researcher utilized a 3-phase interview approach (Seidman, 2006) to gather details of participants' experiences, as illustrated in Table 4. The researcher began by conducting a participant screening (Interview #1; Appendix C) with potential participants face-to-face, online, or by private phone to gather qualification and demographic information and to begin to "build a foundation for the interview relationship" (Seidman, 2006, p. 46).

Participant screening and the follow-up session took 15-20 minutes and occurred by phone or private e-mail to allow for efficiency with regards to time and cost on behalf of all parties involved as per cited by Weiss, 1994. In addition to the criteria above, demographic information obtained during the participant screening allowed for balancing of the participant pool across a breadth of experience and perspectives (as per Seidman, 2006; e.g., a goal of equal representation of men and women; a range of ages, years of work experience, industries, etc.).

Table 4. Interview Stages of the Study

Component	Interview #1: Participant Screening	Interview #2: In-Depth Interview	Interview #3: Member Checking
Agenda	• Began building rapport and relationship with potential participant • Discussed study and initial process-related questions participant may have • Conducted Participant Screening (Appendix C) • If selected, provided informed consent form • If not selected, sent e-mail and appreciation for their volunteerism	• Confirmed/collected completed informed consent form • Conducted In-depth Interview (Appendix D) • Answered any questions and confirmed next steps	• Discussed any changes to transcription provided to participant for review and confirmation (Appendix F) • Was prepared to gather and record new data if offered • Thanked participant for willingness to participate in the study
Method	Face-to-face, online, or private phone	Face-to-face, online, or private phone	Private phone or private e-mail
Estimated time	15-20 minutes	60-120 minutes	As needed

The screening process enabled the researcher to identify whether a potential participant meets the necessary criteria described earlier. The screening process served to build rapport and relationships with the participant and to confirm their credibility in order to identify any underlying or untrustworthy reasons anyone may have toward participation (Seidman, 2006). The researcher conducted 20 participant screenings, of which 14 were eligible and selected to participate. The potential respondent pool were identified from HR practitioners that the researcher met in various HR networking events.

Once selected, each participant received an informed consent form via his or her private e-mail address. Upon receipt and review of each completed informed

consent form, the researcher contacted each participant via private phone or private e-mail to schedule the interview within the following 1 to 2 weeks.

In three instances, potential participants did not meet the participant screening criteria, and the researcher sent individual e-mails advising of this, and thanked them for their time and consideration. Any information collected for potential participants not selected for the study was shredded (physical) or erased (electronic) after being deemed ineligible for the study. The disposal of data collected from eligible study participants is detailed later in this chapter.

3.5   Data Collection

The Interviews used "combine structure with flexibility" as cited by Richie & Lewis, 2003. The data collection occurred using a 3-phase interview process. The participant screening (Interview #1; Appendix C) was described earlier in the Participant Selection Criteria, Recruiting, Screening, and Selection section. This section describes the interview recording and transcription methods, as well as the in-depth interview (Interview #2; Appendix D), and member checking (Interview #3; Appendix F), the second and third phases of Seidman's (2006) 3-phase interview approach are described below.

Interviews for this study occurred online (1 participant) or by telephone (9 participants) and face to face (4 participants), and the researcher recorded each interview for later transcription. Only two of the interviews was conducted face-to-face. Creswell, 2007; Weiss, 1994 cited that face-to-face interviewing was the preferred interviewing method, and the face-to-face interviews would have occurred in a public, mutually agreed location that was safe and quiet, allowed for participant

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privacy and overall comfort of the participant and the researcher, and facilitated clearer recording of the interview.

In the event that the researcher and the participant were not able to arrange a face-to-face or online interview, a telephone interview occurred. Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004 cited "Telephone interviews can yield good quality data with maximized response rate and thus can be an effective means of data collection". If the researcher and the participant are unable to meet face-to-face (whether due to timing, resources, or distance), the online and phone interview alternatives enabled the researcher to reach a sufficient number of participants providing a more diverse population for the study. On-line, synchronous interviews only took place with 1 participant, as there were challenges in scheduling interviews during an available day and time, and equipment was not readily available during the scheduled times. Sturges & Hanrahan (2004) mentioned that the research methods literature reflected that relatively few qualitative studies utilized telephone interviewing, although comparisons between telephone to face-to-face interviewing results in data of similar quality (Novick, 2008).

Thus, regardless of whether face-to-face, online, or telephone interview methods were employed for this study, all results yielded similar quality responses and served as acceptable methods in which to conduct the interviews necessary for this study.

The researcher transcribed each interview, including the removal or replacement of identifiable information (e.g., "[co-worker's name]") to maintain participant privacy and confidentiality. Each participant received a copy of his or her

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transcribed participant screening (Interview #1; Appendix C) and in-depth interview (Interview #2; Appendix D) for review in preparation for member checking (Interview #3; Appendix F).

3.5.1 Interview 2: In-Depth Interview

Interview #2 is an in-depth, semi-structured interview conducted face-to-face, online, or by telephone with the selected participants (Seidman, 2006), which enabled me to obtain rich, meaningful descriptions of the participants' experiences. The in-depth interview questions (Appendix D) corresponded with the study's research questions as illustrated in Appendix E. Open-ended questions provide participants with the opportunity to expand upon their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Some of the key questions are as follows:

3. Describe your experience with downsizing decision making, including, but not limited to, the following:

   i.   Your reaction

   ii.   Reactions of others in your same role

   iii.   Your manager's reaction and any other reactions up your line of management

   iv.   Your experience with the process itself (including communication with your manager, your peers, and employees)

   v.   Other downsizing managers' experience with the process

   vi.   Professional impact(s) on you

   vii.   Personal impact(s) on you

   viii.   Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the decision making part of your downsizing experience.

6. Describe your experience with implementing the downsizing, including, but not limited to, the following:

    i.   Downsized employees' reactions

   ii.   Survivor or non-downsized employees' reactions

  iii.   Your own reactions

  iv.   Reactions of others in your same role

    v.   Your manager's reaction and any other reactions up your line of management

  vi.   Your experience with the process itself (including communication with your manager, your peers, and employees)

 vii.   Other downsizing managers' experience with the process

viii.   Professional impact(s) on you

  ix.   Personal impact(s) on you

  x.   Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the implementation part of your downsizing experience

8. Describe your experience with managing in the Post-downsizing environment, including, but not limited to the following:

    i.   Relationships with downsized employees

   ii.   Relationships with non-downsized or survivor employees

  iii.   Reactions of others in your same role

  iv.   Your own reactions

    v.   Your manager's reaction and any other reactions up your line of management

  vi.   Your experience with the process itself (including communication with your manager, your peers, and employees)

 vii.   Other downsizing managers' experience with the process

viii.   Your loyalty (to team, to organization)

  ix.   Professional impact(s) on you

   x.   Personal impact(s) on you

  xi.   Impact(s) on your productivity

 xii.   Impacts on your morale/motivation

xiii.   Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the aftermath of your downsizing experience.

3.6　Data Analysis

The analysis of the data obtained from the qualitative interviews led to a number of themes and sub-themes.

3.6.1 Implementer's Experiences of Procedural Aspects

This theme reflects the implementers' experiences of the manner in which the retrenchment process was managed and includes a number of sub themes:

1.　The need to restructure was found to be the most frequent cause for the retrenchment decision.

2.　Majority of the participants experienced the organisational management style as autocratic in making the final decision on whether to implement the retrenchment decision. This meant that management had already made the decision to retrench prior to entering into the consultation process.

3.　In Majority of participants' organisations, objective selection criteria were applied, for example the last-in-first-out principle subject to the retention of key skills.

4.　Most of the participants experienced the organisation as offering more than the minimum legal requirements for severance pay.

5.　Majority of participants experienced their organisations as offering some form of formalised assistance to retrenchees, with outplacement initiatives for the victim being the most popular form of assistance offered.

6.　Majority of participants were satisfied that attempts at communication increased in their organisations, once the news of the retrenchment decision had broken.

7. Majority of the participants were of the opinion that the victims were treated with dignity and respect and that in their experience, victim s were treated as appropriate as possible after all option has been exhausted.

8. All participants reported that no formal follow up systems were in place to check up on victims' welfare.

3.6.2 Implementer's Experiences of Personal Aspects

The different sub themes emerging from the second central theme are summarised below:

1. On the participants' experiences of organisational expectations in their roles as implementers of the retrenchment decision, in all cases the participants' main task was ensuring compliance with legal requirements as per the relevant labour legislation and in most cases to enact the retrenchment conversation and answer all questions.

2. As part of their role preparation, most of the participants reported receiving training in the procedural aspects of retrenchment as well as some information on what they could expect from the victims in term s of their emotional reactions.

3. In some of the cases, the implementers' emotional experiences during the retrenchment process indicated that they experienced negative feelings, for example concern regarding their own jobs.

4. Diverse reactions were obtained with regard to the implementers' emotional experiences of the retrenchment conversation. This relates to amongst others, feelings of guilt and a sense of responsibility, experiences

of decreased emotional wellbeing, role overload, role conflict, and a sense of isolation.

5. Concerning the implementers' experiences of the retrenchment conversation, the majority of participants reported experiencing dysfunctional conversation types some of the times during their retrenchment conversations. The majority of participants relied on emotion-focussed coping techniques or behaviours to reduce or resist the dysfunctional effects of their emotions.

Majority of the participants diverted their attention to non -work activities, focusing on something else other than their own distress or that of the retrenchment victim.

3.6.3   Implementer's Experiences of Enabling Strategies

The third central theme relates to the role that organisational and personal enabling strategies can play in preparing implementers for the challenges they may face in handling retrenchment conversations. The findings can be summarised as follows:

1. All participants were in agreement that organisational emotional support, pre-retrenchment training or coaching and psychological counselling was vital to their performance in fulfilling the implementer role.

2. The majority of participants expressed the view that because of the changing world of work and the implications for the traditional psychological contract, the responsibility for career management was a joint one between employers and employees.

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3. Relating to personal and practical preparation for the implementer role, the majority of participants reported on the value of investing time in personal preparation.

After each interview transcription was complete and approved by the participant, the researcher read the transcriptions, and became intimately familiar with the data, providing for a closer connection in which to begin analysis. The researcher provided brief participant profiles, to provide insight into the demographics of the study's participants while protecting confidentiality and anonymity. The analysis techniques that the researcher used, use include generating meaning of the data, by "selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 7). The researcher generated meaning by pulling out significant statements from the interviews, putting these statements into a table (which will be illustrated and discussed in Chapter 4), and formulating meaning; thereby allowing for the inclusion of generated meanings during thematic analysis (Creswell, 2007); coding, the researcher "break[s] up and categorize[s] the data into simpler, more general categories" (Ruona, 2005, p. 241)

The coding process enables greater efficiency in the analysis of the data. This study utilized a combination of prior-research-driven and data-driven codes. Prior-research driven codes drew from existing themes in the literature and provided an initial list of codes to begin the coding process, while data-driven codes derived through themes that emerged during analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ruona, 2005).

Common themes identified in the literature review include shared vision, resistance to change, commitment/loyalty, morale/motivation, productivity/job performance, survivor syndrome, and emotional experience. Additional coding may occur as additional themes emerge from the data itself during data analysis. The researcher was open to an evolving code system as the analysis unfolded (as cited by Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ruona, 2005); thematic analysis, in an attempt to identify existing or emerging themes (Creswell, 2007; Ruona, 2005). "Boyatzis, 1998 stated that themes can be conceptually organized through the identification and application of an underlying construct".

The researcher pulled patterns and themes from responses on each phase of the downsizing (decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath), as well as themes across downsizing in its entirety. During thematic analysis, the researcher also compared identified themes to the existing literature relative to this study, as reviewed in Chapter2; and composite descriptions, to provide a summarization and verbatim examples of what happened, how it happened, and the essence of the participants' experiences.

Boyatzis, 1998; Ruona, 2005 stated that coding, thematic analysis, generating meaning, and composite descriptions of the data assisted in uncovering the deepest sense of the participants' experiences and illustrated those experiences for the reader.

3.6.4 Credibility and Verification

Ruona, 2005 cited that credibility relates to "how research findings match reality". Cassell, Symon, Buehring, & Johnson, 2006 mentioned that qualitative research differs from quantitative research in this respect, as there is no strict

formatting guidelines in presenting data and results. The following processes will help to increase this study's credibility: the researcher completed researcher bracketing, or reflexivity (Appendix A), of personal experience related to the research, while drafting the dissertation proposal, including updates and revisions prior to submission of the proposal to mentor, committee, and to the school. Prior to interactions with participants, the researcher reviewed the bracketing to recollect these experiences, perspectives, and/or biases, to help the researcher to come to terms with what is known and assist in freeing the mind to focus as objectively as possible on the subject, participants, and topic at hand.

