

**THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP STYLE ON FIREFIGHTERS' WELL-BEING and  
STRESS REDUCTION IN EMERGENCIES**

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### **Abstract**

This study was carried out as a generic qualitative inquiry. The study focused on the evaluation of the impact of the transformational leadership style on the impact of stressors on firefighters, as well as the overall well-being of firefighters. The identified problem was that there exists an insufficient degree of data effect pertaining to the efficacy of the transformational leadership style on firefighter followers, particularly in emergent situations. The impact of the transformational leadership style on the well-being of firefighters is unknown. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of this leadership style on the well-being of firefighters. This study utilized 10 participants, five of whom were leaders and five of whom were followers. Data for the study was collected via semi-structured interviews. The results generated several key and overarching themes. The results indicate that the use of this study is beneficial for both followers and leaders. The recommendations include integrating this leadership style into another firefighting department across the U.S.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Firefighting is well recognized as a dangerous and stressful vocation since this profession exposes professionals in high-risk areas (DeJoy et al., 2017; O'Neill & Rothbard, 2017), as firefighters are frequently exposed to bad conditions characterized by persistent danger and unpredictability. Unlike other professions, firefighters experience additional stressors, such as ongoing fires, which can lead to sudden explosions within the working environment due to the dangers that firefighters need to overcome (DeJoy et al., 2017). Such stressors cannot be eliminated, as the goal of the profession is to address the identified dangerous stressors (DeJoy et al., 2017). Firefighters are unable to avoid the presence of such dangers other than potentially leaving the profession altogether (O'Neill & Rothbard, 2017).

Because of the dangers that firefighters encounter on a regular basis, firefighters' well-being might suffer, leading to mental disorders such as PTSD and/or fatigue (Airila, 2015; Heinrichs et al., 2005; Lourel et al., 2008). Although the job structure of firefighters is not feasible to adjust to lessen some of the stresses that firefighters encounter (for example, participation in rural wildfires), leaders need to provide their subordinates the resources that allow these employees to manage such adversity. The required and provided resources are particularly useful when generated internally, as leaders often are keenly aware of what followers within the organization may require to be able to work effectively (Lee et al., 2014). Leaders have an important role in providing numerous safeguarding their subordinate firefighters from illness (Lee et al., 2014). Specific actions that leaders can take play an important role in mitigating the risks that firefighters face and endure (Lee et al., 2014). Indeed, leadership behaviors benefit both workers (e.g., mental health, stress, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, performance, well-being, creativity, solitude, voice behavior,

and retention) and organizational functioning (e.g., effectiveness, innovation, creativity, productivity, change, and expertise) (Wang et al., 2022). Several studies of the literature have indicated that a relationship-oriented style of management (e.g., participatory, empowering, supporting, and transformational) has a beneficial influence on the well-being of subordinates (Fries et al., 2020). These same studies, such as one carried out by Wang et al. (2022), have shown that this type of leadership style can prompt positive changes on the part of followers. The resulting changes, once undertaken by leaders, can enhance firefighters' health and overall well-being (Fries et al., 2020).

### **Background**

Existing research on leadership in emergency workers indicated that leadership enhances adaptability, helps to recognize and define dangerous circumstances, and makes individuals feel an additional degree of security, which may assist with dealing with stressful situations (Barton et al., 2015; Eriksen, 2019; Lewis et al., 2011) and, as a result, ensures well-being. For example, within the firefighting field, specific leadership strategies have been found to enhance firefighters' response to the stress that is regularly present within the firefighting working environment (Barton et al., 2015). Furthermore, Desmond (2010) emphasized the role of leadership in promoting well-being and claims that an individualistic ethic might lead to a depreciation of leadership, which renders this role less meaningful and so worsening well-being. Existing studies have found that a leadership style geared toward people factors and development increases the well-being of followers and the ability to adjust the group to wind fluctuations in a firefighting crisis (Erschens et al., 2022; Rico et al., 2021). As a result, firemen favor leaders who give assistance, foster mutual respect, and have the humility to recognize mistakes and accept failure in both oneself and others, all of which are traits of empowering leadership

(Reimer & Eriksen, 2018). The aspect of empowerment is important within this context, as this approach to support accountability, thus supporting the development of future leaders (Reimer & Eriksen, 2018).

### **Significance of the Study**

Individuals aim to obtain, preserve, and safeguard the resources (things, personal qualities, and physical, psychological, and social situations) that enable the fulfillment of goals, based on the Conservation of Resources theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 2002). When firefighter leaders eliminate, risk losing, or expend excessive resources in comparison to their followers, whom they manage, they experience stress. Individuals' well-being, on the other hand, is not jeopardized when firefighters have access to any resources needed to cope with the destruction or possibility of lack of resources caused by stress (Hobfoll, 2002). Leadership may be a team asset that helps subordinates to obtain resources, reducing the emergence of ill-being-related diseases (such as exhaustion and/or PTSD) in instances of loss or feared loss of resources. Specifically, empowering or participatory leadership is a leadership style in which the leader motivates followers to engage in decision-making by giving them the knowledge and assistance followers require, as well as encouraging followers' responsibility to achieve the organization's goals (Wang et al., 2022). In the context of firefighters, leaders have been found to promote subordinates' well-being and eliminate their subordinates' ill-being by improving their mental capacity, expanding social support, increasing supervisor-subordinate relationships, and decreasing occupational stress sources (Ângelo & Chambel, 2013; Beaton et al., 2001; Reimer & Eriksen, 2018; Wu et al., 2019). In fact, even during times of repeated occurrences (for example, rural fires), transformational leadership is critical in firefighter intervention teams because this



leadership style improves the well-being of firefighting employees, namely the job engagement and flourishing of the latter (Maio et al., 2023; Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2022).

### **Problem Statement**

The specific problem is the impact of transformational leadership attributes on firefighter well-being and workplace stress are unknown in Dallas County, TX. (Hagemann et al., 2022). Thus, far, the majority of research focusing on the stressors that affect firefighters focuses on the impact that other types of leadership, such as democratic leadership, servant leadership, and visionary leadership, have on how well the impact of such stressors is mitigated in relation to the well-being of firefighters (Blaney et al., 2021). Conversely, it is unknown how the leader attributes of leaders using the transformational leadership style affect the well-being of firefighters, and particularly in emergent situations. Such a lack of evidence presents a problem because firefighters encounter emergent situations on a regular basis, which means that their well-being can be adversely impacted by a lack of effective leadership.

Firefighters endure multiple stressors within the work environment, and leaders do not always effectively utilize a target leadership style as a means of motivating and encouraging firefighters (Hagemann et al., 2022). Existing research indicates that leaders within the firefighting industry have the ability to support the well-being of subordinates (Maio et al., 2023). For example, leaders can identify what tools subordinates need to be able to carry out firefighting jobs properly and ensure that firefighters are provided with such tools (Maio et al., 2023). However, this is not always the case, as leaders, due to also having the role of firefighters, also experience stressors (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2022). Although the application of specific leadership styles can be an effective strategy on the part of leaders to focus on ensuring that employees generate optimal outcomes as a result of carrying out assigned jobs and tasks,

evidence is still lacking on the effects of the application of the transformational leadership style within the same context (Huntsman et al., 2020). As such, this generic qualitative inquiry would benefit the firefighting industry as a whole by providing insight for leaders to determine how the use of the transformational leadership style could benefit both leaders and firefighters.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry is to investigate the impact of transformational leadership attributes on firefighter well-being and workplace stress in Dallas County, TX. The goal of this study is to generate data pertaining to the use of the transformational leadership style within the firefighting industry as a means of supporting the well-being of firefighters and how leaders, via the use of this leadership style, are able to enhance firefighters' emotional, mental, and physical health.

### **Research Question(s) or Hypothesis**

The research question guiding this study is:  
What is the impact of transformational leadership attributes on firefighter well-being and workplace stress in Dallas County, TX? The research question is intended to allow the researcher to explore the impact of the transformational leadership style on how firefighters experience and address the stressors that they encounter in the workplace.

### **Summary**

Overall, the firefighting industry is known for being inherently unsafe for those working as firefighters (Song et al., 2020). Firefighters face natural hazards in the form of burning materials within this type of working environment. The jobs that firefighters have lack the stability that is clearly seen in other industries, fields, and professions. Due to the volatile environment, firefighters typically encounter stressors that can have a wide range of impacts,

both inside and outside of the professional environment. The stressors present within the firefighting environment may lead to the development of serious complications, such as PTSD. At the same time, leaders within the industry can utilize leadership skills and styles to address and potentially mitigate the impact of such stressors so that the well-being of firefighters is not so adversely impacted because of the jobs that these same individuals have chosen to carry out. Similar evidence in relation to the use of the transformational leadership style within the firefighting industry is lacking. As such, the study investigated the impact of the transformational leadership style on the well-being of firefighters. Chapter 2 will provide a literature review outlining the evidence that already pertains to the type of leadership styles and their relationship to the well-being of firefighters. Chapter 3 will outline the methodology that has been used in this study. Chapter 4 will provide the results of the data that was obtained for this study. Finally, chapter 5 will provide the conclusions that were generated as a result of the gathered data and recommendations that are rooted within these conclusions.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

Firefighting is a profession that has been recognized as having an inherent degree of danger associated with its tasks, as well as an ordinate amount of stress as a result of the hazards that firefighters encounter as part of the daily jobs (DeJoy et al., 2017). The degree of danger and hazards that are simply a part of the characteristics of this profession can put firefighters at risk of developing various mental health disorders, such as fatigue and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD (Airila, 2015). These characteristics cannot be easily altered or eliminated from the workplace structure and environment. However, their effect and impact can be effectively mitigated via the use of specific leadership techniques and styles, which, when integrated into the workplace by supervisors, can lessen the manner in which they affect firefighters. In this way, supervisors and managers are able to help protect their subordinates from such negative and adverse effects and facilitate and foster proper mental health (Lee et al., 2014). The rationale for this topic, as well as its importance, is that individuals aim to get, preserve, and safeguard the resources (things, personal qualities, and physical, psychological, and social situations) that enable them to fulfill their goals, based on the Conservation of Resources theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 2002). When individuals eliminate, risk losing, or expend excessive resources in comparison to those they manage to gain, they experience stress. Individuals' well-being, on the other hand, is not jeopardized when they have access to the resources they need to cope with the destruction or possibility of lack of resources caused by stress (Hobfoll, 2002). Leadership may be a team asset that helps subordinates to obtain resources, reducing the emergence of ill-being-related diseases (such as exhaustion and/or PTSD) in instances of loss or feared loss of resources. Specifically, empowering or participatory

leadership is a leadership style in which the leader motivates followers to engage in decision-making by giving them the knowledge and assistance they require, as well as encouraging their responsibility to achieve the organization's goals (Hobfoll, 2022).

### **Existing Literature**

As previously mentioned, the workplace environment in which firefighting takes place is inherently dangerous and hazardous, as firefighters tend to risk their well-being, health, and even life when they respond to any type of fire (Xanthopoulos et al., 2020). Over the last few decades, the function of firefighting has dramatically evolved due to the various technologies and techniques that firefighters utilize and apply within the modern function of firefighting (Xanthopoulos et al., 2020). What further complicates the firefighting function is that firefighters do not only respond to fire instances in homes; rather, they also address wildfires, which can prove to be much more dangerous and treacherous (Zhichkina et al., 2021). In recent years, the frequency of wildfires, for example, has drastically increased due to multiple factors, such as climate change and severe droughts (Zhichkina et al., 2021). As such, this puts firefighters at an increased risk of danger. What further exacerbates these dangers is the fact that firefighters also deal with multiple goal conflicts, such as the need to address and put out a fire, but also maximize their safety, which are two goals that can be contradictory (Hagemann et al., 2022). This can lead to conflicts pertaining to what firefighters should do and the decisions and actions that they should be making and carrying out as part of each mission, thus leading to increased levels of sustained stress (Hagemann et al., 2022). This can also influence how firefighters perceive their working environment, as well as the individuals leading them as part of the missions that they are assigned to (Martinez-Fiestas et al., 2020). It is also speculated that the

nature of firefighter employment, such as whether such individuals are formally employed or if they volunteer for this function, can also influence this perception (Martinez-Fiestas et al., 2020).