Following a consistent process encourages reliability and the potential for future transferability. The researcher used a consistent process (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) by referring frequently to and following the research process (Table 3) and the analysis techniques described in Chapter 3, and by keeping organized notes and files.

Member checking, or member validation, is "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Participants reviewed, amended (if necessary), and confirmed a transcription of their interviews as confirmation of their experiences (Bryman, 2001; Creswell, 2007), which are included in discussions held during member checking (Interview #3; Appendix F).

The study engaged a small group of participants that met the criteria described in Chapter 3. Huberman & Miles, 1983 cited that it is normal for qualitative studies to use smaller samples, but to use more in-depth methods of retrieving data. Triangulation also occurred through comparing and contrasting, researcher

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bracketing and reflexivity, multiple interviews with each participant, and member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Scandura & Williams, 2000) to ensure that, although the sample size was small, the researcher took steps to ensure credibility and generalizability (Scandura & Williams, 2000). Specific to the generalizability of the study, it is necessary in the written account of the study to provide detailed information regarding participants, selection methods, context, and data generation and analysis methods in order for readers to decide how far and to whom the findings may be generalized. (Priest, 2002, p. 60)

3.6.5 Ethical Considerations

The researcher took into consideration and provided participants information specific to participant privacy and confidentiality, risks and benefits, any necessary consideration for vulnerable populations, and data security. Each of these key ethical considerations is addressed herein, in terms of the issues, literature on point, and study methods which serve to mitigate each such concern.

Informed consent and participant confidentiality are important ethical considerations to include in the development of a study. In this study, the researcher have obtained informed consent with an informed consent form, which provided evidence of the consent of the participant to participate in the study while understanding the basis for the research and the right to confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity when called for in the study (Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994). Differing industries have associations or academies that provide rules and regulations surrounding research or work conducted by professionals in the field. Specific to the field of management, the Academy of Management (2008) details these guidelines.

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The Academy of Management's code of ethics details three general principles of its members in the preamble: "responsibility, integrity, and respect for people's rights and dignity". The code of ethics also discusses conflicts of interest and the need for informed consent in research.

Confidentiality is another ethical consideration integrated into this study. Privacy of the participants' responses within the study is of the utmost importance. Maintaining participants' privacy throughout this study is of the utmost importance to the researcher.

In order to maintain that privacy and create anonymity, the researcherassigned participants a penname prior to the interview, and ensured that the findings from this study did not provide specific details that enable anyone to call out a participant in a way that may danger his or her career, organization, or social being. A master penname list matching participants and their corresponding penname remains under my discreet care. No one had access to the master penname list at any point prior to, during, or after the study was completed.

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this study. The researcher asked participants to recall unpleasant experiences, which may have caused distress. The researcher reminded participants at the beginning of the in-depth interview that they may stop being in the study at any time if they become uncomfortable.

Participants did not receive a direct or tangible benefit to participating in this study. The informed consent form noted that participation in this study may help the researcher research and help others in the future. As discussed in Chapter 1, the

outcome of this study may assist organizational leaders, change agents, managers (including downsizing managers), employees, clients, and other organizational stakeholders, as well as the scholar-practitioner community, in finding new appreciation for the challenges that downsizing manager's face, and informing the future decision making affecting the lives and livelihoods of the organizations' human assets. The likelihood of participants experiencing distress is minimal, and the severity of this risk is low. Therefore, the benefits of this study outweigh the potential risk.

The safekeeping of documents, and notes are steps towards privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants may withdraw their participation from the study at any time. In addition, if participants found discomfort in responding to any questions, whether in a verbal or written manner, during the study, the researcherinformed them that they refrain from responding.

3.7   Limitations

Some of the limitations existed in this study are as follows:

i.   **Sample size**: The sample size for this study was small, as it was a qualitative, exploratory study. Results of this study are not statistically significant or generalizable. Convenience of time, location, and use of face-to-face interviews did not allow me to interview a larger sample size. The use of exploratory, semi-structured, in-depth interviews provided for rich, thick descriptions of the participants' experiences, thereby ensuring that I am able to retrieve a deep understanding of the experience.

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ii.   **Time**: Time is another limitations that did not allow the researcher to reach out bigger participant numbers. A study on a bigger number than 14 for a qualitative study will need a longer time to complete.

iii.   **Demography**: Klang Valley was chosen due to time and situation constraint. By choosing Klang Valley, it will ease accessibility of respondents and availability for the interview to take place.

As the researcher do have direct experience as a downsizing manager, prior downsizing experiences and relationships with downsizing managers have explored and shared clear notions and perspectives on this topic. The researcher have undertaken a reflexivity exercise (Appendix A) to record the researcher related experiences, thoughts, questions, notions, and perspectives, as a method to avoiding personal bias within the study (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Ruona, 2005). Realization of these perspectives assisted the researcher in recognizing, disclosing, and putting aside such biases and freeing the mind to focus as objectively as possible on the participants and topic at hand. Chapter 5 revisits these limitations and provides recommendations for future research.

3.8   Discussion

3.8.1 Procedural Experiences of Retrenchment Initiative

The core focus to be determined and addressed in the analysis of implementers' procedural experiences suggest that in most cases the legislative requirements of the relevant legislation were followed. The finding that a minority of the participants experienced limited or no compliance could be interpreted as either the retrenchment decision makers (senior management) being unaware of the legal provisions, or they

selectively applied the law. In addition, the findings could al so be interpreted as the implementers not advising the decision makers correctly.

With regards to whether the business goals were achieved against the suggested operational requirements, some participants were of the view that while there were short-term benefits, there might have been longer-term losses. Some participants were of the view that there was a downside to achieving stated business goals and that was the hum an impact of retrenchment. Alternatively, some suggested that the emotional costs were often ignored in the business rationale. Folger &Skarlicki , 1998; Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997 stated that these experiences are validated in the literature, where authors indicate that the people dimension is often marginalised when implementing retrenchment programmes.

The majority of participants experienced their management as already having made the final decision to retrench even before consulting with the other consulting party. The participants' experiences are therefore in contrast with legal requirements and would be seen to be supported by their experiences of the organisational management style as characteristically autocratic. The minority of participants experienced the selection criterion of poor performance as a subjective and unfair selection mechanism, as in their opinion, poor performers or other unwanted employees were managed out of the company under the guise of retrenchment. Issues of justice, specifically procedural justice, which refers to the perceived legitimacy of the retrenchment, that is, perceived fairness of the processes used to implement the retrenchment decision, is also supported by the literature (Brockner, 1992).

A minority of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the role that senior management played in being involved in the notification and communication process of the retrenchment decision as well as the poor treatment (lack of dignified and respectful treatment) of employees. Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996 cited that this aggravated their experience of unfair treatment of employees and is supported by the theory of informational and interactional justice respectively.

3.8.2   Personal Experiences of Retrenchment Initiative

With reference to the researcher personal experiences, most participants or dismissal manager underwent at least a briefing on what to say and what not to say to the affected employees. Only a few of the implementers experienced some form of experiential training or coaching to prepare them to handle the dynamics of their own emotions. This experience is supported in the literature (Grunberg, Moore & Greenberg, 2004; Molinsky & Margolis, 2005, 2006).

Participants mentioned about their own initial response to the views of retrenchment by indicating having thoughts and feelings about their own job security. This experience would relate to the literature review on employee awareness of the new employment and psychological contract and the role that they need to play in becoming employable (Leung & Chang, 2002).

Participants also indicated that upon being tasked with the dismissing manager's role, they experienced a range of thoughts and emotions related to the task and coming to terms with their role in having to implant the decision. These experiences are supported in the literature (Grunberg, Moore & Greenberg, 2004; Mishra, Spreitzer & Mishra, 1998).

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Further to the personal experiences of the dismissing manager's role, their emotional experiences during the retrenchment process also require attention. Majority of participants claimed experiencing negative feelings. Participants also referred to experiencing a variety of emotions. As the participants form part of the surviving groups of stakeholders, it could be postulated that the negative emotional experiences are in some instances comparable to the symptom s of "survivor syndrome" as experienced by survivors. Evidence of this is suggested in the literature on the symptoms of "survivor syndrome" in remaining managers (Newell & Dopson, 1996).

Concerning the dismissal managers' experiences of the retrenchment conversation, previous researchers have highlighted dysfunctional conversation types, where the experience of their emotions negatively directed implementer behaviour in delivering the retrenchment message, thereby undermining the treatment afforded the victims (Molinsky & Margolis, 2006). The majority of participants reported experiencing dysfunctional conversation types during their retrenchment conversations some of the time.

3.8.3 Organisational and Personal Enabling Strategies

The majority of participants relied on emotion-focussed coping techniques or behaviours to reduce or resist the dysfunctional effects on their emotions, which also assisted them in maintaining composure and treating the retrenchment victims with interpersonal sensitive treatment during the retrenchment conversation. This is borne out in the literature (Noronha & D'Cruz, 2005, 2006; Molinsky & Margolis, 2006).

The majority of participants indicated that they did not receive sufficient or any organisational support for the challenges they may face in handling retrenchment conversations. The notion of organisational support is suggested as a significant buffer against work stress and the participants' experiences in this regard are echoed in the literature by the participants in the study conducted by Wright & Barling (1998). All participants in the present study were in agreement that organisational emotional support, pre-retrenchment training or coaching and psychological counselling were vital to their performance in fulfilling the implementer role.

The literature would suggest that implementers often need counselling in dealing with their own guilt and stress (Grunberg, Moore & Greenberg, 2004; Mishra, Spreitzer & Mishra, 1998), as it allows those responsible for implementing the retrenchment programme the opportunity to ventilate and dissipate their feelings in a safe and appropriate setting. The majority of participants expressed the view that because of the changing world of work and the implications for the traditional psychological contract, the responsibility for career management was a joint one between employers and employees. Various authors support these views (Sandler, 2003; Leung & Chang, 2002; Thornhill & Saunders, 1997). Relating to personal and practical preparation for the implementer role, the majority of participants reported on the value of investing time in personal preparation. This finding is also supported by the literature (DuBose, 1994).

3.9 Summary

This chapter included details surrounding the methodology proposed for this study. In summary, this study used a qualitative approach following Seidman's

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(2006) 3-phase interview approach. Purposive recruiting assisted in identifying participants that met the criteria specified herein. The interview transcription served as the primary tool for analysis. The researcher used qualitative techniques when analyzing the data: thematic analysis, constant comparative, and making metaphors. To maintain credibility, the researcher used bracketing; a logical, consistent process; rich, thick descriptions; and member checking. In addition, ethical considerations included obtaining participant consent and maintaining confidentiality using pennames.

The findings of this study also benefit retrenchment decision makers (senior management) in which will offer clearer perspective of the dismissing manager's dilemma hence assisting them in understanding some of the challenges implementers face in implementing the retrenchment. This will in return create and opportunity for them to offer guidance in the role that employers can play in preparing the implementers to deal with the emotional impact of retrenching others that can be used to develop guidelines for assisting implementers in their personal preparation for their role.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.0   Introduction

Despite the critical role in retrenchment, most researchers and practitioners have ignored the experiences of retrenchment implementers when formulating retrenchment models and best practice guidelines. Molinsky and Margolis (2006) confirmed that like the victims and survivors of retrenchments, the implementers of retrenchments too are negatively affected by the retrenchment act, experiencing many emotional challenges when implementing the retrenchment. Wright and Barling (1998) suggest that implementers are worthy of empathetic scrutiny because of the negative effects on both their wellbeing and functioning within the organisation, which manifest as a result of implementing the retrenchment.

Based on the researcher's observations and feedback from affected employees in the retrenchment exercise, majority of the affected employees register and experience the following feelings and reactions during the periods of retrenchment. The emotions and feeling will likely affect those are not retrenched as well. They may experience mixed feeling as well such as guilt or even relief that they have been spared, while some may even wished that their name are included in the list. Managers on the other hand may mourn the loss of employees and the company that they know and has been working with.

Those who are retrenched is expected to feel sad, angry, depressed, and worried. They maybe concern about their future financial or job prospects. With no surprise some may view retrenchment as a good thing to happen to them as they can

explore and start up their own business. It is important to understand that the majority of the feelings and emotions experienced after a retrenchment are completely normal.It is important to register and acknowledge that retrenchment is not an easy process. Knowledge and full understanding about the process detail is critically important and useful in dealing with retrenchment situation or exercises that has become increasingly common.

This chapter presents the key findings that have emerged from in-depth interviews with 14 downsizing managers. The chapter includes data regarding the demographics of study participants, the description and analysis of the collected data, interview summaries, the thematic analysis of the data, analysis of the data in relation to the research question, and summation of the major findings of the study.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

This section provides additional insight and analysis into the population, and a description of the sample of participants in this study. Additionally, participant profiles and interview summaries provide sufficient details for the reader to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's experience(s).

4.1.1 Population

The researcher interviewed participants to explore their personal and professional experiences as downsizing managers during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. The study criteria required that each participant (a) was a downsizing manager (as defined in Chapter 1); (b) lives within Klang Valley; (c) had a downsizing experience at least 3 months, but no

more than 10 years, prior to the study interview; and (d) was not employed at the same organization. The sample used for this study included willing participants to share their encounter and experiences as detailed in Chapter 3.

4.1.2 Description of the Sample

The sample for this study comprised 14 participants who met the criteria detailed in Chapter 3. Table 6 provides demographic data about participants, six of whom were male and six female. Study participants included a diverse range of age ranges (20 to 30 range through 50 to 60 range), highest level of education attained (bachelor's through doctorate), geographic region where participant resides, and level within the downsizing organization (manager through executive).

Table 6: Participant's Demographic

Participant Characteristic	Numbers
Age group:	
20 – 30	6
30 – 40	2
40 – 50	3
50 - 60	-
Highest education attained:	
Doctorate	1
Master	3
Degree	6
Diploma	4
Geographical Location: (within Klang Valley)	
Central	4
South	1
Northern	1
East	1
West	7
Industry of employment during downsizing:	
Manufacturing	5
Services	5
Education	-
Retail	4
Position title at time of downsizing:	

Participant Characteristic	Numbers
Management (CEO, COO, CFO)	1
General Manager	1
Manager	5
Executive	7
Status with downsized organization at time of study:	
Retrenched	8
Left voluntarily – new opportunity, etc.	2
Still employed	4

Three participants (R12, R2, R5) had availability and sufficient recall to discuss two experiences they had as a downsizing manager, as noted within Table 6. In order to ensure anonymity, the researcher grouped participants into general rather than specific age and industry categories.

Nine participants completed in-depth interviews by phone with me, four was done in person and one participant completed his in-depth interview in an online, synchronous format. All participants appeared very willing to be open and honest in their responses. Each participant shared his or her personal and professional experiences as downsizing managers, and expressed interest in learning more about the experiences of other downsizing managers so that they could compare, contrast, and learn from them. In many instances, participants responded similarly to interview questions; conversely, some participants provided unique responses.

4.1.3 Participant Profiles and Interview Summaries

Although many downsizing managers provided similar responses, each responded as a unique individual. The research reflects the individual opinions and experiences of each of the participants, and a short interview summary for each participant is provided below. These summaries provide a general sense of each

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participant's background, as well as how each individual viewed their experience as a downsizing manager.

"R1"- After 13 years with an organization in the technology industry, R1 faced his experience as a downsizing manager. In his experience, the plant he worked in was closing and approximately 500 employees were losing their positions over a 6-month period. R1 had to decide which members of his team of eight would leave during each wave of the shutdown, in addition to his leaving in the final wave. R1's team was unanimous in wanting to know who would go when, so he provided the plan for the team at a meeting with them.

The team's reaction to learning of when their respective last days were, was shocking because now it's real. We're not just talking about it, or hearing about it. "Now my date is." . . . I've prepped them enough that they knew it was going to happen they just didn't know the date. Now they could start planning. I tried to turn a negative into something optimistic and positive that they can plan to. I did the best I could.

For this study, it was typical for participants to spend approximately 1 hour discussing each downsizing experience. R1 was the only participant who opted to interview via the online, synchronous format, and R1 and the researcher spent almost 2 hours discussing his experience. The researcher believe this had to do with the comfort level of myself and him. This particular interview was later in the evening, so it is unclear whether the comfort level and length of the interview were due to time of day or being able to see each other during the discussion.

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"**R2**" - After 15 years with her organization in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry, R2 encountered the downsizing experience she described for this study. During this experience, R2 was responsible for realigning processes and people within her department, and downsized one manager and two employees in a remote office. R2 also talked about the decision-making process in another experience, in which R2 and her peers (at the vice president level) knew that they needed to do something, or there would be significant repercussions down the road. Rather than moving forward with R2 and her peers' recommendations, the company chose to outsource the technology-specific personnel and processes to another organization.

R2 shared that *'one of my peers had gone to headquarters to present our plan'. He came back and said . . . , "You're not going to believe what's happened. They want us to work with this company. They want to outsource all of this," and we were all just in shock. . . . It totally changed the whole picture. . . . And one by one, each of the VPs ended up leaving.*

Approximately 4 months after the transition to the contracted outsource company; R2 received her own layoff notice.

"**R3**" - After almost 10 years in an organization in the financial services industry, R3 had to downsize four employees in the experience he discussed for this study. At the time, he supervised approximately 50 employees and compared his experience to that of a funeral:

You just kind of have your period of mourning, but come next Monday, after you let people go on a Friday or a Thursday, you've got to pick up the pieces and

start doing your job again. So you can't be stuck in the mourning stage; I mean that isn't good for the team, and it's not good for the organization, and it's not good for you personally.

"**R4**" - After more than 30 years with an organization in the communications industry, R4's management team approached her to downsize almost all of her team and replace those individuals with multinational employees. R4 handled the hiring, transitioning of processes, personnel management, and ongoing maintenance of multinational work processes. Downsized employees remained with the organization for 60 days after learning the news. R4 expressed the significant emotional toll that the downsizing experience had on her.

R4 stated *'well like I said, I ended up breaking down and crying as I was giving the news to someone that they were going to lose their job. You know, in some senses, I think that was an extremely selfish thing because it wasn't supposed to be about me and my feelings. It was supposed to be about them. It was like my tears, maybe it made me seem more human, but it also maybe took the focus away from them and it shouldn't have'.*

R4 appeared to be the most stressed during the study interview process out of all participants, as she expressed feelings of burnout and having to work harder because of the challenges encountered in working with offshore resources (such as culture and time zone).

"**R5**" - After almost 10 years with a manufacturing organization, R5 faced his first experience as a downsizing manager. The experience included six rounds of cuts, month after month, each of which he was unaware of until announced. R5

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discussed his experience during the first two rounds for this study; he had to downsize two employees in each instance, and those employees left the premises immediately. A few times during his interview, R5 stated that he felt as if he had failed his employees by having to implement the downsizing, especially due to the friendships he had formed there.

R5 said *'I think the biggest thing that came over me more than anything was the sense of failure on my part, that I had failed my employees. Part of my job was protecting their job by making the right decisions, you know, so, I felt like a failure'.*

R5 eventually decided to leave this company to pursue his education and identify a better opportunity.

"R6" - When asked how many experiences R6 had a downsizing manager, she responded "too many to count." After 5 years with a manufacturing organization, R6's skills at managing a downsizing were required once again. She recalled two experiences in the interview, one in which employees were notified and terminated on the same day, and another in which a 60-days' notice was provided to employees. There were 160 employees impacted overall, and downsizing conversations occurred individually. Based on her experiences, other departments began reaching out to her to provide a consultative role in the development and implementation of their downsizings. R6 hoped that this research would result in being able to describe how to get out of this death spiral more quickly for other people, because it's never easy to do, and you never want to feel the fate of the organization.

"R7" - After almost 5 years with a manufacturing organization, the downsizing experience R7 discussed in the interview involved laying off 15 employees, of which

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three individuals had memorable reactions to the news. Downsizing conversations occurred individually, and employees left the premises immediately. When asked about his initial thoughts on having to decide whom to downsize, R7 replied, "Like I was just doing my job." He was compassionate towards employees within the organization, but also realized the necessity of downsizing due to decreasing revenues.

R7 said *'one thing I learned is that you can never underestimate the human traces in people, like people pick up different tendencies, elements, interactions, their whole life. How do you know that this one person wasn't sitting over dinner with his best friend on Saturday and said, "You know, if I ever got laid off, I'd freaked out and possibly run mad." You know, how do you know that it doesn't happen? You can just never take anything for granted and I don't try to ever ask why they acted that way. You just accept it. Honestly, I don't know what I would do. People cry, get emotional, [and] walk out. I could be one of those people that just get up and leave.'*

R7 was involved in numerous downsizing experiences over the years with several organizations prior to the experience he recalled for this study.

"R8" - After almost 10 years with an organization in the financial services industry, R8 faced her first experience as a downsizing manager. Her experience included two rounds of deep cuts, in which upper management ignored the recommendations R8 had originally provided.

R8 said *'so, anyway, I think that the priorities weren't communicated up. What could have been done better is that those priorities that my boss' boss should have insisted on—hearing the priorities and not the schmoozing—because it ended up that*

we laid off so many people that all of the people that got laid off were providing the data to the people that weren't laid off. So the people that weren't laid off didn't have data. They couldn't do their models because my team was providing the data for them, for their models.'

R8 was responsible for downsizing three of her employees, two of whom were remote and one who was on-site, all of whom left the organization that day. Although the company that eventually took over the organization offered R8 a position, including relocation, she declined the offer. R8 talked the fastest of all the participants in this study, and she admitted later in the interview how much anxiety she had leading up to the interview, as she knew she would have to relive her experience.

"R9" - After more than 20 years in an organization within the communications industry, R9 faced his most significant experience as a downsizing manager. This experience involved downsizing 70% of employees within his department, an experience that took a significant amount of time and commitment to both downsized and surviving employees.

The downsizing communication occurred in individual conversations, and downsized employees had to leave the office by the end of the following day. Less than 3 years later, he faced another memorable experience as a downsizing manager with a private, much smaller organization. In this experience, there were three waves of downsizing, which included approximately 10 employees each. Downsized employees were required to leave the premises immediately. The perception and actions of the owner played a large part in the challenges faced with this experience,

as the owner was there, and he started crying and weeping, and trying to make it appear that he was caring, and so many people afterwards told me that they saw right through it.

"R10" - After 3 years with an organization in the manufacturing industry, R10 realized the need for a shift in strategy, which required the company to downsize. The decision was clear due to the significant decline in revenues resulting from several of the company's top customers deciding to discontinue use of the product for a cheaper and new alternative. In his experience, there were 30 employees downsized and asked to leave the organization that day. R10 expressed "deep regret and remorse" and having had a "heavy heart" throughout the downsizing process.

He stressed *'You first determine that you must do the downsizing; then you go through the emotional baggage and there is a lot of it, that you're going to affect people's lives, and their families, and potentially impact their financial situations in the short or long term, and you know it hurts. Nobody wants to do this; I can tell you, as the CEO of this company, as much as I've had to do it, I've never wanted to do it. It's an absolute drudgery to have to go through the process, but it's absolutely necessary to keep the enterprise alive. So to be specific, it was clear that it was a necessary step, it certainly didn't lessen the heavy heart that I had, and I think that most of the leadership team had.'*

"R11" - After 3 years in an organization in public administration, R11's organization faced budget concerns and, from R11's perspective, legal entanglement, and his manager instructed him to lay off four employees. R11 noted that his manager disappeared shortly after directing R11 to identify and downsize employees:

R11 shared *'I couldn't find my manager for a long time, but he showed up again when it came time for the axe to fall. He was scared. There was some stuff going on, but I don't know how much of that was avoiding it or what, you know. It became a sort of a tense environment work-wise.'*

R11 received his own layoff notice approximately 4 months later. Although he remembered the situation and the organization's turmoil, he had difficulty recalling specific details of his experience. As a result, R11's interview was the shortest of the participant group.

"R12" - After almost 25 years in an organization in the communications industry, R12 faced the two experiences as a downsizing manager that he described for this study. In each instance, he needed to downsize one employee, and each employee would remain with the organization for the next 60 days. R12's two experiences were extremely different from each other in the method used and the reactions of the downsized employees. R12 noted that in both instances he advised the downsized employee that his or her primary job over the next 60 days with the organization was to find a new job.

When people feel they are in crisis, they typically take one of two reactions: they disengage within the organization . . . [or they] engage even harder, because they felt that, you know, whether they had control or didn't have control, they weren't sure, but they sure as hell weren't going to be let go because they weren't performing.