There is little doubt that the overall environment in which firefighters work is dangerous and can even prove to be lethal. For example, firefighters have been found to have a risk of developing mental health conditions that is ten times greater than that of their peers outside of this profession (Song et al., 2020). More specifically, firefighters have a risk of depression that is five times greater than that of the general population (Song et al., 2020). Additionally, they also incur a risk of developing substance abuse problems that are seven times greater than that of the general population (Song et al., 2020). For this reason, it is critical that those in leadership positions within this industry and environment do what they can in order to effectively guide firefighters and maximize their physical, emotional, and mental well-being and safety (Huntsman et al., 2022). Such leadership is critical within this environment, as the environment itself has a high degree of uncertainty, as the end results or effectiveness of firefighter actions is never fully known or guaranteed (Huntsman et al., 2022). Such an environment tends to reduce firefighters' ability to easily adapt to each situation that they encounter and in which they find themselves when assigned to a specific mission (Huntsman et al., 2022). What also further complicates this environment, but which can also be mitigated via effective and targeted leadership, is the fact that the firefighting industry, as a workplace environment, is highly stratified and bureaucratic, with firefighters not having as much personal and professional empowerment as their professional peers in other industries (Huntsman et al., 2022). As such, effective leadership can foster this empowerment and create opportunities for empowerment among firefighters where, previously, it lacked, or there was simply none (Huntsman et al., 2022). Aside from empowerment, effective and targeted leadership can also increase and optimize the safety of all

firefighters, as leaders, for example, can encourage and remind firefighters to wear all of their indicated and recommended personal protective equipment, or PPE, which can make a dramatic difference in the wellbeing of these professionals (Smith et al., 2020). According to Smith et al. (2020), for example, leadership has been critical in positively shaping healthy behaviors pertaining to safety among firefighters. The use of PPE has been found to be one of the main primary interventions that can optimize firefighters' safety, particularly in situations and environments in which a full degree of control over the situation may not be possible to achieve (Smith et al., 2020).

Due to the hazards and dangers that firefighters need to endure while within their workplace environment, it is important that they have and display a high degree of resilience, which can reduce and mitigate the effects of the stressors that they encounter while on the job (Laureys et al., 2020). Such resilience can also reduce their risk of experiencing an adverse mental, physical, and emotional reaction to the trauma that they may encounter while addressing fires and natural disasters (Laureys et al., 2020). According to Laureys et al. (2020), there is a high degree of positive correlation between the resilience of firefighters as a personal characteristic and the manner in which they deal with and respond to the stressors that they address in the workplace. As a result, researchers have found that resilience can act as a protective factor on the part of firefighters and the way in which they respond to the hazardous environment in which they work (Song et al., 2020). At the same time, they also found that, without resilience, firefighters can experience low job satisfaction, as well as a high risk of developing and experiencing PTSD, a high risk of dealing with job-related stressors, and a reduced overall quality of life, both within their work environment, as well as within their personal lives (Song et al., 2020).

As previously mentioned, the aspect of leadership within the firefighting industry is critical. According to Carolino and Rouco (2022), leaders in firefighting, to be effective within their roles, need to be competent. To be proficient, firefighting leaders typically need to spend considerable time training as a means of further developing any natural and existing leadership skills that they may already have (Carolino & Rouco, 2022). It is important to remember that the role of leaders within firefighters is not limited solely to the traditional dynamic found between leaders and followers in other types of industries (Carolino & Rouco, 2022). For this reason, the overall frameworks that dictate such dynamics in this industry drastically shape these roles (Carolino & Rouco, 2022). This also means that leadership in this function is heavily rooted in this type of dynamic (Carolino & Rouco, 2022). However, leadership in this context cannot effectively function and be applied without there being an established degree of trust between leaders and followers in firefighting (Rosing et al., 2022). Furthermore, the personal characteristics of firefighting leaders also influence the resulting trust on the part of followers and shape the manner in which firefighters relate to and obey their leaders (Rosing et al., 2022).

This leads to the question of what type of leadership is optimal for firefighting. In many ways, transformational leadership has proven to be a relatively popular leadership style that has been enacted by supervisors and managers in this professional field (Hsieh & Tai, 2020). This particular leadership style is characterized by leaders engaging and applying their skills and abilities to optimally motivate their subordinates (Hsieh & Tai, 2020). Such motivation is thought to prompt employees to enhance their performance and elevate it to produce outputs that drastically exceed that which is simply expected of such workers (Hsieh & Tai, 2020). By motivating employees to such a degree, leaders are thought of as being instrumental in fostering positive changes among these workers, with these changes lasting over an extended period of



time, as opposed to only being short-lived (Hsieh & Tai, 2020). Overall, such leadership has been found to have a positive correlation with the professional performance of firefighters (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2022). Furthermore, transformational leadership has been found to have a beneficial resulting effect on firefighters' self-efficacy, thus showing that leaders play an important role in helping firefighters be better able to adjust to and perform in stressful work situations that they are likely to encounter on a regular basis (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2022). As such, the aspect of transformational leadership has been found to function as a protective factor in relation to the safety and well-being of firefighters (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2022).

The use of the transformational leadership style can be instrumental in the mitigation of the effect that workplace stressors have on the well-being of firefighters (Igboanugo et al., 2021). Such stressors have the ability and potential to adversely impact the overall health of firefighters (Igboanugo et al., 2021). For example, transformational leadership has been found to reduce the risk of both depressive symptoms as well as suicidal ideations among firefighters exposed to hazardous working conditions (Igboanugo et al., 2021). This is an important point, as the mental health of firefighters has been increasingly scrutinized due to the link between mental health and the ability of firefighters to cope effectively with the work stressors that they regularly face and endure (Van Dassel et al., 2021). This particular style of leadership can also work to reduce the risk of other health conditions being developed on the part of firefighters as a result of stressors, which can include hypertension, cardiovascular disease, myocardial infarctions, and cancer (Van Dassel et al., 2021).

Aside from the positive developments associated with transformational leadership in firefighting, there are other benefits that can be generated as a result of this type of leadership being enacted within this professional field. It is unlikely that leaders can effectively reduce the

incidence of existing stressors within their subordinates' workplace (Curral et al., 2023). However, aside from acting as a protective factor in relation to firefighters' health and safety, such individuals can also improve the overall organizational environment, including, for example, citizenship behavior (Curral et al., 2023). Such developments have the ability to reduce the impact of natural disasters over time, as firefighters are able to effectively respond to such developments (Huntsman et al., 2020). This enhances the ethical concept of justice as applied to the firefighting function (Huntsman et al., 2020). Beyond this, this development can also significantly enhance the well-being of firefighters, thus leading to greater satisfaction on their part in relation to their jobs and professional functions (Kling et al., 2022). Through this, effective leadership has the ability to create a balance between the professional roles of firefighters and their need to carry out their jobs in a satisfactory manner (Kling et al., 2022). Beyond this, effective leadership has also been found to be useful in terms of mitigating fatigue and exhaustion felt by firefighters, thus optimizing their safety and helping workers be much more effective at their jobs and assigned tasks (Neto et al., 2021). For these reasons, it is recommended that firefighting organizations and departments allocate resources to the development of transformational leadership skills on the part of individuals in positions and roles to become or step into leadership roles (Neto et al., 2021).

There is a close relationship between leadership within firefighting and people factors. Resilience, which was previously discussed as a critical factor to have on the part of firefighters, also helps to develop improved interpersonal skills on the part of firefighters (Conway & Waring, 2021). Furthermore, interpersonal skills can also be supported by leaders; as such, individuals tend to understand the dynamics between their subordinates well enough to be able to enact specific actions in response to various developments (Conway & Waring, 2021). These and

other vital firefighting personal skills can reduce the impact of workplace stressors and reduce the potential risks that firefighters endure (Romero & Alvar, 2021).

Within the firefighting industry, the specific leadership styles used by supervisors and managers have the ability to increase and enhance the competitiveness of firefighters (Bahadori et al., 2021). To this end, it is critical that any type of leadership that is implemented within this environment is ethical in nature so that it can foster positive outcomes on the part of firefighters and members of the general public that such professionals serve (Bahadori et al., 2021). This is because leaders, through the leadership style that they adopt, have the ability to shape the morality of firefighters when working out in the field and encountering the very stressors that can adversely impact their professional performance and their lives (Bahadori et al., 2021). Without such moral and ethical leadership, it is very likely that the professional performances of firefighters would be adversely impacted (Smith et al., 2023).

A theoretical framework that can be applied to this topic is the Conservation of Resources Theory, which posits that human beings experience psychological and mental stress due to the actions that they engage in, which also means that they are very likely to experience adverse consequences stemming from this (Bardeol & Drago, 2021). As such, when firefighters lose access to needed resources, such as effective type of leadership that could be provided to them as guidance, they incur the risk of experiencing more stress than if they have simply gained access to additional resources (Bardeol & Drago, 2021).

### **Synthesis of the Existing Literature**

Overall, the firefighting workplace environment is intrinsically dangerous due to the nature of the work environment (Xanthopoulos et al., 2020). Firefighters regularly encounter multiple unsafe situations, such as needing to address wildfires or responding to burning

residential and commercial buildings (Zhichkina et al., 2021). Over the last few decades, firefighters have routinely faced and encountered multiple additional risks due to an expansion of their jobs and roles, which can present challenges to their physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being (Hagemann et al., 2022). These additional risks can lead to conflicts within the workplace, as different employees and internal stakeholders may have different ideas pertaining to how to optimize safety (Hagemann et al., 2022). As a result, firefighters sustain a considerably higher risk of mental health exacerbations, as well as substance abuse (Song et al., 2020).

The utilization of effective leadership can help to mitigate these risks and their impact on firefighters (Huntsman et al., 2022). Such leadership abilities can also increase firefighter safety by encouraging proper actions on the part of employees, such as ensuring that firefighters utilize all of the personal protective equipment that is available to them and which is indicated for use in specific workplace situations (Smith et al., 2020). Beyond this, effective leadership can foster a high degree of resilience on the part of firefighters, which can bolster their ability to reduce the impact of stressors on their well-being (Conway & Waring, 2021; Laureys et al., 2020). However, to be effective, leaders in such roles have to possess a sufficient degree of competence, which is also predicated on the followers' trust that is placed in their leaders, as well as the dynamic that develops between leaders and followers (Carolino & Rouco, 2022).

The transformational leadership style has been shown to be instrumental in a wide range of industries and professional fields and has been found to be efficacious (Hsieh & Tai, 2020). The transformational leadership style is believed to be beneficial because it fosters leaders' engagement with their followers and helps motivate employees (Hsieh & Tai, 2020). In the firefighting field, the transformational leadership style appears to improve the output of firefighters' work and efforts, as well as facilitate firefighter's abilities to operate in a work

environment characterized by the presence of multiple serious and potentially life-threatening stressors (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2022). Furthermore, the transformational leadership style can also work to recognize the presence of stressors and motivate leaders to allocate efforts to the reduction of the incidence of these stressors, thus leading to a greater degree of job satisfaction and work productivity on the part of employees (Curral et al., 2023; Kling et al., 2022; Neto et al., 2021; Romero & Alvar, 2021).

Existing literature points out the merits of the transformational leadership style. However, there appears to be insufficient evidence existing pertaining to the use of the transformational leadership style within the firefighting industry. Evidence is limited in terms of how the transformational leadership style affects the well-being of firefighters, as well as how this leadership style can be leveraged to maximize the safety of firefighters.

### **Summary**

The evidence obtained and evaluated as part of Chapter 2 indicates that the transformational leadership style has been widely utilized across a broad range of industries. The transformational leadership style has been shown to generate benefits in terms of motivating followers, engaging them, and supporting them to facilitate a high degree of productivity. Insufficient evidence exists in relation to how the transformational leadership style can be used in firefighting to support firefighter well-being and safety. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology guiding the present study.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Firefighting comprises of a profession that is associated with a lack of safety, since firefighters regularly encounter situations that compromise their personal and individual safety, such as needing to physically enter physical spaces that are affected by fires (DeJoy et al., 2017). Such a high degree of danger and work environment-related stress can lead to the development of multiple physical, emotional, and mental disorders that can significantly impair the affected firefighter's quality of life and overall functioning (Airila, 2015). To effectively address and counter this aspect, leaders within the firefighting work environment can play a significant role (Lee et al., 2014). As a result, leaders should thoroughly address their leadership ability and style to maximize the results generated by such abilities and styles. The goal of this chapter is to discuss the methodology that was used for this study.