"R13" - After years with an organization in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry, R13 and his four peers realized that change was

imminent due to drastic declines in workload. The format for communicating the news was to split employees into two groups by bringing them into separate meeting rooms at the same time to share the news. Approximately 50 downsized employees left the organization the same day. R13 shared that *'in such a situation to communicate, you can't really draw out the explanation. So I pretty much said, "We've split you guys into two groups, and the reason that we're meeting today is to announce that we're going through a downsizing and everyone in this room is impacted by it." You just kind of have to get it out on the table, and there was a little bit of a shock value, or shock factor that occurred. Then, I think naturally everybody is sitting there saying, "Oh shit! What do I do now?" and we actually then took them through briefly, really briefly, what the other people were hearing and why we had to make this decision, but I think everyone knew it.'*

"R14" - After 4 years in a manufacturing organization, R14's position in Human Resources required her to work with her business counterpart to downsize his department. This was just one of many downsizings occurring across the organization. R14 was pregnant during her experience, and found out prior to communicating a downsizing to approximately 150 employees that her own position would end in 7 months.

So [my manager] did not agree with [the] position [of the new company], and basically told us . . . , "Hey listen, I disagree that you should be told after you have completed your part in the process, so this is what's happening with your job," and he told me that my job was being eliminated at the end of the year. In some ways, it was a relief. Actually, it was a relief to know what my future was. Employees were typically given 2 weeks' to several months' notice. R14 mentioned that many of the

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employees that she called in to downsize felt bad that she had to deliver the difficult

news.

4.2   Data and Results of Analysis

The researcher identified a deeper level of understanding for each of the seven themes in the literature in the analysis of the data (Figure 6). In addition, during the analysis of participants' responses, some data did not fit into one of the existing themes from the literature, which resulted in the identification of one new theme: treating downsized employees humanely (Figure 6). Participant data supporting each of the eight themes is detailed below.
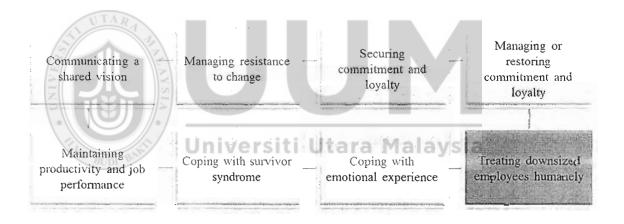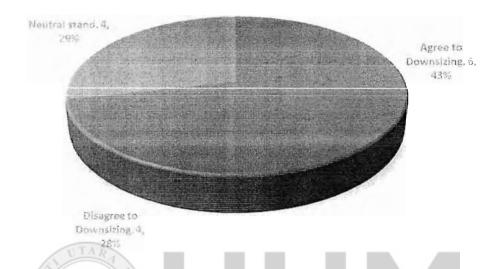

Figure 6. Themes relevant in the experiences of downsizing managers (seven existing themes from the literature and one new theme emergent from the data).

4.2.1 Communicating a shared vision.

Participants described their reactions to their respective organizations' decisions to downsize. Downsizing was a necessary decision for the company to survive (R9, R12, R10, R2, R6, R7); although some disagreed with the need to downsize, they understood that they had to do it (R11, R1, R3, R5). Of the 14

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participants, six downsizing managers mentioned communicating with their teams, and its criticality to managing in the aftermath (R12, R10, R13, R1, R4, R7).
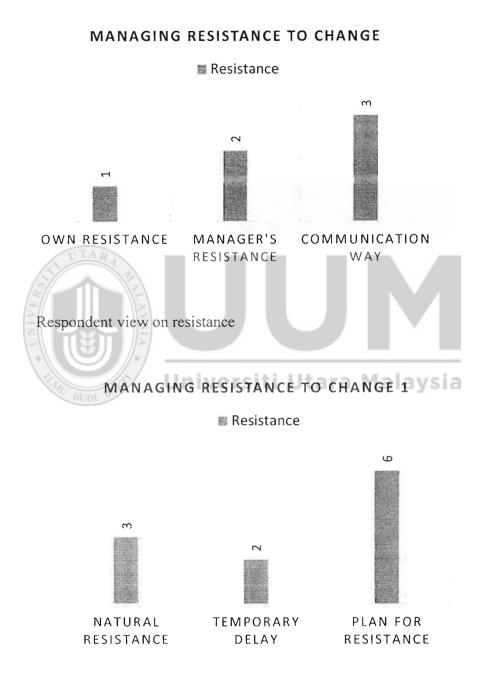
COMMUNICATING A SHARED VISION

Downsizing managers' experience with communicating a shared vision shows that executives and upper management view downsizing managers who share the vision of the organization in a positive light (R9, R12, R5). In addition, the downsizing managers' acceptance and sharing the vision eases their ability to communicate the vision to others (R12, R13, R1).

4.2.2 Managing resistance to change.

Once the downsizing managers identified or learned of the organization's decision to downsize, they may have exhibited a personal resistance to change or experienced resistance in employees. One downsizing manager talked about his own initial resistance to the change (R7), which provided brief delays in the inevitable need to downsize employees. Two participants mentioned resistance to implementing the downsizing by either their own manager, or one of their reporting managers

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(R12, R6). Three participants mentioned the resistance of employees based on their reactions to the communication of the news (R9, R12, R7).

MANAGING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Resistance

Respondent view on resistance

MANAGING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE 1

Resistance

Respondent view on preparation to manage resistance

The downsizing managers' management of resistance to change indicates that downsizing managers will experience resistance from employees, whether downsized or remaining with the organization, due to the nature of the impact on the organization and the livelihoods of individuals (R9, R12, R7); may only temporarily delay the inevitability of downsizing (R2, R7); and should plan for potential resistance to change by downsized employees, as it is never a bad idea, such as ensuring extra security, additional management presence, or notifying police on the day of the event (R9, R12, R14, R1, R3, R6).

4.2.3 Securing commitment and loyalty.

The researcher asked participants about their commitment or loyalty to their team and to their organization while managing in the aftermath of the downsizing. One downsizing manager had an interesting response to loyalty and referred to his perspective that loyalty has disappeared since his father's days on the job (R7).

Loyalty to the organization	Participants
Increased or stayed the same	(R12, R13, R5);
Diminished loyalty	(R9, R11, R12, R1, R3, R4, R5, R6);
Further diminished loyalty	(R3, R5);

Loyalty to the organization. Three downsizing managers responded that their loyalty increased or stayed the same (R12, R13, R5), whereas eight downsizing managers reported diminished loyalty (R9, R11, R12, R1, R3, R4, R5, R6). Two participants referred to further diminished loyalty after subsequent rounds of downsizing within the organization (R3, R5).

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Loyalty to the team	Participants
• Increased or stayed the same	(R9, R12, R3, R5);
• Help downsized employees through outplacement	(R9, R12, R13, R4, R5, R8, R7);
• Different loyalty feeling	(R14, R4);

Loyalty to the team. In addition to R1 as quoted above, four other downsizing managers referred to an increased feeling of loyalty to the team (R9, R12, R3, R5). Of the 14 participants, seven downsizing managers discussed their commitment to helping downsized employees find new jobs by providing resources and references (R9, R12, R13, R4, R5, R8, R7).

There was no mention of a decrease in loyalty to the team, but two downsizing managers mentioned a difference in the loyalty they had with the original team members or organization versus new team members or the new organization due to merger or acquisition (R14, R4).

Securing commitment and loyalty synthesis. Participants' responses reflected that a variety of factors might influence participants' commitment and loyalty to their organization and to their team. Many participants recalled decreased levels of commitment and loyalty to their organizations, especially after subsequent downsizings (R9, R11, R12, R1, R3, R4, R5, R6). Some participants thought that their company was committed to its employees, but felt otherwise after the company's decision to and eventual downsizing of the organization (R1, R3, R4).

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Many participants recalled increased levels of commitment and loyalty to their teams, especially in helping downsized employees find new jobs (R9, R12, R13, R4, R5, R8, R7). Two of the three participants who mentioned they had an increased or the same level of loyalty to the organization were members of the executive management team (R12, R13), one of who was a company founder. Reference to members of the participants' team and/or organization being similar to a "family" appear again herein, in the analysis of participants' emotional experience, as well as in the analysis of the research sub-question related to the downsizing manager's experience during implementation.

4.2.4 Maintaining or restoring morale and motivation.

Downsizing managers had to maintain or restore morale and motivation—their own, their management team's and/or other managers' within the organization, and their employees'—throughout the downsizing process.

Management by walking around was a concept that three downsizing managers used in an attempt to maintain or restore morale and motivation in the organization (R12, R1, R7). Downsizing managers recognized the importance of communication with remaining employees, not only in the concept of management by walking around, but by open communication with remaining employees related to the status and progress of the company.

Synthesizing the downsizing managers' maintenance or restoration of morale and motivation, participants' comments reflected that the post downsizing environment was often lack lustre. To restore morale and motivation to employees, participants used communication, whether through management by walking around or in meeting with individual employees or as a group in the post downsizing

environment. These efforts provided employees with an opportunity to either talk or learn more from the downsizing manager on topics such as how or why the downsizing happened and/or what employees needed to do so that they and the company could move forward.

4.2.5 Maintaining productivity and job performance. Participants reported a variety of responses regarding their ability to maintain productivity and job performance throughout the downsizing. Table 7 illustrates increased, decreased, and in one instance mixed levels of productivity in the post downsizing environment.

POST DOWNSIZING IMPACTS

Table 7. *Postdownsizing Impacts on Productivity*

Productivity level	Reasons	Participants
Increased	▪ No change to goals and workload	R11, R4, R5, R6
	▪ Employees feared they could be downsized next	R5, R7
	▪ Had to assist in responsibilities of team members that were downsized	R12, R4, R6, R8
	▪ Shifted workload to an appropriate amount	R11
Decreased	▪ Less willing to work hard after subsequent rounds ofdownsizing	R12, R5
	▪ Employees feared they could be downsized next and obsessedover that thought	R3
	▪ Natural level of disruption and/or mourning period	R9, R13, R3
	▪ Bad leadership	R6
Mixed	▪ Legal battles and news media impacted productivity	R14

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i. **Increased productivity levels.** Participants provided several reasons that productivity increased within their respective organizations during the post downsizing environment (R11, R12, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8): (a) that the organization maintained the same goals and processes as before the downsizing, (b) the managers needed to assist with workloads, (c) employees' fears of being on the next downsizing list, and (d) a shift in workload among employees to more appropriate and efficient levels.

Four participants noted that the organization maintained the same goals and processes in the post downsizing environment as the goals and processes that were present before the downsizing (R11, R4, R5, R6).

In addition, in order to maintain the same goals and processes with a smaller workforce, four participants recalled that their own productivity increased, as they needed to assist their teams with processes of employees who were no longer with the organization (R12, R4, R6, R8).

Two participants attributed the increased productivity levels to employees' fear for their jobs and to a lessened likelihood that the employee might be downsized next (R5, R7). Seven participants identified increased productivity levels in the post downsizing environment (R11, R12, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8)and noted specific reasons for those increased levels. Conversely, six participants described decreased productivity levels as follows.

ii. **Decreased productivity levels.** Six participants indicated that productivity levels decreased in the post downsizing environment (R9, R12, R13, R3, R5, R6). Reasons included (a) employees being less willing to work hard after

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subsequent rounds of downsizing, (b) employees' fear and obsession with possibility of future downsizings, (c) a natural level of disruption and/or mourning period, and (d) bad leadership.

Two participants recalled that employees' reactions to numerous downsizings was reflected in decreased productivity levels because there were employees who were less likely to put in the minimum work, or additional efforts, upon subsequent downsizings with the organization (R12, R5)

Employees' fears resulting from the downsizing not only prompted them to increase productivity, but they could also negatively influence productivity if taken too far. One participant mentioned an instance in which an employee's fears became obsessions and the employee's productivity levels decreased as a result (R3):

Three participants recalled a natural level of disruption, due to grieving the loss of employees that occurred within their organizations (R9, R13, R3). Often, there was not a lot of time for a mourning period; one participant noted he *"always tried to pick up the pieces as quickly as we can and keep morale up"* (R3).

Lastly, one participant noted that the productivity within her organization decreased due to bad leadership (R6). Once this participant and her peers escalated feedback regarding the bad leadership of their manager throughout the downsizing, senior management took swift action.

Thus, three participants identified reasons why there may have been both increased and decreased productivity levels (R12, R5, R6). Two of these participants recalled differences in productivity after subsequent (R5) or separate (R12) downsizing experiences. The third participant recalled her productivity level increased, as she had to downsize a member of her team, but that employees within her company showed decreased levels of productivity due to bad leadership throughout the downsizing (R6). In addition to these participants' experiences with increased and decreased levels of productivity, some one participant noted an instance of mixed productivity levels.

iii. Mixed productivity levels. One participant mentioned mixed levels of productivity within her organization due to an anticipated company merger that included legal battles and media attention (R14). What the news media communicated caused a rollercoaster of emotions and productivity levels among the organization's employees dependent upon the anticipated positive or negative results.

iv. Maintaining productivity and job performance synthesis. Synthesizing the downsizing managers' maintenance of productivity and job performance, the participants' comments indicate that downsizing managers may experience increased productivity levels due to (a) maintenance of the same organizational goals and processes as before the downsizing, (b) the managers' realization of the need to assist with workloads, (c) employees' fears of being on the next downsizing list, and/or (d) shifts in workload among employees to more appropriate and efficient levels.. decreased productivity levels due to (a) employees being less willing to work hard after multiple rounds of downsizing,

(b) employees' fear and obsession with possibility of future downsizings, (c) a natural level of disruption and/or mourning period, and/or (d) bad leadership mixed productivity levels as varying views of the future of the organization unfold.

The potential improvements noted by participants as discussed later in this chapter may alleviate some instances of decreased or mixed productivity levels in the post downsizing environment (e.g., increased communication, altering goals or processes).

4.2.6 Coping with survivor syndrome.

In-depth interview questions that related to the relationships with and reactions of remaining or surviving employees sought knowledge about how managers coped with survivor syndrome. Participants advised that surviving employees exhibited a gamut of emotions, including relief, gratefulness, guilt, shock, anger, fear, stress, distress, appreciation, and resilience.

Two participants discussed feelings of great regret and remorse for having to downsize employees (R9, R12). One of these participants mentioned remorse six times and having a heavy heart twice during his in-depth interview (R9). Participants held a dual role of both downsizing manager and survivor, and experienced similar emotions as surviving employees within their organizations. (R12)

Introspection. Participants discussed employees' or their own introspection of their future and/or the future of the organization. Two participants remembered that surviving employees became more inquisitive after the downsizing, likely in fear of

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future downsizing events. (R5, R14). Some of the surviving employees at participants' organizations became fearful of what their future, or the future of the organization held. (R13). Throughout the interviews, six participants referred to periods of their own reflection and introspection. (R6, R12)

Several participants began to reflect upon their roles, their future with the organization, and the future of the organization. Seven of the participants that became introspective because of the downsizing eventually learned of their own downsizing with the same organization. In total (as recapped above in Table 6), eight of the participants were downsized themselves (R9, R11, R12, R13, R14, R1, R2, R8), two participants chose to leave for better opportunities (R3, R5), and four participants are still with the organizations at which they experienced their roles as downsizing managers (R10, R6, R4, R7).

4.2.7 Coping with the emotional experience.

Nine participants recalled the stressfulness of the downsizing situation, which is one component of the emotional experience (R9, R12, R14, R1, R2, R4, R5, ND, R7):
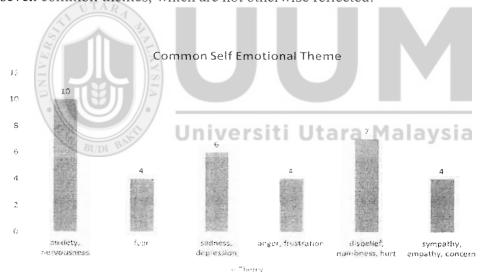
In addition to stress, downsizing managers experienced myriad emotional responses throughout their downsizing experience, as illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8. Downsizing Managers' Self-Reports on Emotional Well-Being

Participant(s)	Emotion(s) as described by participants (all quotations)
R9	Regret . . . depression of sorts . . . separation anxiety complex . . . hurt
R10	Grief . . . deep regret and remorse . . . heavy heart
R11	Frustrated [because it was out of participant's control] . . . annoyed
R12	Sympathy . . . empathy . . . emotion . . . fear of lawsuit . . . anxious . . .

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	introspective . . . frustrated
R13	Anxious . . . relieved . . . proud . . . sad . . . disappointed . . . concerned for employees
R14	Anxious . . . roller coaster of emotions . . . angst
R1	Sad . . . scared . . . introspective . . . numb
R2	Sad . . . anxious
R3	Thought it was ridiculous . . . felt horrendous
R4	Angry . . . scared by power to decide someone's fate . . . introspective . . . contentious [up against other managers to keep positions]
R5	Nervous . . . disbelief [computer deciding who to downsize] . . . introspective . . . anxious
R6	Nervous . . . felt like Dr. Jekyll [concerned for individuals] and Mr. Hyde [knew it was business] . . . introspective . . . unsettled
R8	Nervous [first time as downsizing manager] . . . numb . . . fear of lawsuit
R7	Unsure [referring to one employee that responded by leaving] . . . concerned

The participants' emotional self-reports as noted in Table 8 may be grouped into seven common themes, which are not otherwise reflected:

Common Self Emotional Theme

Themes	Participants
anxiety, nervousness	(R9, R12, R13, R14, R1, R2, R4, R5, R6, R8);
fear	(R12, R1, R6, R8);
sadness, depression	(R9, R12, R10, R14, R1, R2);
anger, frustration	(R11, R12, R3, R4);
disbelief, numbness, hurt	(R9, R12, R10, R1, R3, R5, R8);
sympathy, empathy, concern	(R12, R13, R1, R7).

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Verbatim examples illustrating participants' deeper understanding of each of these emotional areas during the downsizing manager's experiences are available in Appendix G.

i.   **Anxiety, nervousness.** Ten participants referred to feelings of anxiety or nervousness during downsizing decision making and implementation (R9, R12, R13, R14, R1, R2, R4, R5, R6, R8). These feelings resulted from knowing there would be an impact on employees and the organization through the decisions they made, as well as in communicating their decisions to employees.

ii.   **Fear.** Four participants remembered being afraid or scared during their downsizing experience (R12, R1, R6, R8). One participant experienced fear due to the significant power the participant held as a downsizing decision maker. Two participants were fearful about whether they would handle the downsizing in the best possible way (R1, R8). Both of these participants were first-time downsizing managers. Two participants mentioned their fear of potential lawsuits after the downsizing (R12, R8).

iii. **Sadness, depression.** Six participants referred to being sad or in a depression-like state throughout their downsizing experience (R9, R12, R10, R14, R1, R2).

iv. **Anger, frustration.** Four participants recalled being angry or frustrated, either due to decisions made by executive leaders to downsize (R11, R3, R4), or due to conversations with other managers to decide who to downsize (R2).

v.   **Disbelief, numbness, hurt.** Seven participants discussed having a feeling of disbelief, or being numb or hurt by having to go through the downsizing experience (R9, R12, R10, R1, R3, R5, R8). Out of this group, one participant

could not believe that information entered into a computer would help to decide who would go and who would stay (R5). Three participants recalled a numbness that overcame them in going through the downsizing decision making and implementation (R12, R1, R5, R8). For one participant, it was her first and only experience to date as a downsizing manager (R8), whereas two participants recalled becoming numb after subsequent experiences (R12, R5). Three participants referred to feeling hurt by the impact their decisions made on employees' lives (R9, R12, R3).

vi. Sympathy, empathy, concern. Four participants felt sympathy, empathy (R12, R13, R1, R7), as well as concern for whether sufficient cuts were being made (R13). Additionally, four participants mentioned their own personal matters that happened simultaneous to the downsizing, and the impact of that on their experience as a downsizing manager (R11, R1, R14, R4). Two of these managers (R14, R4) mentioned the concern that downsized employees showed for them during implementation.

4.2.8 Treating downsized employees humanely.

This is a new theme not previously identified in the literature related to downsizing or the managerial experiences of downsizing managers. As mentioned in Chapter 2, communication is essential to effective organizational change, but the literature does not describe the depth of communicating to ensure employees are treated humanely. Based on the participants' comments on point, the best way to define this theme is treating downsized employees with respect and integrity and providing time and space in leaving the organization with dignity. Ten participants made remarks related to this theme (R9, R12, R13, R14, R1, R2, R3, R4, R6, R7).

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Participants stressed that humane treatment of employees was important in announcing and implementing the downsizing, and in helping downsized employees prepare for future job opportunities.

One way in which participants treated downsized employees humanely was in the care, preparation, and delivery of the downsizing news to these employees. In addition, participants reflected on their efforts to provide downsized employees resources and references for new job opportunities.

Downsizing managers' humane treatment of downsized employees reflects the genuine care and concerns that most downsizing managers' have, by recognizing downsized employees as human beings. Instead of seeing employees as an expense line in the company's budget, these participants realized that employees had families, livelihoods, and feelings, and attempted to respect those despite having to downsize these employees. Eight of the participants left the organization in which they served as a downsizing manager by way of another downsizing, in which they experienced the same range of emotions and reactions as the employees they had to downsize (R9, R11, R12, R13, R14, R1, R2, R8). Sympathy eventually transitioned into empathy due to their experience as a downsized employee.

4.3   Analysis of Findings Informing the Research Sub questions

As detailed in the beginning of this chapter, the researcher conducted an analysis of participant responses related to (a) seven existing themes in the downsizing literature as recapped above, and (b) themes emerging from the data, as identified above.

Additionally, participant interview responses were reviewed in relation to the central research question and subquestions to describe the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers involved in decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of downsizing, which are described in further detail throughout the remainder of this chapter.

4.3.1 What are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of downsizing decision making? I asked participants about their experiences with the decision-making process; reactions from the participants' direct manager; and potential improvements that the participant or the organization should consider during downsizing decision making.

Experience with the process	Participants
• Formal decision making process	(R9, R12, R11, R13, R14, R2, R3, R5, R6, R7);
• loosely guided/informal process	(R12, R1, R4, R8);

i. **Experience with the process**. Participants described the downsizing decision making process either as a formal process (R9, R12, R11, R13, R14, R2, R3, R5, R6, R7), or a loosely guided/informal process (R12, R1, R4, R8). Formal decision-making processes included the ranking or rating of employees on various elements, such as their performance, work ethic, attendance, character, role modelling, tenure, skills, attitude, and/or function. The loosely guided, informal decision-making processes included identification of who to downsize based on functional area or process (R12, R1, R4, R8) or by level in the organization (R12).

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The participants' decision-making processes went smoothly, except for two participants' mentions of being up against other downsizing managers in their organization to decide which position and respective person should stay (R2, R4). Two participants were members of the executive management level with their organizations, and helped to decide that downsizing was the necessary approach to handle the downturn in business (R10, R13).

The responses of each participant aligned with the initial reaction of realizing that they would have to do something that was inevitable [downsizing] even though it was an uncomfortable position. In addition, participants commented on the consequence of not accepting their downsizing manager responsibilities: They could be next on the chopping block.

ii. Manager's reaction. Participants provided feedback on their experiences with their direct managers during the downsizing decision-making process. Nine participants mentioned having good experiences (R9, R12, R14, R1, R2, R3, R4, R8, R7), while three participants discussed negative or non-existent experiences with their direct managers during the process (R11, R5, R6).

As previously mentioned, two participants were executive level management within the organization, and either reported directly to the Board of Directors, or had no reporting structure above them (R10, R13).

Participants experienced positive interactions with their direct managers during downsizing decision making, except for occasions in which direct managers disappeared or focused solely on the benefits of the downsizing for the business.

Manager's reaction	Participants
• good experiences	(R9, R12, R14, R1, R2, R3, R4, R8, R7),
• negative or non-existent experiences	(R11, R5, R6);

iii. Potential improvements. The researcher asked participants what improvements, if any, they or the organization could have made to the downsizing decision-making process. Responses included not doing the downsizing (R12, R5), or anticipating the downsizing sooner to avoid it (R6); providing managers additional time to make decisions as to who to downsize (R3); and guidance, support, openness, or justification from the organization's headquarter (R12, R1, R5).

Potential improvements	Participants
• not doing the downsizing,;	(R12, R5)
• or anticipating the downsizing sooner to avoid it	(R6);
• providing managers additional time to make decisions as to who to downsize	(R3)
• and guidance, support, openness, or justification from the organization's headquarter	(R12, R1, R5).