The methodology used for this study was intended to generate applicable and sufficient data pertaining to the target phenomenon or issue to be explored. As such, the selected methodology for this study was that of a generic qualitative inquiry. By focusing on detail-rich data, the researcher can further explore how leaders within the firefighting field lead their followers through the use of the transformational leadership style. This study was structured as a generic qualitative inquiry that targets the lived experiences of leaders in the firefighting field. By being structured as a qualitative study, it allowed the researcher to obtain and evaluate a high degree of high-quality data that is rich in detail. This is intended to effectively address the research question, which is "What is the impact of transformational leadership attributes on firefighter well-being and workplace stress in Dallas County, TX?" The setting of the study was comprised of five local metropolitan fire stations, all of which have several leaders. Both groups

of participants underwent a semi-structured interview lasting 60 minutes each. Each interview was held at a time that was mutually convenient for the participant and the researcher at the researcher's office. Each interview was recorded and transcribed following its conclusion, and the transcript of the interview was provided to the participant to assess and ensure accuracy.

### **Population and Sample Size**

The population used for this study comprised firefighters and leaders working at five large fire stations in a metropolitan area. In order to identify the participants and ensure relevance, an email was sent to all of the employees of the identified five fire stations with information pertaining to the study and questions about their backgrounds to determine if they met the study's participant criteria. Once the researcher evaluated the respondents' answers to the provided questions, as seen in the informed consent form located in Appendix C, he emailed study participation invitations to those respondents meeting the inclusion criteria described in the next paragraph. Once those wishing to participate responded via email, the researcher compiled a list of potential participants in the sample and randomly selected five leaders and five followers using the Research Randomizer found at [www.randomizer.org](http://www.randomizer.org). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a sample size of 10 participants is within the acceptable range for a qualitative study. The selected ten participants were emailed to determine when they wished to set up the interview appointment.

The inclusion criteria for the leaders were as follows: the participant is at least 18 years of age or older at the inception of the study, the participant should have been in a leadership position within this field for at least the last five years, and the leader should have implemented and used the transformational style of leadership. Exclusion criteria for selected leaders included the leaders being younger than 18 years of age, not having the required five years of experience

in a leadership role, and the leader utilizing a leadership style other than the transformational style of leadership. The inclusion criteria for the follower participants were as follows: the participant is at least 18 years of age, the participant's leader using the transformational style of leadership, and the participant has been under the leadership of that specific leader using the transformational style of leadership for a minimum of three years. Exclusion criteria for follower participants included the participants being younger than 18 years of age, not working under a leader using the transformational style of leadership, and not working under that specific leader for at least a period of three years. The participant sample comprised five firefighter leaders, who were interviewed via the use of semi-structured interviews. Additionally, five firefighters, who were followers of the selected leaders, also took part in semi-structured interviews.

### **Instrument(s)**

Each group of participants took part in individual, 60-minute interviews, which were arranged at the convenience of both the participant and the researcher. Each participant, regardless of leader or follower, was asked 15 questions. For leader participants, questions inquired of leaders' ability to lead and support firefighters in stressful times, leaders' communication, actions taken in terms of preparing firefighters for their jobs, actions taken to promote a culture rooted in safety and risk awareness, actions taken to promote firefighters' well-being, ability to adjust leadership based on the specific situation, manner in which firefighters' stress and burnout are addressed, manner in which firefighters' resilience is supported, actions taken to involve firefighters in the decision-making process, actions taken during debriefing, personal attempts to address stressors, and the types of resources that are available to firefighters. The structured portion of the semi-structured interview of the leaders is presented in Appendix A.



For follower participants, questions inquired as to followers' perception of their leaders, ability to communicate, manner in which leaders address firefighters' well-being, manner in which leader inspires confidence and how the leader generates team unity and morale, leader's actions following the conclusion of a stressful situation, actions taken by leaders to foster firefighter rest and recovery, the accessibility of the leader, the leader's ability to provide effective guidance, the leader's commitment to firefighting teams' safety, actions taken by the leader to involve the team in decision-making, the manner in which the leader celebrates firefighters' achievements, the firefighters' perceptions of leader debriefing, and the degree to which the leader empowers followers. The structured portion of the semi-structured interview of the followers is presented in Appendix B.

### **Research Process**

The semi-structured interviews contained a set of established questions that will be asked of every participant in each participant group, and which can be found in Appendices A and B. Once questions were posed and answered, the researcher asked other questions, as he sees fit to further elicit critical details from each participant. Once obtained, the qualitative data was coded using NVivo software to determine what themes and subthemes exist within the collected data. No personally identifiable information was collected as part of the study, and participants were assigned numbers. Their interviews and files were coded using that number.

As previously mentioned, all interviews were reviewed and transcribed, as well as provided to participants for review in terms of accuracy. Once data was collected, it was evaluated and coded using NVivo software to elicit themes for both themes. Once identified, the themes and subthemes were presented in table format to show the results of the data collection process.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study was approved by the researcher's instructor. The researcher anticipated that the risks incurred by the participants would be minimal and not exceeding that of the general population. The main ethical aspect to consider here would be the participants experiencing mental or emotional triggers associated with any traumas that they may have experienced in the firefighting workplace and environment in the past as a result of the questions asked.

The researcher took measures to minimize personal bias, which included reflection on the goal of the study prior to the interview process. The researcher also evaluated any cultural differences between himself and the participants to further reduce the presence of bias. The confidentiality of the participants was maintained by the researcher storing all digital data on an encrypted and password-protected external zip drive. Any paper-based data, along with the zip drive, was physically stored in a cabinet in the researcher's office that was locked using a key that only the researcher had access to.

### **Summary**

Overall, this study was designed as a generic qualitative inquiry to obtain detail-rich data. The study utilized ten participants, with five being leaders and five being followers. Sixty-minute interviews were conducted with each participant, with the resulting data being analyzed and coded for themes and subthemes through the use of NVivo software. The main ethical consideration inherent to this study comprised the risk of potential stress or trauma being experienced by the participants as a result of the interviews. The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents the results of this study.

## CHAPTER 4: STUDY RESULTS

### Introduction – Demographics of the Participants

The research question guiding this study was as follows: “What is the impact of transformational leadership attributes on firefighter well-being and workplace stress in Dallas County, TX?” The identified and selected participant sample comprised of 10 participants, five of whom were leaders and five of whom were followers. The demographic data for the participants can be seen in Table 1.

*Table 1: Participant Demographic Data*

	<b>Followers</b>	<b>Leaders</b>
<b>Age</b>		
<b>18-29</b>	2	
<b>30-49</b>	2	3
<b>50-64</b>	1	2
<b>65+</b>		
<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Male</b>	5	5
<b>Female</b>		
<b>Race</b>		
<b>Caucasian</b>	2	3
<b>Hispanic</b>	1	1
<b>African American</b>	1	1
<b>Other</b>	1	

As can be seen in Table 1, two followers were between the ages of 18 and 29, two followers were between the ages of 30 and 49, and one follower was between the ages of 50 and 64.

Conversely, three participants were between the ages of 30 and 49, with the remaining two followers between the ages of 50 and 64. All participants in the follower and leader groups were male. Out of the follower group, two participants were Caucasian, one was Hispanic, one was African American, and one was Other. Conversely, of the leader group, three participants were Caucasian, one participant was Hispanic, and one participant was African American.

### Research Results

Data was obtained through the use of semi-structured interviews conducted with participants in the follower and leader group. Once obtained, the data was evaluated for themes and subthemes using the NVivo software. Multiple themes and subthemes were identified as part of the data collection and analysis process. Leader participants were coded as Participant 1 through Participant 5, while follower participants were coded as Participant 6 through Participant 10. The initial coding scheme for the data can be seen in Table 2.

*Table 2: Initial Coding*

Initial code	n of participants contributing	n of transcript excerpts assigned	Sample quote
Leadership humility	3	14	“He offers support, guidance, and resources to help me navigate work-related stressors and maintain a healthy balance between my professional and personal life.” (P10)
Collaboration	3	16	“He encourages us to work closely with our colleagues,

			share knowledge and expertise, and support each other during challenging situations.” (P10) “Building strong relationships, fostering trust, and maintaining open communication with my team members create a supportive network that enhances resilience and camaraderie.” (P3)
Accountability	2	3	“We instill a culture of accountability and responsibility within our team by emphasizing the importance of adhering to safety protocols and procedures at all times. Each team member is accountable for their actions and is encouraged to speak up if they identify any safety concerns or risks, regardless of their rank or experience level.” (P3)
Flexibility and responsiveness to follower needs	2	3	“By offering flexibility and support, we ensure that team members can address cumulative stress effectively while continuing to fulfill their duties as firefighters.” (P5)

Focus on mental health.	10	41	<p>“My leader supports me in balancing the demands of the job with my personal life by providing flexibility in scheduling and accommodating individual needs whenever possible.” (P7)</p> <p>“We provide mental health awareness training to all team members to increase their understanding of stress, burnout, and other mental health issues common in the firefighting profession.” (P3)</p> <p>“We provide access to mental health resources and support services for all team members. This includes counseling, peer support programs, and stress management techniques to help them cope with the challenges and pressures of the job.” (P2)</p>
Focus on learning	7	12	<p>“He (leader) emphasizes the importance of reflecting on our experiences, identifying lessons learned, and implementing changes to enhance</p>

			our effectiveness and safety.” (P6)
Individual follower focus	3	5	“During performance evaluations or one-on-one meetings, our leader takes the time to acknowledge individual achievements and milestones, providing personalized feedback and recognition for outstanding performance.” (P10)

Once the initial coding of the raw data step was completed, the initial codes were evaluated to facilitate their grouping. The results of this process can be seen in Table 3.

*Table 3: Initial Code Grouping*

Theme	n of participants contributing (N=10)	n of transcript excerpts assigned
Theme 1: The focus of leaders on mental health is appreciated by firefighters	7	24
Theme 2: The willingness of leaders to collaborate and to actively listen to followers is perceived as support on the part of firefighters	6	19
Theme 3: Leaders attempt to individualize the manner in which they lead	8	36
Theme 4: Communication on the part of transformative leaders facilitates positive health outcomes on the part of followers	9	37

Next, the researcher clarified the relationship between the research question guiding this study and the emergent themes evident in the initial coding of the data. The results of this step can be seen in Table 4.

*Table 4: Research Question and Emergent Themes*

Research Question	Themes addressing the research question
RQ1: What is the impact of transformational leadership attributes on firefighter well-being and workplace stress in Dallas County, TX?	Theme 1: Leadership focus on mental health shows firefighters that their leaders are cognizant of the adverse effects of workplace stressors on their mental well-being
	Theme 2: Leadership focus on collaboration and active listening shows firefighters that their concerns matter to their leaders
	Theme 3: Transformational leaders create a unique opportunity to tailor leadership strategies to the specific needs of each follower
	Theme 4: Communication on the part of transformative leaders facilitates positive health outcomes on the part of followers

### **Stressors and Risk Assessment**

Firefighters encounter and endure multiple stressors, with the risks that are innate to their unique working environment being a primary one. A significant stressor is the fact that firefighters are routinely thrust into dangerous situations that require preparatory meetings and debriefings as a means of identifying the factors of dangers that could affect firefighters in each specific event that they respond to, the cause of an event, as well as what went well in the firefighters' response. According to Participant 1, regular meetings are held as an opportunity for all internal stakeholders to provide their input regarding their working environments.



## Culture of Safety

All leaders selected for this study used the transformational leadership style, thus generating a large quantity of detail-rich data to facilitate the answering of the research question guiding this study. Leaders using the transformational leadership style also generate the benefit of creating an internal working culture that supports safety. Participant 1 uses continuous training and education, while Participant 2 uses safety briefings and reviews. The training engaged by Participant 1 comprised “regular drills, scenario-based training exercises, and workshops focused on safety protocols and procedures.” The safety briefings used by Participant 2 comprise “comprehensive safety briefings where we discuss potential risks, hazards, and safety protocols specific to the task at hand.” Participant 3 also mentioned that his fire station ensures that a safety of culture is supported by providing firefighters with safety equipment and gear that are all high in quality.

A culture of safety is further reinforced by the actions of the leaders. According to Participant 10, the leader “promotes a culture of teamwork and collaboration within the team.” Additionally, according to Participant 6, his leader “consistently demonstrates [s] professionalism, calmness under pressure, and a strong commitment to safety protocols during dangerous situations.” Participant 7 felt that such a culture of safety helps to instill confidence in firefighters. According to Participant 8, his leaders “encourage[s] open communication, collaboration, and mutual trust among team members, which creates a sense of camaraderie and solidarity.” Participant 9 stated that his leader “invest[s] in regular training exercises, simulations, and skill development opportunities to ensure that we're well-prepared to handle dangerous situations effectively.” Finally, according to Participant 10, the leader “prioritize[s]

safety above all else, consistently emphasizing the importance of following safety protocols, using proper equipment, and assessing risks before taking action.”