4.3.2 What are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of downsizing implementation?The researcher asked participants about their experience with downsizing implementation; reactions from the participants' direct manager, the personal and professional impacts of the downsizing implementation process on them, and potential improvements for the process. Each

participant had to downsize at least one employee who reported directly to him or her.

i. **Experience with the process**. The downsizing implementations described by participants included a combination of releasing employees on the same day as the communication to employees (R9, R12, R11, R13, R2, R3, R5, R8, R7), versus releasing employees at a future date (R10, R14, R1, R4, R6). One participant was involved in two experiences, one same-day and one giving 60 days' notice of the downsizing (R6). Eleven participants noted peaceful or calm interaction with downsized employees when communicating the news to them (R12, R10, R13, R14, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7).

Experience with the process	Participants
• releasing employees on the same day as the communication	(R9, R12, R11, R13, R2, R3, R5, R8, R7),
• releasing employees at a future date	(R10, R14, R1, R4, R6).
• peaceful or calm interactions with affected employees	(R12, R10, R13, R14, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7).
• negative reactions	(R9, R7).

In contrast, two participants described negative reactions from downsized individuals, including throwing a chair, immediately leaving the room, and throwing keys at the downsizing manager (R9, R7). These were examples of the calm and negative reactions participants experienced when downsizing employees. The next section explores the appreciation employees showed to participants for treating humanely throughout the process.

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ii. **Appreciation for humane treatment**. Ten participants commented on instances in which downsized employees showed appreciation to the downsizing manager, in delivering the news in such a humane and gentle way (R9, R12, R13, R14, R1, R2, R3, R4, R6, R7).

Participants were cognizant of the difficulty that employees faced throughout downsizing, and most of the participants showed their appreciation for employees by treating them with great dignity and respect throughout the downsizing process.

iii. **Potential improvements**. The researcher asked participants what improvements, if any, they or the organization could have made to the downsizing implementation process.

Responses included having easy access to the Employee Assistance Program, or EAP (R6); considering extenuating circumstances to customize severance packages (R12); considering logistics, such as availability of rooms and HR representatives (R8); role playing the downsizing discussions with managers several times prior to the actual conversations (R5); offering résumé-writing classes earlier (R6); receiving guidelines as to what works and what does not in a downsizing situation (R1); better documentation within packages provided to downsized employees (R11); and ensuring that the new group of employees that will take over the workload are hired and trained (R4).

If implemented, the potential improvements participants mentioned may provide greater efficiency in the process, and an added ability to treat employees humanely during downsizing implementation.

Potential improvements	Participants
• Employee Assistance Program, or EAP	(R6),
• customize severance packages	(R12);
• logistic arrangement	(R8).
• Role play (training)	(R5).
• Resume writing class	(R6),
• Downsizing guideline	(R1),
• Better documentation with package	(R11),
• employees that will take over the workload are hired and trained	(R4),

iv. Downsizing implementation synthesis. Participants mentioned only a few instances in which downsized employees displayed negative responses, such as throwing items or causing disruptions. Implementing a downsizing is not an easy task, and several participants mentioned employees' reactions to their kind and gentle manner of handling the downsizing. Potential improvements suggested included easier access to conference rooms for downsizing discussions, assistance programs, any available training (e.g., résumé writing), and clear materials (e.g., severance packets). Potential improvements that the organization could make included considering alternatives to downsizing, allowing additional time for managers to prepare for the downsizing, and providing additional support between the headquarters office and field locations throughout the downsizing. The next section provides insight into the participants' experience in managing in the aftermath of the downsizing.

4.3.3 What are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of managing in the aftermath of the downsizing? I asked participants about their experience with managing in the aftermath of the downsizing, including communication with their direct manager, other managers, and employees; the impacts on maintaining loyalty and commitment, maintaining productivity and job performance and restoring morale and motivation; and potential process improvements.

i.   **Experience with the process.** Participants remembered that the post downsizing environment was not a happy one, but after a brief period, the organization began to pick up the pieces, as there was plenty of work to do. Often there was too much work to do for employees to stay in mourning for long, so managers had to find ways to maintain or increase motivation and productivity despite the gloomy post downsizing environment.

ii.   **Communication.** A useful tool for motivating employees was communication, which participants did in various ways, such as town-hall-style meetings with employees in the post downsizing environment, or walking around and talking with employees.

Participants discussed the importance of bringing the surviving employees together after the downsizing (R12, R12, R13, R1, R2, R4, R7).

As discussed earlier, the concept of management by walking around (Bell, 2000; Peters & Austin, 1985; Reese, 2009) was used by three participants in this study (R12, R1, R7). There were also instances in which communication

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within the organization decreased, or even ceased, after the downsizing occurred (R11, R4).

Many participants stressed the importance of communication in the post downsizing environment and identified a few ways in which they were able to communicate effectively. There were also instances where a lull in communication existed, possibly leading to the organizations' challenges in turning around the gloomy post downsizing environment.

iv. Impacts on loyalty, productivity, morale. The researcher analyzed participants' experiences in relation to the impacts on the existing themes of securing loyalty and commitment; maintaining productivity and job performance; and restoring morale and motivation, all of which are covered earlier. Participants' responses reflected:

a) a significant decrease in loyalty and commitment to their respective organizations;

b) an increase in loyalty and commitment to their respective teams;

c) increased productivity levels in instances where goals remained the same, managers needed to assist with the workload, employees feared being considered for any future downsizing, or appropriate shifts in workloads occurred;

d) decreased productivity levels in instances where employees were less willing to work after subsequent rounds of downsizing, employees' fears became obsessions, natural period of mourning, or bad leadership;

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e) mixed levels of productivity due to news media's portrayal of the positive or negative aspects of the situation; and

f) increased morale and motivation when communication existed within the organization—among its management team, between manager and employee, or in group settings.

Earlier in this chapter, the researcher provided additional descriptions from participants' experiences that described managing in the aftermath of the downsizing, which further explored the impacts to loyalty and commitment, productivity and job performance, and morale and motivation.

v. Potential improvements. The researcher asked participants what improvements, if any, they or the organization could have made to the ability to manage in the aftermath of a downsizing. Responses included

a) providing more leniency on goals (R5);

b) bringing in new leadership (R6);

c) having more involvement from headquarter office, as they missed an opportunity to educate upcoming managers and learn from the work being done (R1);

d) continuing to communicate, or ensuring that there is more communication than before (R4); and

e) conducting stay interviews to learn why employees chose to stay with the organization (R6).

If implemented, the potential improvements participants mentioned may provide employees with a greater understanding of the process and/or an

enhanced level of comfort in the experience. Additionally, ensuring good leadership is in place will provide greater efficiency and effectiveness within the organization. These improvements may also enhance relationships among and between surviving managers and employees.

vi. Managing in the aftermath synthesis. This section examined participants' experiences with managing in the aftermath of a downsizing. Although participants recalled gloomy post downsizing work environments, a few participants mentioned a short period of mourning before productivity stabilized or increased. Communication was an important tool in the post downsizing environment whether through communicating individually or with groups of employees and/or utilizing management by walking around. Many participants' loyalty and commitment to their teams increased, whereas loyalty and commitment to the organization decreased. Productivity and job performance, as well as morale and motivation, typically diminished for a short period after the downsizing, allowing a mourning period. Due to workload needs, employees could not afford much time to mourn before needing to pick up the pieces again. Lastly, potential improvements mentioned by participants focused on the importance of communication and good leadership in the post downsizing environment.

The next section provides insight into the personal and professional impacts of participants and their downsizing experiences during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. Due to numerous similarities in many of the personal and professional impacts described by participants throughout

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the downsizing, the researcher chose to provide information relative to these areas collectively.

4.3.4 Personal impacts.

The researcher identified participants' responses regarding personal impacts of their downsizing experiences as falling into the same four categories of well-being as identified in Chapter 2: emotional, mental, physical, and social wellbeing.

i. Emotional well-being.

Analysis of participants' responses related to emotional well-being were presented earlier in this chapter, within analysis of an existing theme in the literature: coping with the emotional experience. That analysis explored common emotional themes identified through participants' responses, which included anxiety, nervousness; fear; sadness, depression; anger, frustration; numbness; sympathy, empathy, care; and remorse. These findings indicate that downsizing managers experience a tremendous amount of stress that impacts their personal and professional lives, and that downsizing managers manage a variety of emotions due to pressures of their role in the experience, which may be amplified if the downsizing manager is dealing with major personal matters as well.

ii. Mental well-being.

Participants' responses related to mental well-being covered three areas: distancing, downsizing employees with personal matters, or attempting to downsize an employee that may be protected by discrimination laws.

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Mental well-being	Respondents
Distancing from discussion	R3, R7, R8
Coping with a difficult personal matter	R14, R2
Discriminatory practice	R12, R8

Three participants discussed distancing themselves from discussion of downsizing or the act itself, whether the distancing occurred before, during or after the event (R3, R7, R8); Two participants commented on how difficult it was to downsize an employee who was already coping with a difficult personal matter such as a recent serious health issue or divorce (R14, R2). Two participants described their fear that downsizing certain employees could be viewed as discriminatory practice, such as an employee over 60, on disability, or pregnant (R12, R8).

These findings indicate that downsizing managers experience impacts to their mental well-being. These impacts may be through the use of distancing as a means to cope with the difficulty of their role; or managing the challenges involved in downsizing someone with personal matters or that may be protected by discriminatory laws.

iii. **Physical well-being.** Participants' responses related to physical well-being included difficulty sleeping (R9, R13, R6, R8) and becoming physically sick (R9, R3, R5, R6).
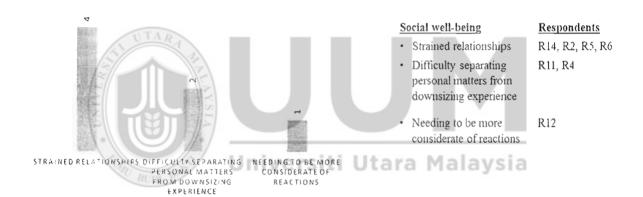
Physical well-being	Respondents
Difficulty sleeping	R9, R13, R6, R8
Physically sick	R9, R3, R5, R6

These findings indicate that downsizing managers experience impacts to their physical well-being. Often, this occurs through difficulty sleeping or becoming physically ill throughout the process.

iv. Social well-being. Participants' responses related to social well-being included strained relationships (R14, R2, R5, R6), difficulty separating personal matters from downsizing experience (R11, R4), and needing to be more considerate of reactions that downsized employees may have (R12).

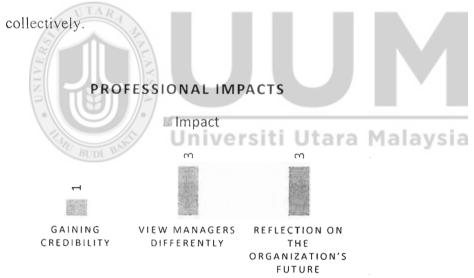SOCIAL WELL BEING

. Social Well Being

Social well-being	Respondents
• Strained relationships	R14, R2, R5, R6
• Difficulty separating personal matters from downsizing experience	R11, R4
• Needing to be more considerate of reactions	R12

Participants described the personal impacts that they experienced throughout downsizing, which affected their emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being. In addition to downsizing managers' job responsibilities related to downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the

aftermath of the downsizing, they must also manage the challenging personal impacts mentioned herein. Future downsizing managers may experience myriad of these personal impacts resulting from their own experience. Similarly, downsizing managers also experience and must cope with professional impacts throughout the downsizing process.

v. Professional impacts. The professional impacts downsizing managers experienced during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath contained numerous similarities. Accordingly, the professional impacts described by participants during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath are addressed herein collectively.

Professional Impact	Respondents
Gaining credibility	R6
View managers differently	R9, R12, R3
Reflection on the organization's future	R12, R1, R6

Participants indicated that their downsizing experience affected them professionally in a variety of ways. A professional impact one participant described was gaining credibility within her organization (R6).

Three participants described the professional impact as seeing their own manager or reporting managers in a different light based on their responses to the downsizing (R9, R12, R3). Three participants mentioned a professional impact of the downsizing in terms of their reflection on the organization's future as well as their own future (R12, R1, R6).

Since the downsizing experiences described for this study, eight participants received downsizing notices from the organizations in which they had served as downsizing managers. This included two of the three individuals who had reflected on their own or the organization's future, as represented above.

To this point, the data analysis and presentation has provided data and verbatim quotes from participants relative to their experiences as downsizing managers, organized into new themes, existing themes in the literature, answers to the research sub-questions, and additional knowledge about the personal and professional impacts on the participants. The analysis culminates in a summation and synthesis of the data toward answering the study's central research question.

4.4 Methodological Approach to Data Analysis

Findings of this research are reported herein through participant profiles, descriptions reflecting significant statements and generated meanings, as well as
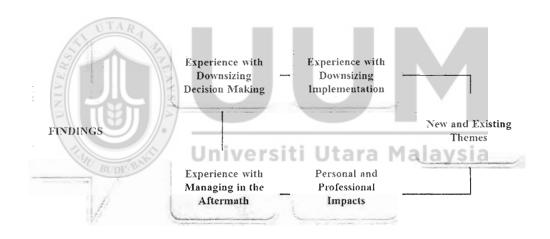
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through thematic analysis and a composite description illustrated by verbatim participant quotes. The researcher identified key themes related to the personal and professional experiences, including existing themes from the literature of communicating a shared vision, managing resistance to change, securing commitment and loyalty, maintaining or restoring morale/motivation, maintaining productivity and job performance, coping with survivor syndrome, and coping with the emotional experience. These themes served as the initial coding for data analysis.

In addition, the researcher looked for instances in which data did not fit into one of the existing themes, in search of potential new theme(s) emergent from the study data.

The researcher completed a thorough analysis of participants' interview responses, which included the researcher's listening to and transcribing each participant's in-depth interview; transcribing each participant's follow-up interview (where applicable); reading each participant's interview transcript and any feedback provided by participant; coding each interview transcription using existing themes; listening to participant interview recordings again as needed; identifying and coding any new theme(s); plotting each participant's coded responses across three phases of downsizing: decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath; reviewing participants' plotted responses for each theme (from the literature and emergent from the data) by each downsizing phase; and then reviewing participants' plotted responses for each theme (from the literature and emergent from the data) across all downsizing phases.

4.5 Summary

The analysis thus far provides an assessment of the participants' responses to interview questions for potentially new theme(s), alignment with the existing theme(s) from the literature, answers informing the research sub-questions, and participants' descriptions of personal and professional impacts of their experience as downsizing managers. These elements provide insight in response to this study's central research question: What are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of downsizing?

4.5.1. Experience with Downsizing Decision Making

The downsizing managers' experience with downsizing decision making reflected that downsizing managers' organizations provided, in most cases, with a formal decision making process that included various elements on which to rate or rank employees to determine which employees should be included on the downsizing list. Additionally, many of the participants described good relationships with their direct managers, and the ability to make decisions with little pushback. Participants

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provided a few thoughts on potential improvements that the downsizing manager or the organization could have made: providing additional guidance and support from the headquarter office, anticipating the downturn in business earlier and identifying other change alternatives, or providing greater formality of the decision-making process in and across the organization.

4.5.2. Experience with Downsizing Implementation

The downsizing managers' experience with downsizing implementation reflected few strong, negative reactions from downsized employees, which participants described as parallel to humane treatment of employees and strong organizational cultures. Participants referred to this culture as family-like (R9, R12, R2, R5, R7). Lastly, potential improvements participants mentioned that would be helpful during downsizing implementation included the organization providing additional logistical resources to managers and employees in carrying out the downsizing (e.g., availability of private meeting rooms and HR support staff).

4.5.3. Experience with Managing in the Aftermath

The downsizing managers' experience with managing in the aftermath of downsizing reflected a post-downsizing environment in many of the participants' organizations of grief, sadness, guilt, and some anger over the loss of downsized employees and the increased workload of remaining employees.

A few of the participants remembered that the organizations' workloads did not allow for much of a mourning period. Participants saw the benefit of effective and regular communication to maintaining or increasing productivity and morale within

the organization. Potential improvements mentioned by participants focused on the importance of effective and regular communication, strong leadership, and consideration of goals and processes due to the reduced workforce.

4.5.4. Personal and Professional Impacts

In addition to the participants' experiences described throughout downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath, participants also described the personal and professional impacts of the downsizing experience. Their identified personal impacts fell into one or more of four existing categories:

i.   emotional well-being included a variety of emotions as illustrated in Table 8 and described in further detail in the theme of copying with the emotional experience earlier in this chapter;

ii. mental well-being including distancing oneself from people or the situation, fear of downsizing employees already undergoing major personal matters, or that an employee might consider the downsizing to be discriminatory and file a lawsuit;

iii. physical well-being included participants' feelings of sickness or difficulty sleeping; and

iv. social well-being included strained relationships, difficulty separating personal matters from the downsizing experience, and needing to be more considerate of reactions that downsized employees might have.

These personal impacts influenced participants' reactions to, comfort levels with, and ability to handle their responsibilities as a downsizing manager.

Participants described the professional impacts of their experience as downsizing managers including increased credibility by upper management; increased introspection of what the future held for them, the company, and their employees; and seeing managers in a different light. These analyses of the sub-questions provide building blocks for analysis of the study data as it informs the central research question.

4.5.6 New and Existing Themes

The study data indicates one new theme, treating downsized employees humanely, through participants' evidencing their respect and concern for the dignity of employees in the implementation of the downsizing, as well as their attention to providing resources, references, and/or assistance to downsized employees to identify other job opportunities. Participant responses also reflected evidence of each of the seven existing themes from the literature:

i. communicating a shared vision, by first accepting the vision, making it easier to share it with employees; thereby causing executives and upper management to have increased credibility in the downsizing manager;

ii. managing resistance to change, by managing reactions to change effectively because managers or employees may exhibit resistance;

iii. securing loyalty and commitment of the manager's team and organization, by finding methods to confirm commitment to employees, as downsizing managers' loyalty to the organization typically decreases after subsequent downsizings; and attempting to assist employees (e.g., locating jobs,

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providing references or resources) as downsizing managers' loyalty to the team is typically increases;;

iv. maintaining or restoring morale and motivation by openly communicating where possible throughout the downsizing, due to the lack luster environment that typically exists within the organization;

v. maintaining productivity and job performance by learning from others' experiences and planning for potential periods of increased, decreased, or mixed productivity in the post downsizing environment;

vi. coping with survivor syndrome, by understanding that surviving employees experience a gamut of emotions, and may become introspective as to their future with the organization or the future of the organization; and

vii. coping with the emotional experience by identifying stress relievers, and other methods that may minimize the variety of emotions that downsizing managers and employees may experience throughout downsizing.

Participants' responses provided a deeper level of understanding of the existing themes in the literature, added an additional theme to the literature, and reflected the challenges faced in the role of a downsizing manager.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0   Introduction

This chapter discuss the study results, significance, comparison of the study's findings to the reviewed literature, and review of the methodology used. This chapter presents discussion of the study's findings, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

5.1   Discussion of the findings

Through this study, the researcheris trying to share and express the dilemma of how organizations prepare for and downsizing manager coping with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath. The central research question (Creswell, 2007, p. 108) of this study was 'What is the downsizing manager's experience of downsizing?' Sub-points implicit in and clarifying this central question were the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of downsizing decision-making, downsizing implementation, and managing the aftermath of the downsizing.

With the continuous use of downsizing in all industries, organizational leaders and downsizing managers must understand the managerial challenges involved in downsizing (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). The results of this study illuminate the perspectives of downsizing managers who experienced downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath, and provide them with a voice

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regarding various facets of the organization and its stakeholders: to the organization's executive management team, unveiling a detailed reflection of the challenges involved in the process and position of the downsizing manager, which will inform executive leadership's high-level strategy and decision making on downsizing and its ultimate impacts from the perspectives of surviving managers; among and to other managers who may someday take on a similar role, illustrating the complexities of the situation and avail an opportunity to reflect on the personal and professional experiences of others to better prepare for and cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath (Bonanzino, 2002); to employees, clients, and other organizational stakeholders providing understanding and appreciation of the challenges associated with the situation and role of a downsizing manager; and to the scholar-practitioner community, contributing to the academic and professional literature related to downsizing, from the downsizing manager's perspective.

Accordingly, each of these key stakeholder groups may better understand the downsizing manager's experiences in the face of downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath, which in turn may better inform overall business decision making affecting the lives and livelihoods of organizations' human assets.

Research and literature on topic have increased markedly over the last 2 decades, coinciding with the increased use of downsizing within organizations across the globe. The downsizing literature reflected potential methods to overcome challenges that downsizing managers may experience during downsizing decision making, by carefully thinking through, documenting, and implementing the agreed upon and/or fair selection criteria, downsizing managers will decrease some of the

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stress experienced in downsizing by means that are fair to employees while also protecting the organization; implementation, by taking a careful approach to implementing the downsizing due to the trauma and uncertainty that employees within the organization experience associated with downsizing. The use of communication, motivation, support, and additional decision making (e.g., outsourcing, process redesign) must be strategic in order to respect employees and ensure the organization's success; and managing in the aftermath, through a greater understanding of the signs, impacts, and methods to alleviate survivor syndrome; and staying abreast of individual and team performance to ensure that standards are met or adjusted for an appropriate alignment with the changed environment (Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Cascio, 1993; Lewin & Johnston, 2000; Lewis, 1994).

Thus, the downsizing literatures informed, but did not fully address the question of the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, as there are very few documented experiences. Of those few documented downsizing managers' experiences, it was known that downsizing managers experienced impacts to their emotional (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Gandolfi, 2008c; Sahdev, 2003, 2004), mental (Clair & Dufresne, 2004), physical (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; Seo & Barrett, 2007), and social (Turnley & Feldman, 2000) wellbeing in relation to their downsizing experience.

The study findings indicated that participants' experiences reflected both the positive and negative impacts in their role as downsizing managers. The participants' responses to interview questions that allowed the researcher to identify a new theme (treating downsized employees humanely), in which participants showed downsized employees respect and dignity in the implementation of the downsizing and by

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providing resources, references, or assistance in identifying other job opportunities; make connections to existing themes in the literature (communicating a shared vision, managing resistance to change, securing commitment and loyalty, maintaining or restoring morale/motivation, maintaining productivity and job performance, coping with survivor syndrome, and coping with the emotional experience), providing a deeper level of understanding for the existing themes in the literature and reflecting the challenges and successes experienced by downsizing managers; understand the personal impacts, including impacts to participants' social, mental, physical and social well-being, which reflected both the positive and negative impacts experienced in their role as a downsizing manager, and affected participants' reaction to, comfort level with, and ability to handle, their responsibilities as a downsizing manager; comprehend the professional impacts, which provided participants with increased credibility by upper management; increased introspection of what the future held for them, the company, and their employees; and understanding of how management operates; and make connections with the study's research sub-questions, providing substance to participants' experience with and potential improvements to downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. Additionally, participants' responses provided additional insight into the participants' managers' reactions in decision making, appreciation for humane treatment of downsized employees during implementation, and the importance of communication in the post-downsizing environment.

These results reflected a deeper level of understanding of the experiences of downsizing managers, comprising the response to this study's focus: What are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of downsizing?

The participants in this study described their experiences, including some experiences that proved somewhat difficult for participants to relive. It is an honour that they were all willing to participate and share their stories in support of the researcher own experiences and this study. The experiences they shared were emotional due to the challenges they faced in their role, as well as inspirational in the care and concern they displayed in taking their role and responsibilities seriously and treating all employees respectfully throughout the process.

5.1.1 Downsizing Decision Making

Downsizing managers in this study unconsciously used a decision-making model, reflective of Drucker's (1954) decision-making model, to decide who would go and who would stay, through the following steps: defining the problem by understanding the need to decide who to downsize and who to keep with the organization; analysing the problem through a formal or informal decision-making process; the formal processes included ranking or rating of various elements, such as performance, work ethic, attendance, drama, character, role model, tenure, skills, attitude, and/or function; developing alternative solutions in a few instances whereas the downsizing manager (a) attempted to escape the inevitable (R7); (b) had to compete with other managers for an employee to remain with the organization; (c) or attempted to eliminate processes before people; deciding upon the best decision by making the final choice on who would stay and who would go; and then converting the decision into action through the downsizing implementation process.

Interestingly, study participants who used a formal process did not refer to a clear-cut method to downsize, such as by seniority, position, or performance alone, but rather through numerous elements, such as character, performance, leadership, and skill sets. Downsizing managers participating in this study described their

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experience as mostly smooth and positive due to the existence of formal decision-making processes and a supportive direct manager. They understood that the responsibility of downsizing decision making was necessary and they were, as one participant stated, "Just doing my job" (R7), which was also a supposed preventative measure from being next on the chopping block. Whether a formal process existed or not, participants found it challenging to decide who to downsize when they took time to realize the implications, and saw employees as human beings with families, financial situations, lives, and obligations outside of the office.