### **Theme 1: Focus on Mental Health**

Leader efforts also focus on promoting firefighter well-being following traumatic events and missions. According to Participant 6, the leader “responds with empathy and compassion, providing immediate emotional support to team members who may be affected.” According to Participant 7, the leader “ensures that team members have access to professional support services, such as counseling or therapy, to help them cope with the aftermath of a traumatic event.” The leader of Participant 8 focuses on the prioritization of “communication and transparency, keeping us informed about any developments, updates, or support services available.” The leader of Participant 10 “takes proactive steps to monitor the well-being of team members and identify any signs of distress or trauma.” All followers also felt that their leaders prioritized their rest. For example, the leader of Participant 1 “ensure[s] that team members have adequate time off between shifts, limit the number of consecutive hours worked, and provide opportunities for scheduled downtime to rest and recharge.” Participant 7 felt that his leader “understands the importance of rest and recovery in maintaining physical and mental well-being.” The leader of follower 9 “advocates [s] for rotating schedules to ensure equitable distribution of workload, encourage the use of recovery breaks during extended incidents, and monitor fatigue levels to prevent overexertion.”

### **Theme 2: Collaboration and Active Listening**

The leader participants using transformational leadership use a variety of tools to facilitate improved communication skills. Participant 1 stated, “We hold regular team meetings where everyone has the opportunity to voice their concerns, share insights, and discuss any

potential risks.” The same participant also mentioned that this helps to create an environment that “fosters an environment of open communication and ensures that everyone is aware of the risks associated with firefighting and how we plan to address them.” Participant 2 references the use of safety briefing, which includes discussing and evaluating specific risks inherent to the firefighting environment. Other similar tools include one-on-one check-ins, as discussed by Participant 3, an anonymous reporting system, as explained by Participant 4, and training and education, as referenced by Participant 5. According to Participant 5, additional focus on training and education “empower[s] them to communicate openly about potential risks and contribute to finding solutions” in relation to employees and subordinates.

These tools are recognized by followers. For example, Participant 6 feels a greater sense of readiness to handle the wide range of various situations that firefighters encounter, which is rooted in the leader’s communication ability. Participant 8 stated that his leader “encourage[s] us to remain alert and observant during all operations, anticipate[s] potential hazards or complications, and adapt[s] our strategies accordingly.” According to Participant 9, the leader is proactive in communicating the risk assessment process.

### **Theme 3: Individualized Use of Available Tools**

Leaders using the transformational leadership style engage multiple types of tools to enhance firefighters’ well-being. Two such tools are the use of physical fitness programs, which are intended to foster and support optimal physical health, as described by Participant 1, and the use of internal policies that support work-life balance for firefighters, as mentioned by Participant 5. Participant 1 also stated that fighting for the “well-being of my team by implementing strict safety measures and protocols during firefighting operations.” Other tools tend to focus on emotional and mental aspects, as Participant 2 works with his fire department to

offer mental health support for firefighters, while Participant 3 and 4 offer simulation training and critical incident stress debriefing, or CISD. CISD is particularly useful, as it is intended to “provide team members with the opportunity to debrief, share their experiences, and receive support from their peers and mental health professionals” following the conclusion of stress incidents and responses. Participant 5 focused on community engagement and support, and he aimed to include members of the community in the operations of the fire station by “fostering strong relationships with the community and advocating for their support.” Other initiatives used by leaders include the use of the regular health assessments of firefighters, as stated by Participant 4, who stated that “based on these assessments, we adjust workloads, provide additional support, or recommend time off as needed to ensure that our crew members remain healthy, rested, and ready for duty.” Furthermore, all leaders provide their followers and subordinates with resources that are intended to assist them with coping with the stressors that are inherent to the firefighting environment. These include an Employee Assistance Program, or EAP, as used by Participant 1, which offers firefighters with “access to licensed therapists, mental health resources, and referral services to help team members cope with stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. Participant 5 has also been instrumental in the creation of “fitness initiatives, stress management workshops, mindfulness practices, and resilience-building exercises designed to help team members manage the cumulative stress of the profession and maintain optimal health and performance.”

Followers tend to recognize and appreciate the efforts of leaders on the part of their well-being. According to Participant 6, “knowing that they genuinely care about our well-being makes a huge difference in how I navigate the stresses of the job.” Participant 9 states his leader “prioritize[s] regular check-ins, provide opportunities for stress management training, and are

always available to talk if we need support.” According to Participant 7, leadership efforts are not always “consistent,” and if leaders were to be more “proactive,” they would likely have an improved impact on the well-being of participants.

Participant’s 1 fire station provides its firefighters with peer support training, which is intended to provide “team members with the necessary skills and techniques to effectively support their colleagues after exposure to high-stress situations.” A similar strategy was engaged by Participant 2, who stated that a peer support network “provides a safe space for sharing thoughts, feelings, and coping strategies, fostering a sense of solidarity and understanding.” Participant 3 stated that his fire station “organize[s] team bonding activities and exercises that promote camaraderie, trust, and mutual support among crew members.” Such a strategy is intended to create a sense of belonging on the part of firefighters.

#### **Theme 4: Communication of Transformative Leaders as an Authentic Factor**

Participant 6 stated that the leader “always takes the time to thoroughly communicate the risks associated with each mission.” Participant 7 and 10 also believed that their respective leaders also communicate effectively, but there was room for improvement, the Participant 7’s leader “make[s] sure to highlight the key dangers and hazards we might encounter, but there have been a few instances where I felt like certain risks were overlooked or not adequately addressed.” Participant 10 felt that “more consistent and thorough communication about risks would benefit everyone on the team.” Participant 8 felt that his leader occasionally rushes through briefings and felt that additional communication efforts would shed additional light onto insight. Finally, Participant 9 did not feel that his leader’s communication had been effective, as “there have been several instances where important safety information was overlooked or downplayed, putting our team at unnecessary risk.” Participant 8 stated that his leader

“encourages open communication and collaboration among team members, creating a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and respected.”

At the same time, followers also felt that their leaders were not always accessible or available to them when needed. Participant 9 stated that he sees his leader “to be somewhat inaccessible when I need to discuss concerns about safety, stress, or job performance.”

Participant 10 stated that he finds his leader “to be largely inaccessible when I need to discuss concerns about safety, stress, or job performance.” The remaining participants felt that leaders are sometimes accessible but that this is not consistent and translates across all situations and instances.

### **Connection of Identified Themes to Transformational Leadership Attributes**

#### **Summary**

As evidenced by the data presented in this chapter, the overarching themes identified within the obtained data include the transformative leaders being focused on mental health, transformative leaders being willing to collaborate and actively listen to their followers, transformative leaders individualizing the manner in which they lead. These identified themes answer the research question in that the data shows that, in instances in which transformative leaders within the firefighting industry use the tools that are available to them and focus on addressing the stressors that firefighters face in this working environment, following firefighters not only appreciate such integration, but also are able to sustain positive health and well-being outcomes. Overall, the obtained data indicates that the transformative leadership style helps foster positive well-being in firefighters. Although not all transformative leaders effectively utilize the tools that are available to them as a means of supporting the well-being and health of

their firefighting employees, followers do notice when they do and recognize the impact of such strategies on their mental health. Such an impact is particularly evident following traumatic events that firefighters respond to.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of the Results

Upon an evaluation and thematic analysis of the obtained data, several overarching themes emerged: transformative leaders being focused on mental health, transformative leaders being willing to collaborate and actively listen to their followers, transformative leaders individualizing the manner in which they lead. The major themes comprised the use of leadership tools, the use of firefighting well-being initiatives, the fostering of a culture of safety, peer support for firefighter well-being, the handling of traumatic events and the provision of rest to firefighters, and effective communication strategies used by leaders. Firefighters generally recognize the benefits of their leaders using the transformational leadership style. For example, firefighters tend to feel supported by their leaders when the latter utilizes the transformational leadership style, as the use of this leadership style places a high degree of focus on the needs of firefighters within the context of the dangers that they face within their daily working environments. Leaders in the firefighting industry tend to harness and utilize a wide range of tools to constructively enhance the well-being of firefighters. For example, leaders make use of regular meetings, safety debriefings, check-ins, firefighter training and education, and critical incident stress debriefing. Furthermore, many leaders have focused on placing a special degree of emphasis on mental health programs and resources for their followers. Leaders also appear to attempt to create a balance within the workforce and work to avoid the negative consequences of work stressors in relation to their effect on firefighters.

Leaders within the firefighting industry appear to take great care to ensure the safety and well-being of their employees, particularly in situations that are inherently, and which typically constitute emergencies. The leaders interviewed as part of the current study continually evaluate



means of alleviating the degree of stress experienced by firefighters, and most appear to understand the importance of mental health and how mental health can be impacted by workplace stressors. Leaders also appear to be aware of the need to properly train and prepare firefighters, as well as debrief them once they have addressed an emergent situation. For example, critical incident debriefing, or CISD, seems to be a popular tool among leaders in relation to helping firefighters better understand the emergency situations that they have addressed and process any traumatic events that they may have experienced as part of their jobs. Aside from this, firefighter leaders also facilitate access to mental health services and resources on the part of their employees, which shows their understanding of the importance of ensuring that firefighters are mentally well and healthy. Such a focus, as described by the leaders, facilitates a greater degree of safety for firefighters. On the other hand, followers also recognize their leaders' focus on mental health, as they verbalize their appreciation of such a focus due to the beneficial effect on their well-being. Although not all followers believe their leaders are fully present for their employees and that they create a welcoming enough environment in which followers feel that they can easily and readily come to discuss any issues with them, they still recognize the benefits of the leadership style used.

### **Conclusions Based Upon Your Results**

Research indicated that the attributes of transformational leadership style could improve the well-being of firefighters and reduce the impact of the workplace stress that is inherent to the work environment. Not all firefighter followers were fully satisfied with the leadership of their managers, supervisors, and other leaders. Based on the data that was collected for the current study, it is clear that the transformational leadership style does generate multiple benefits that assist firefighters in their ability to ensure their safety and well-being. The firefighting industry,

as a whole, should consider utilizing the transformational leadership style as a means of not only motivating their firefighters but also fostering a working environment that fosters safety in every single work situation in which firefighters may find themselves as part of their assigned work duties. Attributes of transformational leadership include attention to firefighter needs, improved motivation, and an ethical framework for decisions.

### **Attention to Firefighter Needs**

The transformational leadership style has attributes that focus the attention of leaders on the needs of their employees. Leaders within the firefighting industry recognize that firefighters face multiple potentially dangerous situations that result from emergent circumstances. One need that firefighters have is to be shown that their safety and well-being matter (Smith et al., 2023). The obtained results indicate that leaders using this leadership style tend to be cognizant of the dangers and risks faced by firefighters. Such attention is evidenced in leaders' engaging in debriefings following the conclusion of emergent events and, as part of routine leadership tasks. Leaders also meet the needs of firefighters by providing them with mental health tools and various other strategies, such as flexible working schedules, as a means of reducing the risk of firefighters experiencing burnout.

### **Improved Motivation Strategies**

Through the use of their transformational leadership attributes, leaders within the firefighting industry have been able to utilize effective motivational strategies. Firefighters derive job satisfaction from the notion of engaging in life saving work that has a positive impact on members of their communities. As such, leaders can motivate firefighters by creating an environment in which firefighters are recognized for the value that they bring through their work.

Furthermore, a sense of unity also acts as a motivational factor, as firefighters feel supported and see their contributions as being perceived to be valuable. Motivation is also viewed by firefighters to be effective when the leadership approach is individualized and tailored to the needs of each specific firefighter. The transformational leadership style promotes teamwork and collaboration, which in turn creates a supportive and motivational environment.

### **Ethical Decisions**

The transformational leadership style facilitates ethical decision-making. By stepping into a role model role, leaders gain the ability to show firefighters what kinds of behaviors are expected from them. For example, this leadership style is aligned with decision-making that takes place on a collaborative and democratic basis. These results support the notion that such a collaborative approach fosters a more ethical decision-making, as it creates an environment of transparency and accountability. Furthermore, the use of debriefing meetings following the occurrence of emergent situations also fosters ethical decision-making, as it helps to further reinforce responsibility and integrity when.

The generated results can be used to help further the existing knowledge on this topic by providing leaders with additional data and evidence pertaining to the benefits associated with the use of the transformational leadership style. The firefighting working environment is inherently dangerous, and leaders in the industry should work to focus as much as they can on securing and preserving the well-being and safety of firefighters. The study indicated additional insight into the dynamics between leaders and followers and allows leaders to consider how to best provide their employees with what they need.

### **Limitations**

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative studies can have smaller participant samples, which can range between five participants and 25 participants. While this study met this criterion, a study sample of only ten participants, with five participants being pooled from either the category of leaders or followers, makes the results of the study difficult to generalize to the larger population from which the sample was obtained (Hennink, M., & Kaiser, 2022). As such, this study's small sample was a limitation in that it generated a large amount of detailed data but only from a small number of individuals.

Another limitation of the study was that all participants were male. Although female firefighters, both leaders, and followers, comprise only a small percentage of the field, as they comprise about 4.38% of the overall workforce in this industry (Data USA, 2024). Because this study lacked female participation, its results also may be difficult to generalize to the overall population of followers and leaders in the firefighting industry in the United States. Furthermore, the study obtained participants from only five fire stations, all of which were located in the state of Texas. Because of this geographic constraint, it is possible that firefighter leaders utilize different leadership styles in other areas of the country, which could lead to different results if the study was to be repeated with participants sources from other areas of the U.S.

### **Implications and Recommendations to the Field**

The implications to the field, as generated by this study, indicated that the transformational leadership style has multiple merits and benefits in relation to how tools available to leaders in the industry are optimally leveraged to support followers. Responses provided to the interview questions indicated support and encouragement by the leaders. At the same time, responses indicated that some of the followers feel that their leaders are lacking in

what they do and can potentially do in order to optimally support firefighter followers. As such, the obtained data shows that, although many leaders purport to utilize the transformational leadership style, not all of the same leaders are able to effectively leverage the use of such tools to support firefighters. It is possible that such a lack of perceived support stems from personality or individual differences between leaders and followers, as opposed to leaders utilizing the transformational leadership style. However, this aspect could be potentially mitigated via self-reflection and the willingness to remain open to the feedback of their followers on the part of leaders.

The obtained data shows that when followers feel supported, and when they perceive that the support tools that leaders apply are being appropriately applied to the function of leadership with the goal of facilitating and protecting the well-being of followers, followers notice such actions and efforts and appreciate it. Obtained data points to the importance of the establishment of a culture of safety by leaders, as this seems to be a critical component of leaders being able to protect and maintain the well-being of firefighters, which is also aligned with a continuously improving and evolving internal structure (ICMA, 2020). Based on this, it can be inferred that such a culture needs to be established prior to leaders attempting to apply the tools that they have at their disposal. For this reason, leaders in firefighting organizations should assess their organizational culture as a starting point and then determine how to ideally apply the tools of their choice: regular meetings, debriefing meetings, mental health resources, and fitness programs, among a multitude of other potential mechanisms.

The theoretical framework guiding the present study was the Conservation of Resources Theory, in which the human resources of employees can be negatively impacted by the stressors that employees experience (Bardeol & Drago, 2021). At the same time, this resource can be

preserved via the provision of other resources, such as effective leadership (Bardeol & Drago, 2021). A keen understanding of both of these aspects can improve and strengthen the well-being and safety of firefighters. The use of this theoretical framework supports the identified importance of the internal culture of the organization, as a culture of safety can appropriately assist in supporting the health of firefighters and help to preserve the organization's human resources (ICMA, 2020). The research indicated the attributes of transformation could lead to firefighter well-being and a reduction of workplace stress if leaders implemented this leadership style.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

As previously stated, limitations that were identified as part of this study included a small participant sample, all participants being male, and all participants being sources from within the state of Texas. The first recommendation for future research should focus on the inclusion of female firefighter followers and leaders in study samples as a means of generating a complete image of the impact of the transformational leadership style on followers in relation to any workplace stressors impacting them, as well as their well-being. A second recommendation for future research can also expand to include firefighters from other areas of the country, as opposed to focusing solely on the state of Texas.

An additional recommendation for future research efforts are likely to benefit from the use of a larger study sample and a more quantitative approach to generate numeric data that can be more easily generalized to the overall population of firefighters in the United States. Together, such an expansion of the research focus can lead to a better understanding of the role of the transformational leadership style on the well-being of firefighters. The final recommendation for future research should also consider focusing on a comparison of the various styles of leadership

used by firefighter leaders in order to evaluate if the transformational leadership style is truly superior in this field in relation to the safety and well-being of firefighters.

### **Conclusion**

The main research question guiding this study was:

R1: What is the impact of transformational leadership attributes on firefighter well-being and workplace stress in Dallas County, TX?

The study adopted a generic qualitative inquiry methodology as a means of exploring this research question in-depth. The study generated results that indicated that the transformational leadership style can make use of the tools that are available to organizational leaders as a means of mitigating the adverse impact that workplace stressors have on employee firefighters.

However, before such tools are implemented, leaders within this industry should strive to create and maintain a culture of safety, which begins with an assessment of the risks that firefighters face and how such risks can be eliminated or mitigated if not fully eradicated. Once a culture of safety is established, leaders in the industry become better able to apply the firefighter well-being support tools so that they can generate optimal outcomes. The data obtained for this study indicates that firefighter leaders can access or create a multitude of various tools with the aim of supporting the well-being of firefighters and mitigating the adverse impact of any stressors.

Although all leaders participating in the current study have utilized the transformational leadership style, not all appear to use the tools that they could be able to effectively leverage the positive attributes and defining characteristics of this particular leadership style. The data indicates that, when such tools are used, such actions are recognized and appreciated by followers and that their perceived feeling of safety dramatically increases.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Leader Interview Questions**

1. How do you maintain open communication with your team, especially when addressing the risks associated with firefighting?
2. What measures do you take to ensure that all team members are mentally and physically prepared for the demands of firefighting?
3. Can you provide examples of how you promote a culture of safety and risk awareness within your team?
4. How do you lead your team through the aftermath of particularly difficult calls or traumatic events?
5. In what ways do you advocate for the well-being of your team, both on the job and off?
6. How do you encourage and facilitate peer support among team members after exposure to high-stress situations?
7. What initiatives have you implemented to reduce the impact of job-related stress on your firefighters?
8. How do you balance operational readiness with the need for rest and recovery among your crew?
9. Can you describe a scenario where you had to adapt your leadership approach due to an unexpected emergency or challenge?

10. How do you assess and address signs of burnout or PTSD within your team?
11. What strategies do you use to foster resilience and mental toughness within your crew?
12. How do you involve your team in the decision-making process, particularly in situations that involve high risk?
13. What is your approach to debriefing after an incident, and how do you ensure it contributes to learning and growth?
14. How do you personally cope with the stresses and dangers of firefighting, and how does this influence your leadership?
15. What resources or support systems do you have in place for team members who may be struggling with the cumulative stress of the profession?



## **Appendix B**

### **Follower Interview Questions**

1. Do you feel that your leader effectively communicates the risks associated with each mission?
2. How well does your leader support your mental and emotional well-being in the face of the stresses of the job?
3. In what ways does your leader inspire confidence in you when facing dangerous situations?
4. How does your leader ensure that the team is prepared and trained to handle the unexpected?
5. Can you provide an example of how your leader has fostered a strong sense of team unity and morale?
6. How does your leader respond to and support team members following a traumatic event?
7. Does your leader actively encourage and facilitate opportunities for rest and recovery?
8. How accessible is your leader when you need to discuss concerns about safety, stress, or job performance?
9. Does your leader provide clear guidance and feedback that help you improve your firefighting skills and safety knowledge?
10. In what ways has your leader demonstrated a commitment to the physical and psychological safety of the team?
11. How does your leader involve the team in planning and decision-making, especially when it involves high-risk situations?

12. How are achievements and successes recognized and celebrated by your leader?
13. Does your leader promote and participate in post-incident debriefings that focus on learning and improvement?
14. How does your leader help you balance the demands of the job with your personal life and well-being?
15. Do you feel empowered to voice your concerns and suggestions, and how does your leader address them?

## **Appendix C**

### **Informed Consent**

#### **TITLE OF STUDY**

**The Impact of Leadership Style on Firefighters' Well-Being and Stress Reduction in  
Emergencies**

#### **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

Christofer Alexander

[Christofercj.alexander@columbiasouthern.edu](mailto:Christofercj.alexander@columbiasouthern.edu)

#### **PURPOSE OF STUDY**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact of the transformational leadership style being used within the firefighter setting on the stressors and dangers that firefighters face within this particular working environment.

#### **STUDY PROCEDURES**

Please fill out this informed consent form, sign, and return back to the researcher via email. If you fit the inclusion criteria, you will be emailed an invitation to participate in the study, along with potential interview slots that you will be able to choose from. The study consists of a 60-minute-long interview that will be recorded and transcribed. Once transcribed, you will be able to evaluate the transcript for accuracy.

#### **RISKS**

The main risks that could be incurred by you could be being triggered by the interview questions based on any trauma that you may have experienced within the professional working environment in the past.

You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

#### **BENEFITS**

The main benefits that could be generated by you as a result of the study would be an improvement of your leader's leadership style as a means of further minimizing the dangers and risks of working as a firefighter.

## **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

If you are a leader:

State your age \_\_\_\_\_

Type of leadership style you use \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you spent as a leader \_\_\_\_\_

If you are an employee:

State your age \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you spent working within the firefighting field \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you spent working under your current leader \_\_\_\_\_

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your responses to this survey will be anonymous. Please do not write any identifying information as part of your interview. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

Measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality, such as those listed below:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant,

or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Primary Investigator, please contact the Institutional Review Board at [iepc@columbiasouthern.edu](mailto:iepc@columbiasouthern.edu).

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

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## **CONSENT**

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D**

### **Raw Interview Data**

#### **Leader Interview Questions: Raw Data**

**16. How do you maintain open communication with your team, especially when addressing the risks associated with firefighting?**

P1. We hold regular team meetings where everyone has the opportunity to voice their concerns, share insights, and discuss any potential risks. This fosters an environment of open communication and ensures that everyone is aware of the risks associated with firefighting and how we plan to address them.

P2. Before every operation, we conduct thorough safety briefings where we discuss the specific risks involved and the measures we'll take to mitigate them. This ensures that everyone is informed and prepared, and it provides an opportunity for team members to ask questions or raise any concerns they may have.

P3. I make it a point to have regular one-on-one check-ins with each team member. This allows for more personal communication and gives team members the chance to discuss any concerns they might not feel comfortable sharing in a group setting. It also helps to build trust and rapport within the team.

P4. We have an anonymous reporting system in place where team members can report any safety concerns or risks they observe without fear of retribution. This encourages open communication and ensures that all potential risks are addressed promptly.

P5. We invest in ongoing training and education for our team members to ensure they have the knowledge and skills necessary to assess and address risks effectively. By keeping our team members informed and well-trained, we empower them to communicate openly about potential risks and contribute to finding solutions.

**17. What measures do you take to ensure that all team members are mentally and physically prepared for the demands of firefighting?**

P1. We have structured physical fitness programs in place to ensure that all team members are in optimal physical condition for the demands of firefighting. These programs include regular workouts, strength training, cardio exercises, and flexibility routines tailored to the specific requirements of firefighting tasks.

P2. We provide access to mental health resources and support services for all team members. This includes counseling, peer support programs, and stress management techniques to help them cope with the challenges and pressures of the job.

P3. We conduct regular simulation training exercises to simulate real-life firefighting scenarios. This not only helps improve technical skills but also prepares team members mentally for the high-stress situations they may encounter on the job.

P4. Following particularly challenging or traumatic incidents, we conduct CISD sessions to provide team members with the opportunity to debrief, share their experiences, and receive support from their peers and mental health professionals.

P5. We have policies in place to promote a healthy work-life balance, including adequate rest periods between shifts, scheduled time off, and flexible scheduling options. This helps prevent burnout and ensures that team members have the time and energy to focus on their physical and mental well-being.

**18. Can you provide examples of how you promote a culture of safety and risk awareness within your team?**

P1. We prioritize ongoing training and education to ensure that all team members are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills related to firefighting safety and risk management. This includes regular drills, scenario-based training exercises, and workshops focused on safety protocols and procedures.

P2. Before every operation, we conduct comprehensive safety briefings where we discuss potential risks, hazards, and safety protocols specific to the task at hand. Additionally, we conduct post-operation reviews to analyze any safety incidents or near-misses, identify areas for improvement, and implement corrective measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

P3. We instill a culture of accountability and responsibility within our team by emphasizing the importance of adhering to safety protocols and procedures at all times. Each team member is accountable for their actions and is encouraged to speak up if they identify any safety concerns or risks, regardless of their rank or experience level.

P4. We ensure that all team members have access to high-quality safety equipment and gear, including personal protective equipment (PPE), firefighting tools, and communication devices. Regular inspections and maintenance

procedures are in place to ensure that all equipment is in good working condition and meets safety standards.