Many of the downsizing managers in this study noted the existence of a supportive direct manager. The target for potential improvements was at the organization's executive management, which included recommendations for them to anticipate the need to downsize the business sooner (in order to avoid it or prepare management for it); allow managers additional time to make decisions as to whom to downsize; and provide guidance, support, openness, or justification for the downsizing.

5.1.2 Downsizing Implementation

As per the researcher own experience, downsizing implementation requires downsizing managers to roll out the decisions of who goes and who stays within the organization. Delivering difficult news is not an easy task, and proves no different for downsizing managers that must communicate these decisions. Downsizing managers in this study experienced a variety of emotions during implementation, such as anxiety, sadness, and relief. Although some participants were nervous as to employees' reactions, they may have also experienced sadness due to the impact on downsized and remaining employees, and/or relief in finally ending the decision-making stage and delivering the news.

Other critical elements in the downsizing literature that were reflected in participants' description of their implementation experience were communicating clearly, consistently, and as much information as possible (Appelbaum, Everard, & Hung, 1999; Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005); and helping employees to deal with the trauma associated with the downsizing experience (Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005).

These downsizing managers made their best attempts to be open with employees and provide as much information as possible. One participant noted the need to *"rip the band aid off and get it over with"*. Another participant started his implementation conversation with downsized employees by stating, *"We've split you guys into two groups and the reason that we're meeting today is to announce that we're going through a downsizing and everyone in this room is impacted by it"* (R13). In addition to ensuring clear, consistent, and open communication with employees, the downsizing managers in this study were also considerate of downsized employees and did their best to treat them humanely. Many of the participants discussed providing downsized employees with time to collect themselves once learning the news of their downsizing, providing them with dignity and respect, and offering references and other resources to assist them in their search for another job.

5.1.3 Managing in the Aftermath

Although research has shown a positive correlation between training and development (T&D) and organizational performance (Gandolfi, 2009), executive management views Training &Development as a monetary and opportunity cost. This rang true with this study's participants, as there was no formal training on how

to downsize. One participant, a first-time downsizing manager, mentioned watching another manager in his organization who had experience so that he might learn more (R11). The same participant referred to the training modules that managers are typically required to complete on topics such as timekeeping, codes of conduct, and sexual harassment, but that there was no module specific to how to downsize employees. Downsizing managers in this study referenced survivor syndrome, or the "low morale and lower productivity experienced by survivors of the downsizing" (Appelbaum et al., 1997, p. 278), and that this mourning period existed within their organizations only for a short time before employees had to return to maintained or improved levels of productivity.

The literature referred to downsizing managers, in playing a dual role as a downsizing manager and survivor with the organization, as also exhibiting signs of survivor syndrome (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003; Gandolfi, 2007).

Downsizing managers in this study reflected upon their own sadness in the post downsizing environment and taking a few weeks to get through the mourning period. According to participants, some managers in participants' organizations either appeared unaffected or bounced back from the challenges of implementing the downsizing. In many cases, the organization's goals and processes remained unchanged despite the decrease in employees to handle the workload, causing an immediate need for surviving employees to increase morale and productivity; inability to do so could be cause for disciplining, terminating, or considering the individual for a future downsizing.

In summary, the participants in this study shared their personal and professional experiences as downsizing managers involved in downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. Participants reflected upon

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the challenges and successes faced in the role. Their stories add to the existing, yet limited, body of literature on topic. One participant summarized the personal experience of the role as a downsizing manager, advising that: R4: '*You have peoples' livelihoods at stake, and if you allow it to get to you it can really tear you apart. . . . You know, if you allow it to, it would eat you up. So you really try whatever you can do for yourself not to have that happen*'. Another participant provided a telling quote that summarized the professional experience of a downsizing manager:Bill: '*I look at it [the role of a downsizing manager] as an extremely valuable experience in that I was recognized for understanding the big picture of the company, and was charged with an awesome responsibility to help build the future*'. While at the same time being recognized as having the compassion and the ability to be able to deliver the message in a way that would be received well and/or in an optimal way to where the individual would not feel persecuted.

Participants' responses reflected the personal and professional experiences faced in their role as downsizing managers. The experiences described by the downsizing managers in this study resonate with the limited literature on downsizing manager's experiences, and provide significantly greater depth to the topic through the thick, rich descriptions obtained in this qualitative, exploratory study.

5.2   Implications of the Study Results

This study provides insights that organizations' executive management teams and current and future downsizing managers can use to understand some of the common themes in the challenges that downsizing managers may experience during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. This section describes implications for theory and practice, followed by recommendations

for future research, which will continue to build upon this study's contributions to the literature.

The participants in this study proved that numerous challenges exist in managing change in their organizations. Scholarly research studies called for greater organizational support of downsizing managers after identifying: a lack of planning, policies, and programs (Appelbaum et al., 1997; Cascio, 1993; Gandolfi, 2008d); inadequate emotional support (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b); and/or a need for training materials (Cameron, 1994; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b).

Downsizing managers who participated in this study echoed these organizational support needs, and recommended that the organizations' executive management teams should provide additional: insight, to the extent possible, as to why or how the change will happen; structure, so that managers have a fair and equitable format within which to base decisions, timeframes, and processes; support, of managers who play a key role in personnel and process decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of the change, as well as the employees within the organization who will undergo the impact of the change, whether directly impacted or not; and time, to allow managers the opportunity to make appropriate decisions that will allow them to treat employees humanely throughout the change process.

Additionally, the participants in this study referred to communication as a powerful tool to initiate and manage change. Without communication, the change will be extremely challenging and more likely to fail (Thompson, 2005). The existing literature provides useful information on effective communication during change (Daly, Teague, & Kitchen, 2003; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Kitchen & Daly,

2002), but remains sparse regarding additional skills or methods used by or actual experiences of such managers. Downsizing managers in this study noted the value of communication by holding meetings with individuals or teams, management by walking around, and in appropriate social settings (e.g., lunch, employer reunions).

Participants' experiences as described this study reflect the challenging responsibilities involved in the role of a downsizing manager. Limited literature related to the experiences of downsizing managers exists, but it provides insight into the impacts that downsizing managers will experience to their emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being. Participants' experiences resonated with these impacts, which influenced their reactions to, comfort levels with, and ability to handle their responsibilities as downsizing managers. As a result, knowledge of these impacts will allow current and future downsizing managers to better prepare and cope with the likely impacts of their role in downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath.

5.3   Limitations

The limitations of this study include (a) generalizability and (b) researcher bias. I made every attempt to explain and alleviate, where possible, these limitations as described herein.

5.3.1 Generalizability:

The sample size for this study was small yet appropriate for a qualitative, exploratory study. Results of this study are not statistically significant or generalizable, but provide additional insight into the experiences of downsizing managers and augment the limited literature on topic. Triangulation also occurred through comparing and contrasting downsizing managers' interview responses,

researcher bracketing and reflexivity, multiple interviews with each participant, and member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Scandura & Williams, 2000) to ensure credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The findings of this study are consistent with themes existent in the literature, and provide a greater level of depth and detail for each of the existing themes. Additionally, one newly identified theme contributes to the furtherance of the literature related to the experiences of downsizing managers. In addition, the issues of time, location, and use of face-to-face interviews did not allow the researcher to interview a larger sample size. Although a participant may have had more than one experience that met the criteria for the study, often the individual did not have sufficient time or memory recall to discuss every experience. In those cases, I asked the participant to answer interview questions relative to the eligible experience of which he or she had the best memory recall and time to discuss.

The research methodology literature recognizes phone interviews "effective means of data collection" (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004, p. 115) and online synchronous interviewing as yielding functionality and results similar to face-to face or telephone interviews (Salmons, 2010). Based on the difficulty experienced by me in recruiting participants for this study, securing opportunities for face-to-face interviews and obtaining additional time with each participant to discuss additional experiences were limitations.

5.3.2 Researcher Bias:

As originally noted in Chapter 1, the researcher was also a downsizing manager, and many of the researcher former colleagues and good friends took on this role. As detailed in Chapter 3, bracketing works to identify and disclose researcher preconceptions, realize and relive one's own thoughts and experiences, and remove

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researcher bias relative to the focus of the study (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Gearing, 2004; Ruona, 2005). Bracketing enabled the researcher to write out the researcher preconceived notions, personal experiences, and questions about downsizing and the role of a downsizing manager. Referring to the bracketing exercise prior to the participant interviews and revisiting these notes helped to identify the researcher learning and any connections with the researcher preconceived notions, personal experiences, and questions concerning the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers.

5.4   Recommendations for Future Research

As noted throughout this study, research on the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers is limited. Since organizations continue to opt for downsizing as a mean to reduce expenses and streamline processes, the researcher and the participants hope and expect that the results of this study will allow each key stakeholder groups to better understand the downsizing manager's experiences in the face of downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath, which in turn may better inform overall business decision making affecting the lives and livelihoods of organizations' human assets. For the benefits of future separation exercises and everyone's interest, the researcher is highly recommending additional research on the topic as outlined below:

5.4.1 Training:

The downsizing literature and a few of the participants in this study suggested guidance from their organizations through documentation, helpful tips, or training materials on how to conduct the downsizing (Cameron, 1994; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b). Some participants recalled that their organization's human resources or legal departments or communication departments provided training or

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scripts, or presented formal training slides on how to conduct the downsizing, and what was appropriate or inappropriate to say throughout the downsizing process. Other participants noted the lack of guidance or formal training, and did their best to carry out their responsibilities as humanely as they knew how. Also, there may be benefits in studying downsizing managers' job satisfaction level in (a) organizations that take a formal approach to training their managers on conducting a downsizing versus (b) organizations that take an informal approach or have no training in place for managers conducting a downsizing. This recommended research may provide organizations with insight into whether formal training programs provide the support, guidance, and training needed by downsizing managers, as the downsizing literature and participants in this study identified this as a gap and recommendation, respectively.

5.4.2 Revised Downsizing Manager Definition:

Research utilizing a similar study design, with a revised definition of downsizing manager to study individuals responsible for implementing a downsizing within an organization, but employed by an outsourced consulting firm that specializes in downsizing organizations, would be beneficial to organizations' executive and senior management teams. Another option would be to compare and contrast the personal and professional experiences of outsourced downsizing consultants called in to implement a downsizing, versus downsizing managers employed by the organization and required to implement a downsizing. This recommended research will provide insight as to how the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers from an outsourced consulting firm are similar or different from those of downsizing managers employed by the organization. The outcomes of this research may alter the decisions of organizations' executive and

senior management teams on whether to utilize internal of external downsizing managers for downsizing decision making, implementation, and/or managing in the aftermath.

5.4.3 Treating Downsized Employees Humanely:

Another potential area of future research is further examination of the newly identified theme discussed in this study, treating downsized employees humanely, to gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles that may exist in attempting to do so as a downsizing manager, and strategies for doing so for the benefit of all involved in a downsizing.

Two of the participants in this study mentioned the importance of treating downsized employees humanely, so another perspective may be to identify if or how employees, front-line managers, middle managers, senior managers, and/or executives view the importance of this theme in downsizing. In addition, it would be interesting to understand whether various levels of management (e.g., front-line, middle, senior and/or executives) in other organizational change alternatives (e.g., early retirement, voluntary reductions) attempt to treat impacted employees humanely, and if so, how organizations achieve such humane treatment effectively.

These recommendations for research will provide additional contributions to the literature relative to the downsizing manager's experience, downsizing, and the organizational change literature, respectively.

5.5   Conclusion

This research study informs the main focus of the researcher experience as a downsizing manager, specific to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing the aftermath of the

downsizing. Study participants' experiences provided a deeper level of understanding related to seven existing themes from the downsizing literature and one newly identified theme, as described more fully in Chapter 4.

Participants also provided rich, meaningful descriptions of their experiences as downsizing managers during decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of downsizing. These downsizing managers faced challenging tasks in their roles that affected them both personally, in terms of their emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being, and professionally. A few participants referred to their involvement in this study as part of the healing process, and many participants agreed to share their experiences for this study with the intent that it will help others. This study provides a glimpse into the experience of a downsizing manager and may assist this community in preparing for future downsizing and identifying tools and coping strategies within the process as it occurs.

The limitations discussed herein include generalizability and researcher bias. In addition, this is the first research study that the researcher worked on and implemented. Although the extent to which the results of this study are generalizable is unknown, the purpose of the study was to understand and describe the personal and professional experiences of individual downsizing managers related to their role throughout downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath, to inform organizational practice and future related decision making; and to begin to fill a gap that exists in the literature related to what downsizing managers experience during downsizing, both from personal and professional perspectives.

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