P5. We foster open communication and collaboration among team members, encouraging them to share their insights, experiences, and concerns related to safety and risk management. This includes regular team meetings, brainstorming sessions, and forums for discussing safety best practices and lessons learned from past experiences. By working together as a team, we can effectively identify and address potential risks before they escalate into safety incidents.

## **19. How do you lead your team through the aftermath of particularly difficult calls or traumatic events?**

P1. Following a particularly difficult call or traumatic event, I ensure that my team has immediate access to debriefing sessions led by trained professionals. These sessions provide a safe space for team members to express their emotions, share their experiences, and receive support from their peers and mental health professionals.

P2. We have established peer support programs within our team where experienced members are trained to provide support and guidance to their colleagues during difficult times. This network of peer support helps team members feel understood and validated, fostering a sense of camaraderie and resilience.

P3. I ensure that my team has access to mental health resources and support services, including counseling, therapy, and stress management techniques. Encouraging team members to seek professional help when needed reduces the stigma associated with mental health issues and promotes overall well-being.

P4. Recognizing the importance of self-care, I encourage my team members to take time off to rest and recharge after particularly challenging incidents. I emphasize the importance of prioritizing their physical and mental well-being and provide flexibility in scheduling to accommodate their needs.

P5. I maintain ongoing communication with my team members in the days and weeks following difficult calls or traumatic events, checking in on their well-being and offering support as needed. This continuous support helps prevent the long-term effects of trauma and ensures that team members feel supported throughout the recovery process.



**20. In what ways do you advocate for the well-being of your team, both on the job and off?**

P1. I advocate for the well-being of my team by implementing strict safety measures and protocols during firefighting operations. This includes providing proper training, ensuring the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE), and conducting regular safety inspections to minimize the risk of injury or harm while on duty.

P2. I prioritize the mental well-being of my team by advocating for access to mental health resources and support services. This includes offering counseling services, peer support programs, and stress management techniques to help team members cope with the challenges and stressors of the job.

P3. I advocate for a healthy work-life balance by promoting policies that allow for adequate rest periods between shifts, scheduled time off, and flexible scheduling options. Ensuring that my team members have time to recharge and spend quality time with their loved ones is essential for their overall well-being.

P4. I advocate for professional development opportunities that support the growth and advancement of my team members' skills and knowledge. This includes providing access to training programs, workshops, and certifications that enhance their capabilities as firefighters and promote career satisfaction and fulfillment.

P5. I advocate for the well-being of my team by fostering strong relationships with the community and advocating for their support. This includes collaborating with local organizations to provide resources and assistance to firefighters and their families, such as financial aid, mental health services, and educational opportunities. By building a supportive network within the community, we can better address the needs and well-being of our team members both on and off the job.

**21. How do you encourage and facilitate peer support among team members after exposure to high-stress situations?**

P1. We provide training sessions specifically focused on peer support, equipping team members with the necessary skills and techniques to effectively support their colleagues after exposure to high-stress situations. This includes active listening, empathy, and knowing when to refer someone to professional help.

P2. We facilitate the formation of support networks within the team, where team members can connect with peers who have undergone similar experiences. These networks provide a safe space for sharing thoughts, feelings, and coping strategies, fostering a sense of solidarity and understanding.

P3. We encourage open communication among team members, creating an environment where individuals feel comfortable discussing their experiences and seeking support from their peers. By normalizing conversations about stress and trauma, we reduce the stigma associated with seeking help and promote a culture of support.

P4. We conduct regular check-ins with team members following exposure to high-stress situations, either individually or in small groups. These check-ins provide an opportunity to assess how individuals are coping, offer support and encouragement, and identify any signs of distress that may require further intervention.

P5. We ensure that team members have access to resources and information about mental health support services, including counseling, therapy, and helplines. By providing readily available resources, we empower team members to seek help when needed and ensure they receive the support necessary for their well-being.

## **22. What initiatives have you implemented to reduce the impact of job-related stress on your firefighters?**

P1. We have implemented regular stress management workshops for our firefighters, providing them with practical techniques and coping strategies to manage job-related stress effectively. These workshops cover topics such as mindfulness, relaxation techniques, and stress-reduction exercises tailored to the demands of firefighting.

P2. We have established peer support programs within our team, where trained peer supporters are available to provide emotional support and guidance to their colleagues experiencing job-related stress. This initiative creates a supportive network where firefighters can seek help and share experiences in a safe and confidential environment.

P3. We have developed comprehensive wellness programs focused on promoting physical and mental well-being among our firefighters. These programs include fitness classes, nutrition counseling, mental health screenings, and access to resources such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to support their overall health.

P4. Following particularly challenging or traumatic incidents, we conduct Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) sessions to help firefighters process their emotions, share their experiences, and receive support from peers and mental health professionals. These debriefing sessions are essential for mitigating the impact of job-related stress and preventing long-term psychological effects.

P5. We have implemented rotational shift scheduling to minimize the impact of job-related stress caused by long hours and irregular work patterns. By providing firefighters with predictable schedules and adequate rest periods between shifts, we help reduce fatigue and improve their overall well-being, leading to better job performance and resilience to stress.

**23. How do you balance operational readiness with the need for rest and recovery among your crew?**

P1. We balance operational readiness with the need for rest and recovery by implementing structured shift scheduling systems that prioritize adequate rest periods for our crew members. This includes rotating shifts, limiting consecutive work hours, and ensuring sufficient time off between shifts to promote restorative sleep and recovery.

P2. We utilize an on-call rotation system that allows our crew members to alternate between active duty and on-call status. This approach ensures that while some firefighters remain on standby for immediate response, others have the opportunity to rest and recover away from the station, reducing the risk of burnout and fatigue.

P3. We have established comprehensive wellness programs aimed at supporting the physical and mental well-being of our crew members. These programs include fitness initiatives, stress management workshops, access to mental health resources, and counseling services to help them maintain optimal health and resilience in the face of operational demands.

P4. We conduct regular health assessments for our crew members to monitor their physical and mental health status and identify any signs of fatigue or burnout. Based on these assessments, we adjust workloads, provide additional support, or recommend time off as needed to ensure that our crew members remain healthy, rested, and ready for duty.

P5. Following intense operational periods, we prioritize post-operational debriefings to review performance, assess crew well-being, and identify any areas for improvement. These debriefings provide an opportunity to discuss the balance

between operational demands and the need for rest and recovery, allowing us to make informed decisions to better support our crew members in maintaining their readiness and resilience.

**24. Can you describe a scenario where you had to adapt your leadership approach due to an unexpected emergency or challenge?**

P1. During a wildfire response, weather conditions unexpectedly intensified, leading to rapid fire spread and increased risk to our team. In response, I quickly shifted from a directive leadership style to a more collaborative approach, involving team members in decision-making and adapting our tactics in real-time to ensure their safety and the effectiveness of our operations.

P2. While conducting a rescue operation, a critical piece of equipment malfunctioned, posing a significant challenge to the operation's success. In this situation, I had to adapt my leadership approach by delegating tasks effectively, improvising alternative solutions with the available resources, and maintaining clear communication to ensure the safety of both the rescue team and the individuals in need of assistance.

P3. One of our crew members experienced a sudden medical emergency during a training exercise, requiring immediate medical attention. In this scenario, I had to swiftly transition from overseeing the exercise to managing the medical emergency, coordinating emergency medical services, and ensuring the well-being of the affected team member while maintaining the safety of the rest of the team.

P4. While engaged in fire suppression operations at a structural fire, a section of the building unexpectedly collapsed, trapping several team members inside. I immediately adapted my leadership approach by prioritizing rescue efforts, coordinating with additional resources for support, and providing clear direction to ensure a coordinated and effective response to the emergency situation.

P5. During a multi-agency response to a large-scale incident, communication breakdowns occurred between different response teams, leading to confusion and inefficiencies in our operations. To address this challenge, I adjusted my leadership approach by establishing a unified command structure, improving communication protocols, and facilitating collaboration between agencies to streamline our response efforts and enhance overall effectiveness.

## **25. How do you assess and address signs of burnout or PTSD within your team?**

P1. We conduct regular mental health check-ins with all team members to assess their well-being and identify any signs of burnout or PTSD. These check-ins provide an opportunity for team members to express their concerns and seek support in a safe and confidential environment.

P2. We provide training to all team members on recognizing the signs and symptoms of burnout and PTSD in themselves and their colleagues. By increasing awareness and understanding of these conditions, we empower our team to identify when help may be needed and to take proactive steps to address it.

P3. We ensure that our team members have access to counseling and support services specifically tailored to addressing burnout and PTSD. This may include individual therapy, group support sessions, and resources such as helplines and online forums where they can seek guidance and connect with others who may be experiencing similar challenges.

P4. We have established peer support programs within our team, where trained peer supporters are available to provide confidential assistance and guidance to their colleagues experiencing burnout or PTSD. These peer supporters offer a valuable source of empathy, understanding, and encouragement, helping to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help.

P5. We recognize the importance of work-life balance in preventing burnout and managing stress. Therefore, we offer flexible work arrangements, such as adjusted schedules, reduced hours, or temporary reassignments, to team members who may be experiencing burnout or PTSD. These arrangements allow individuals to take time off to prioritize their well-being and seek the support they need to recover.

## **26. What strategies do you use to foster resilience and mental toughness within your crew?**

P1. We foster resilience and mental toughness within our crew by providing comprehensive training that simulates real-life scenarios and challenges they may encounter on the job. By equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence, we build their resilience to effectively handle stressful situations and adversity.

P2. We use positive reinforcement techniques to acknowledge and celebrate our crew members' achievements, efforts, and strengths. By recognizing their

accomplishments and contributions, we boost morale, instill confidence, and cultivate a resilient mindset that enables them to overcome obstacles and persevere through difficult times.

P3. We organize team bonding activities and exercises that promote camaraderie, trust, and mutual support among crew members. By fostering strong interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging within the team, we enhance their resilience and ability to navigate challenges together as a cohesive unit.

P4. We provide access to mental health resources, support services, and resilience-building programs tailored to the unique needs of firefighters. This includes stress management workshops, counseling services, peer support programs, and resilience training aimed at equipping crew members with coping strategies and tools to maintain their mental well-being.

P5. We invest in leadership development initiatives that empower crew members to take on leadership roles and responsibilities within the team. By nurturing their leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and problem-solving capabilities, we enhance their resilience and readiness to lead effectively in high-pressure situations, inspiring confidence and trust among their peers.

**27. How do you involve your team in the decision-making process, particularly in situations that involve high risk?**

P1. We involve our team in the decision-making process by conducting collaborative risk assessments before engaging in high-risk activities. This includes gathering input from all team members to identify potential hazards, evaluate risks, and develop strategies to mitigate them. By involving the entire team in the risk assessment process, we ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more informed and effective decision-making.

P2. We facilitate scenario-based discussions and tabletop exercises that simulate high-risk situations, allowing team members to explore different options, discuss potential challenges, and collectively develop response strategies. These discussions foster a shared understanding of the risks involved and encourage active participation from all team members in the decision-making process.

P3. We maintain open communication channels within our team, where team members are encouraged to voice their concerns, ask questions, and provide input on decisions related to high-risk situations. By creating a culture of open communication and transparency, we promote collaboration and trust, enabling

team members to contribute their expertise and insights to the decision-making process.

P4. We provide ongoing training and education to our team members on risk management principles, decision-making frameworks, and situational awareness techniques. By equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills, we empower our team members to actively participate in the decision-making process and make informed choices when faced with high-risk situations.

P5. After high-risk incidents or operations, we conduct post-incident reviews to evaluate our performance, identify lessons learned, and discuss areas for improvement. These reviews involve all team members and provide an opportunity to reflect on our decisions, assess their effectiveness, and implement changes to enhance our decision-making processes in future high-risk situations.

**28. What is your approach to debriefing after an incident, and how do you ensure it contributes to learning and growth?**

P1. We have a structured debriefing process in place that we follow after every incident. This includes gathering all team members involved, providing a safe space for open discussion, and guiding the conversation to cover various aspects of the incident, including what went well, what could have been improved, and any lessons learned.

P2. During the debriefing, I encourage all team members to share their perspectives, experiences, and insights without fear of judgment. By fostering an environment of open communication and active listening, we ensure that all voices are heard and valuable lessons are captured from different viewpoints.

P3. I guide the debriefing process to identify both strengths and areas for improvement. We celebrate successes and commend effective actions taken during the incident, while also acknowledging areas where we can learn and grow as a team. This balanced approach helps maintain morale while promoting a culture of continuous improvement.

P4. As part of the debriefing, we focus on identifying actionable takeaways that can be implemented to enhance our performance and response in future incidents. These takeaways may include adjusting procedures, refining communication protocols, or providing additional training to address specific challenges encountered during the incident.

P5. Following the debriefing, I ensure that key insights and lessons learned are documented for future reference. We develop action plans based on the identified takeaways and assign responsibilities for implementing any necessary changes or improvements. Regular follow-up sessions are scheduled to review progress and ensure that the debriefing contributes to tangible learning and growth within our team.

**29. How do you personally cope with the stresses and dangers of firefighting, and how does this influence your leadership?**

P1. Personally, I prioritize physical fitness and wellness to cope with the stresses and dangers of firefighting. Regular exercise, healthy eating habits, and sufficient rest are essential for maintaining my physical health and resilience in demanding situations. This commitment to wellness influences my leadership by setting a positive example for my team and emphasizing the importance of self-care in managing stress and staying prepared for the challenges we face.

P2. I practice mindfulness, meditation, and stress management techniques to maintain my mental well-being and resilience. These practices help me stay focused, grounded, and emotionally balanced during high-stress situations, enabling me to make clear-headed decisions and provide effective leadership to my team. By prioritizing mental health, I demonstrate to my team the importance of self-awareness and self-care in managing the pressures of firefighting.

P3. I engage in continuous learning and professional development to expand my knowledge and skills in firefighting, leadership, and risk management. This ongoing growth mindset helps me stay adaptable and responsive to evolving challenges, fostering confidence and competence in my leadership approach. By demonstrating a commitment to learning, I encourage my team members to embrace a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in their own development.

P4. I rely on the support and collaboration of my fellow firefighters to cope with the stresses and dangers of firefighting. Building strong relationships, fostering trust, and maintaining open communication with my team members create a supportive network that enhances resilience and camaraderie. This sense of unity and shared purpose influences my leadership by emphasizing the importance of teamwork, mutual support, and collective problem-solving in overcoming challenges together.

P5. I maintain perspective and resilience by focusing on the positive impact we make as firefighters and the meaningfulness of our work in serving and protecting



our community. Recognizing the value of our mission and the difference we can make in people's lives helps me stay motivated and resilient in the face of adversity. This sense of purpose and optimism influences my leadership by inspiring hope, determination, and a sense of purpose among my team members, even in the most challenging circumstances.

**30. What resources or support systems do you have in place for team members who may be struggling with the cumulative stress of the profession?**

P1. We have an Employee Assistance Program in place that provides confidential counseling and support services to team members who may be struggling with the cumulative stress of the profession. This program offers access to licensed therapists, mental health resources, and referral services to help team members cope with stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.

P2. We have established peer support programs within our team, where trained peer supporters are available to provide confidential assistance and guidance to their colleagues experiencing cumulative stress. These peer supporters offer a valuable source of empathy, understanding, and encouragement, helping to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help and fostering a supportive environment within the team.

P3. We provide mental health awareness training to all team members to increase their understanding of stress, burnout, and other mental health issues common in the firefighting profession. This training equips team members with the knowledge and skills to recognize the signs and symptoms of cumulative stress in themselves and their colleagues, as well as strategies for coping and seeking help when needed.

P4. We have developed comprehensive wellness programs aimed at supporting the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of our team members. These programs include fitness initiatives, stress management workshops, mindfulness practices, and resilience-building exercises designed to help team members manage the cumulative stress of the profession and maintain optimal health and performance.

P5. We offer flexible work arrangements to accommodate the needs of team members who may be struggling with cumulative stress. This may include adjusted schedules, reduced hours, or temporary reassignments to less demanding roles, allowing individuals to prioritize their well-being and seek the support they need to recover. By offering flexibility and support, we ensure that team members

can address cumulative stress effectively while continuing to fulfill their duties as firefighters.

## Appendix E

### Follower Interview Questions: Raw Data

**16. Do you feel that your leader effectively communicates the risks associated with each mission?**

P6. Yes, my manager always takes the time to thoroughly communicate the risks associated with each mission. He provides detailed briefings before we embark on any operation, outlining potential hazards, safety protocols, and strategies for mitigating risks. This proactive approach helps us understand what we're up against and how to stay safe while carrying out our duties.

P7. Most of the time, our leader does a good job of communicating the risks associated with each mission. He makes sure to highlight the key dangers and hazards we might encounter, but there have been a few instances where I felt like certain risks were overlooked or not adequately addressed. Overall, though, I appreciate his efforts to keep us informed and prepared.

P8. I think our supervisor could do a better job of communicating the risks associated with each mission. Sometimes the briefings feel rushed or incomplete, and I don't always feel fully aware of all the potential hazards we might face. It would be helpful if he took more time to ensure that we all have a clear understanding of the risks involved before we go out into the field.

P9. No, I don't feel that our leader effectively communicates the risks associated with each mission. There have been several instances where important safety information was overlooked or downplayed, putting our team at unnecessary risk. I believe there needs to be more emphasis on thorough risk assessment and communication to ensure everyone's safety.

P10. Overall, I think our leader does a decent job of communicating the risks associated with each mission. He makes sure to cover the basics during our briefings and are usually responsive to questions or concerns raised by team members. However, there's always room for improvement, and I think more consistent and thorough communication about risks would benefit everyone on the team.

**17. How well does your leader support your mental and emotional well-being in the face of the stresses of the job?**

P6. My manager is incredibly supportive of our mental and emotional well-being. He actively encourages open communication, provides resources for stress management, and regularly checks in with us to see how we're coping. Knowing that he genuinely cares about our well-being makes a huge difference in how I navigate the stresses of the job.

P7. I feel like my leader does a decent job of supporting our mental and emotional well-being, but there's room for improvement. He occasionally checks in with us and offers resources for stress management, but it's not always consistent. I think more proactive support, such as regular wellness initiatives or access to counseling services, would be beneficial.

P8. Honestly, I don't feel like my supervisor provides much support for our mental and emotional well-being. There's very little acknowledgment of the stresses we face on the job, and I often feel like I'm left to cope with those challenges on my own.

P9. My leader does an excellent job of supporting our mental and emotional well-being. He prioritizes regular check-ins, provides opportunities for stress management training, and is always available to talk if we need support. Knowing that he has our backs and is there to help us through tough times makes a world of difference.

P10. I think my leader could do a better job of supporting our mental and emotional well-being. While he occasionally checks in with us, it often feels superficial, and there's not a lot of follow-up or ongoing support. I believe more consistent efforts to prioritize our mental health, such as offering counseling services or organizing wellness activities, would be beneficial.

**18. In what ways does your leader inspire confidence in you when facing dangerous situations?**

P6. My manager inspires confidence by leading by example. He consistently demonstrates professionalism, calmness under pressure, and a strong commitment to safety protocols during dangerous situations. Seeing his confidence and competence reassures me that we're in capable hands, which helps me stay focused and composed during challenging incidents.

P7. My leader inspires confidence through effective communication. He always provides clear and concise instructions, keeps us informed about the situation and our objectives, and ensures that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities. Knowing that we're on the same page and that our leader has a

solid plan in place gives me confidence in our ability to tackle even the most dangerous situations.

P8. My supervisor inspires confidence by fostering a supportive team environment. He encourages open communication, collaboration, and mutual trust among team members, which creates a sense of camaraderie and solidarity. Knowing that we have each other's backs and can rely on our teammates for support boosts my confidence and morale when facing dangerous situations.

P9. My leader inspires confidence by prioritizing training and preparedness. He invests in regular training exercises, simulations, and skill development opportunities to ensure that we're well-prepared to handle dangerous situations effectively. Knowing that we've practiced and honed our skills gives me confidence in our ability to respond confidently and competently when the time comes.

P10. My leader inspires confidence through their unwavering commitment to our safety and well-being. He prioritizes safety above all else, consistently emphasizing the importance of following safety protocols, using proper equipment, and assessing risks before taking action. Knowing that our leader places such a high priority on keeping us safe instills confidence in our ability to navigate dangerous situations with caution and vigilance.

## **19. How does your leader ensure that the team is prepared and trained to handle the unexpected?**

P6. My manager ensures that the team is prepared and trained to handle the unexpected by conducting regular drills and simulations. These exercises simulate various emergency scenarios, allowing us to practice our skills, test our response protocols, and identify areas for improvement. By engaging in realistic training scenarios, we develop the readiness and adaptability needed to handle unexpected situations effectively.

P7. My leader promotes a culture of continuous learning and professional development within the team. He encourages us to pursue ongoing training opportunities, attend workshops, and seek certifications relevant to our roles as firefighters. By staying current with the latest techniques, technologies, and best practices in firefighting, we enhance our readiness to handle unexpected challenges and emergencies.

P8. My supervisor emphasizes the importance of situational awareness and critical thinking skills. He encourages us to remain alert and observant during all

operations, anticipates potential hazards or complications, and adapts our strategies accordingly. By fostering a mindset of proactive problem-solving and flexibility, we're better equipped to respond effectively to unexpected developments in the field.

P9. My leader ensures that the team conducts thorough risk assessments before every operation. He encourages us to identify potential risks, hazards, and contingencies, develop response plans, and communicate effectively with each other to ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities. By prioritizing risk management and preparedness, we minimize the likelihood of being caught off guard by unexpected events.

P10. My leader promotes a culture of teamwork and collaboration within the team. He encourages us to work closely with our colleagues, share knowledge and expertise, and support each other during challenging situations. By fostering strong bonds and effective communication among team members, we're better able to adapt and respond collectively to unexpected emergencies, leveraging our collective strengths to overcome any obstacle.

**20. Can you provide an example of how your leader has fostered a strong sense of team unity and morale?**

P6. Our manager fosters a strong sense of team unity and morale by organizing regular team-building activities outside of work. These activities, such as group outings, sports events, or volunteer opportunities, provide us with opportunities to bond, build trust, and strengthen our relationships beyond the fire station environment.

P7. During challenging times, our leader makes a point to acknowledge and celebrate our achievements as a team. Whether it's a successful firefighting operation or a milestone reached in training, he takes the time to recognize our collective efforts and contributions, boosting morale and reinforcing our sense of unity and camaraderie.

P8. My supervisor encourages open communication and collaboration among team members, creating a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and respected. He actively solicits input and feedback from the team, listens to our concerns, and involves us in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging that strengthens our unity and morale.

P9. In times of adversity or hardship, our leader leads by example, demonstrating resilience, determination, and positivity. He remains composed under pressure,

maintains a solutions-oriented mindset, and inspires confidence in our abilities as a team. His unwavering optimism and encouragement uplifts our spirits and rally us together, fostering a strong sense of unity and morale even in the face of challenges.

P10. Our leader prioritizes teamwork and mutual support within the team, fostering a culture where we look out for one another and lend a helping hand when needed. He encourages collaboration, cooperation, and mutual respect among team members, creating a cohesive and inclusive environment where everyone feels supported and motivated to give their best. This sense of unity and solidarity boosts morale and strengthens our bond as a team.

## **21. How does your leader respond to and support team members following a traumatic event?**

P6. Following a traumatic event, my manager responds with empathy and compassion, providing immediate emotional support to team members who may be affected. He makes himself available to listen, offers comfort, and validates our feelings, creating a safe space for us to express our emotions and process the experience.

P7. Our leader ensures that team members have access to professional support services, such as counseling or therapy, to help them cope with the aftermath of a traumatic event. He facilitates referrals to mental health professionals and provides information about available resources, ensuring that team members receive the support they need to heal and recover.

P8. In the aftermath of a traumatic event, my supervisor prioritizes communication and transparency, keeping us informed about any developments, updates, or support services available. He provides regular updates, addresses any concerns or questions we may have, and maintains an open-door policy for team members to seek guidance or assistance.

P9. Our leader organizes debriefing sessions or critical incident stress debriefings (CISD) following a traumatic event, providing an opportunity for team members to come together, share their experiences, and process their emotions as a group. These debriefings help validate our experiences, normalize our reactions, and promote resilience and healing within the team.

P10. Following a traumatic event, our leader takes proactive steps to monitor the well-being of team members and identify any signs of distress or trauma. He checks in regularly with team members, offers ongoing support and

encouragement, and follows up with individuals who may be struggling to ensure they receive the necessary assistance and care.

**22. Does your leader actively encourage and facilitate opportunities for rest and recovery?**

P6. Yes, my manager actively encourages and facilitates opportunities for rest and recovery by implementing policies that prioritize work-life balance. He ensures that team members have adequate time off between shifts, limits the number of consecutive hours worked, and provides opportunities for scheduled downtime to rest and recharge.

P7. Absolutely, our leader understands the importance of rest and recovery in maintaining physical and mental well-being. He encourages team members to use accrued leave days for personal time off, provides flexibility in scheduling to accommodate individual needs, and actively discourages excessive overtime to prevent burnout.

P8. My supervisor recognizes that firefighting can be physically and emotionally demanding, so they make it a priority to facilitate rest and recovery opportunities for team members. This may include organizing wellness days, offering access to relaxation amenities at the fire station, and providing resources for stress management and self-care.

P9. Yes, our leader is proactive in promoting rest and recovery among team members, especially after intense or prolonged firefighting operations. He advocates for rotating schedules to ensure equitable distribution of workload, encourages the use of recovery breaks during extended incidents, and monitors fatigue levels to prevent overexertion.

P10. Definitely, our leader actively encourages and supports team members in prioritizing their well-being through rest and recovery. He leads by example by taking time off when needed, openly discussing the importance of self-care, and providing guidance on stress management techniques. Additionally, he ensures that team members are aware of available resources for mental health support and encourage seeking help when necessary.

**23. How accessible is your leader when you need to discuss concerns about safety, stress, or job performance?**



P6. My manager is highly accessible whenever I need to discuss concerns about safety, stress, or job performance. He has an open-door policy and is always willing to listen attentively to any concerns or issues I may have. Whether it's a quick chat in their office or a scheduled meeting, I feel comfortable approaching him at any time to address any concerns.

P7. I find my leader to be moderately accessible when I need to discuss concerns about safety, stress, or job performance. While he may not always be immediately available due to other responsibilities, he makes a concerted effort to respond to emails or messages promptly and schedule meetings to address concerns in a timely manner. Overall, I feel supported in seeking guidance or assistance when needed.

P8. My supervisor's accessibility varies depending on the situation. While he is generally approachable and willing to discuss concerns about safety, stress, or job performance, there are times when he may be busy or unavailable due to other commitments. However, he does make an effort to prioritize important issues and ensure that team members feel heard and supported.

P9. I find my leader to be somewhat inaccessible when I need to discuss concerns about safety, stress, or job performance. While he may be approachable during designated office hours or meetings, I often feel hesitant to approach him informally due to perceived barriers or a lack of clear communication channels. As a result, I may hesitate to seek their guidance or assistance when needed.

P10. Unfortunately, I find my leader to be largely inaccessible when I need to discuss concerns about safety, stress, or job performance. Despite attempts to schedule meetings or request assistance, I often encounter challenges in reaching them or receiving a timely response. This lack of accessibility can be frustrating and may discourage me from seeking support or addressing important issues with them.

**24. Does your leader provide clear guidance and feedback that help you improve your firefighting skills and safety knowledge?**

P6. Yes, my manager provides clear guidance and feedback that are instrumental in helping me improve my firefighting skills and safety knowledge. He offers constructive feedback during training sessions, debriefings, and one-on-one discussions, highlighting areas for improvement and providing actionable recommendations for enhancement. This guidance enables me to continually develop and refine my skills to ensure effective and safe firefighting practices.

P7. Most of the time, my leader provides clear guidance and feedback that contribute to my growth in firefighting skills and safety knowledge. While he generally offers helpful insights and suggestions during training exercises and debriefings, there are occasional instances where feedback may lack specificity or be inconsistent. However, overall, I appreciate his efforts to support my development in the field.

P8. I feel that my supervisor does not always give us sufficient guidance and feedback to help me improve my firefighting skills and safety knowledge. He occasionally offers feedback during training sessions and debriefings, it is often not fully actionable. I believe more consistent and targeted guidance would be beneficial in supporting my growth as a firefighter.

P9. No, my leader does not consistently provide clear guidance and feedback to help me improve my firefighting skills and safety knowledge. Feedback during training sessions and debriefings is often vague or non-existent, leaving me unsure of areas where I can focus on improvement. I believe more structured and consistent feedback would be essential in supporting my development in the field.

P10. Unfortunately, I have not received adequate guidance and feedback from my leader to help me improve my firefighting skills and safety knowledge. Feedback during training sessions and debriefings is scarce and, when provided, may not be clearly detailed. This lack of guidance makes it challenging for me to identify areas for improvement and progress in my development as a firefighter.

**25. In what ways has your leader demonstrated a commitment to the physical and psychological safety of the team?**

P6. My manager consistently emphasizes the importance of physical and psychological safety during training sessions and emergency responses. He ensures that all team members are properly equipped with the necessary protective gear and regularly reviews safety protocols to minimize the risk of injury or harm.

P7. Our leader actively promotes a culture of open communication and support within the team, creating a safe space for team members to discuss any psychological concerns or stressors they may be experiencing. He prioritizes mental health and well-being, providing access to resources such as counseling or peer support programs.

P8. During high-stress incidents, my supervisor remains calm and composed, reassuring team members and prioritizing their safety above all else. He leads by

example, demonstrating a commitment to staying vigilant and making sound decisions to protect the physical and psychological welfare of the team.

P9. My leader conducts regular debriefings after critical incidents to assess the team's performance and identify any areas for improvement. He encourages open dialogue and feedback, allowing team members to express any concerns or suggestions related to physical or psychological safety.

P10. Our leader takes proactive measures to mitigate the risk of occupational hazards and ensure the overall well-being of the team. He advocates for adequate rest and recovery periods between shifts, monitors workload levels, and provides opportunities for team members to participate in stress-reduction activities or wellness initiatives.

**26. How does your leader involve the team in planning and decision-making, especially when it involves high-risk situations?**

P6. My manager actively involves the team in planning and decision-making, especially when it involves high-risk situations, by convening regular team meetings where we collectively discuss upcoming operations, assess potential risks, and develop strategies to mitigate them. This collaborative approach ensures that everyone's expertise and perspectives are considered, leading to more informed and effective decision-making.

P7. During high-risk situations, my leader encourages open dialogue and brainstorming sessions among team members to generate ideas, evaluate alternatives, and formulate action plans. He creates a supportive environment where everyone feels empowered to contribute their insights and expertise, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for the outcome of the operation.

P8. My supervisor utilizes a participatory decision-making approach, especially in high-risk situations, by soliciting input and feedback from team members throughout the planning process. He values diverse perspectives and actively seeks out suggestions and ideas from individuals with varying levels of experience and expertise, ensuring that decisions are well-informed and reflective of the team's collective wisdom.

P9. In high-risk situations, my leader facilitates collaborative discussions and scenario-based exercises where team members can simulate different scenarios, explore potential challenges, and collectively develop response strategies. By engaging in these interactive planning sessions, we're better prepared to anticipate

and address risks effectively, resulting in more coordinated and cohesive operations.

P10. My leader fosters a culture of shared leadership and accountability within the team, especially in high-risk situations, by empowering individuals to take on leadership roles and contribute to decision-making processes. He provides opportunities for team members to lead specific aspects of planning and operations, encouraging ownership and fostering a sense of collective responsibility for the team's success and safety.

## **27. How are achievements and successes recognized and celebrated by your leader?**

P6. Our manager recognizes and celebrates achievements and successes by publicly acknowledging them during team meetings or briefings. He takes the time to commend individuals or teams for their outstanding performance, highlighting specific contributions and the positive impact of their efforts on our mission.

P7. After successfully completing a challenging operation or project, our leader often organizes informal gatherings or social events to celebrate our achievements as a team. Whether it's a barbecue, pizza party, or team outing, these gatherings provide an opportunity for us to come together, relax, and celebrate our collective accomplishments.

P8. In addition to verbal recognition, my supervisor may award certificates, commendations, or other tokens of appreciation to individuals or teams for their exceptional achievements. These tangible gestures serve as a lasting reminder of our accomplishments and reinforce the value of hard work, dedication, and teamwork.

P9. Our leader encourages team members to share success stories or lessons learned from past achievements during team meetings or training sessions. By highlighting best practices and celebrating our successes, he inspires a culture of continuous improvement and excellence within the team.

P10. During performance evaluations or one-on-one meetings, our leader takes the time to acknowledge individual achievements and milestones, providing personalized feedback and recognition for outstanding performance. This individualized approach demonstrates their appreciation for each team member's contributions and motivates us to continue striving for excellence.

**28. Does your leader promote and participate in post-incident debriefings that focus on learning and improvement?**

P6. Yes, my manager actively promotes and participates in post-incident debriefings that focus on learning and improvement. He emphasizes the importance of reflecting on our experiences, identifying lessons learned, and implementing changes to enhance our effectiveness and safety. By leading by example, he fosters a culture of continuous improvement within our team.

P7. Most of the time, my leader promotes and participates in post-incident debriefings aimed at learning and improvement. While he may not always be able to attend every debriefing due to other responsibilities, he consistently advocates for their importance and encourages team members to actively participate. His commitment to debriefing reinforces its value in enhancing our performance and safety.

P8. I feel that my leader could do a better job of promoting and participating in post-incident debriefings focused on learning and improvement. While he may occasionally attend debriefings, their participation and engagement seem inconsistent. I believe more consistent involvement from our leader would help reinforce the importance of debriefing as a tool for learning and growth.

P9. No, unfortunately, my supervisor does not actively promote or participate in post-incident debriefings that focus on learning and improvement. There is little emphasis placed on the value of debriefing as a means of reflecting on our experiences, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing changes to enhance our performance and safety.

P10. I have not had the opportunity to participate in post-incident debriefings led by my leader. While I believe he may recognize the importance of debriefing for learning and improvement, it has not been prioritized or consistently implemented within our team. I think more proactive leadership in promoting and facilitating debriefings would benefit our team's overall performance and safety.

**29. How does your leader help you balance the demands of the job with your personal life and well-being?**

P6. My manager helps me balance the demands of the job with my personal life and well-being by encouraging a culture of work-life balance within the team. He

emphasizes the importance of taking breaks, using accrued leave days, and prioritizing self-care to prevent burnout and maintain overall well-being.

P7. My leader supports me in balancing the demands of the job with my personal life by providing flexibility in scheduling and accommodating individual needs whenever possible. Whether it's adjusting shifts to accommodate personal commitments or allowing time off for family emergencies, he demonstrates understanding and empathy toward the challenges of juggling work and personal responsibilities.

P8. In addition to providing practical support, such as flexible scheduling, my supervisor actively promotes self-care and well-being initiatives within the team. He organizes wellness workshops, provides resources for stress management, and encourages participation in activities that promote physical and mental health, such as exercise programs or mindfulness sessions.

P9. My leader leads by example when it comes to balancing the demands of the job with personal well-being. He prioritizes his own self-care and encourage team members to do the same, recognizing that taking care of oneself is essential for maintaining effectiveness and resilience in the face of job-related stressors.

P10. During team meetings or one-on-one discussions, my leader regularly checks in on my well-being and encourages open communication about any challenges I may be facing. He offers support, guidance, and resources to help me navigate work-related stressors and maintain a healthy balance between my professional and personal life.

**30. Do you feel empowered to voice your concerns and suggestions, and how does your leader address them?**

P6. Yes, I feel empowered to voice my concerns and suggestions, and my manager actively encourages open communication within the team. When I raise a concern or suggestion, he listens attentively, validates my perspective, and engages in constructive dialogue to explore potential solutions. He takes my input seriously and works collaboratively with me to address the issue or implement the suggestion.

P7. Most of the time, I feel empowered to voice my concerns and suggestions, although there are occasions where I hesitate due to fear of repercussions or a perceived lack of receptiveness from my leader. However, when I do express my concerns or suggestions, my leader generally responds with openness and

receptivity, taking the time to listen and consider my input before offering feedback or taking action.

P8. I don't always feel empowered to voice my concerns and suggestions, as there may be perceived barriers or a lack of encouragement from my leader. However, when I do muster the courage to speak up, my supervisor generally responds with professionalism and attentiveness, although there may be instances where my concerns are not fully addressed or implemented.

P9. No, unfortunately, I don't feel empowered to voice my concerns and suggestions, as there is a culture of silence or fear of reprisal within the team. Even when I do express my concerns or suggestions, my leader may dismiss them or fail to take them seriously, leaving me feeling unheard and demoralized.

P10. I feel somewhat empowered to voice my concerns and suggestions, but there is room for improvement in how my leader addresses them. While he may listen to my input and provide a response, there may be a lack of follow-through or tangible action taken to address the issue or implement the suggestion. I believe more consistent and proactive engagement from my leader would enhance our ability to address concerns and drive positive change within the team.