

A Restorative Leadership Training Model Isn't Just for Mock Trial Training.

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Abstract

A mixed-methods collective case study was conducted to assess how training and accompanying instruments impact teams' implementation of Restorative Leadership skills in competitive and noncompetitive settings. Using a parallel mixed methods hybrid design where focus groups, mixed-methods surveys, observer checklists, one-on-one interviews, quizzes, and self-assessment checklists were used to address five research questions. Nine noncompetitive teams in two honors classes, a mock trial team, and an assistant mock trial team coach from a medium Southeastern university participated in this study. The nine noncompetitive teams were assigned to watch instructional videos about Restorative Leadership touchstones and were required to complete a 10-question quiz, followed by a voluntary Qualtrics mixed survey to get feedback on two restorative skills checklists. A leaderboard (dashboard) was implemented in the competitive mock trial team setting with two teams (Gold Team, Green Team). The purpose of this study was to determine if current Restorative Leadership instruction and accompanying tools can successfully aid both competitive teams and noncompetitive teams to implement Restorative Leadership skills in various activities. The results indicated positive support for the checklists to assess the application of Restorative Leadership skills for noncompetitive teams and mixed results for the impact of a leaderboard on individual and team performance for competitive teams.

1. Introduction:

What would it be like to create a model of leadership that could improve communication, accountability, and team relationships in a post-pandemic workplace? Where would we begin? Law schools across the country have primarily used the Case Method since 1890 to train teams for competitions (Chisholm, 1911). However, team cohesion, a key component in the success of team competition, has been undermined in traditional team training (Salas et al., 2015). Studies have shown that training focused on restorative leadership training improved participants' communication, accountability, and relationship with other team members (Blankenship, Mwenja, Dolowitz & Wech, 2021; Pointer, 2019). Currently, the definition of restorative leadership is a work in progress that centers around four core tenets: working together to achieve invitation over coercion, radical inclusion, equitable communities, and working together to achieve objectives

(Blankenship, et al., 2021). The heart of restorative leadership is the push to help teams address challenges that naturally occur within a team over time. Yet the problem is how to offer restorative leadership training effectively. A recent study by Vegt, Visch, Vermeeren, and Ridder (2018) showed that gamification with team performance components was associated with increasing team cohesion.

In this study, we introduced a new restorative leadership training model in several courses and examined its effectiveness on participants' performance. This model was featured with gamified team strategy and restorative leadership training. The research questions were:

1. How effective was the restorative leadership training in helping participants apply the skills in application exercises?
2. How did the use of the gamified team strategy impact participants' individual performance?
3. How did the use of the gamified team strategy impact team performance?
4. How did the use of gamified team strategy influence participants' preparedness for class?
5. How did the dual assessments impact participants' performance?

2. Research Design

This was a parallel mixed method collective case study. For the qualitative analysis, we examined four different cases simultaneously. We examined how teams implemented the Restorative Leadership model in team activities through self-assessments, observation of other teams, focus group interviews, and surveys. We used the quantitative analysis to examine the impact of the Restorative Leadership training model on participants' performance, looking at the certificate completion, the self-assessment checklist, and individual quiz results. Qualitative results from the focus groups were used to supplement the results of quantitative analysis.

2.1 Participants. Forty-seven undergraduate students in nine noncompetitive teams (23 in an honor's college honor's course with four teams, and 25 in a business honor's course with five teams) and 30 participants, of which 17 were active on two competitive teams according to the final leaderboard, at a midsized Southeastern University in the U.S. participated in this study. The students were primarily juniors and seniors. Participants in the focus groups were from these samples. The Gold Team focus group had three participants, the Green Team had four participants, and the honor's college course focus group ended up being an individual interview. One individual interview was conducted with the Gold Team's assistant coach, a former Gold Team member.

2.2 Intervention. Participants who were from the honors courses received the Restorative Leadership training. Students from the mock trial teams were divided into two teams: Gold and Green teams. The Gold Team were students who received the gamified team strategy and participated in mock trial as an extracurricular activity. The Green Team included students who only received the gamified team strategy in training, where participation on the mock trial team was part of their grade for their course.

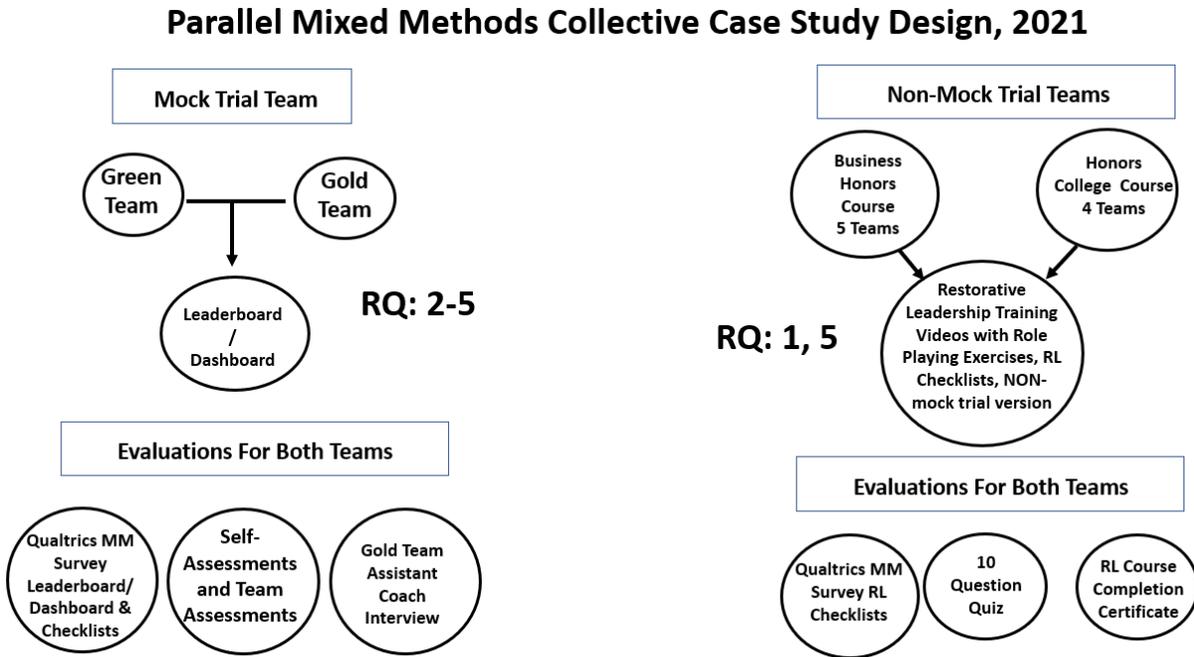
Participants from the honors courses were to watch four Restorative Leadership instructional videos. Each video defined, described, and created a common language for each of the four tenets mentioned above. After watching the video, students engaged in roleplays during the class, where there are at least one to two observers on pre-established teams (in some cases, the whole team). After the roleplay, everyone was to complete either the self-assessment checklist on a Google Form or the Observer's Checklist on a Google Form. Then a debrief was conducted regarding the participants' experiences. This cycle occurred at least once more, where students who roleplayed now become observers and vice-versa.

A leaderboard (dashboard) was created for the mock trial team for both Gold and Green team participants to see their standing as individuals and as teams. These dashboards were used to form the team that competed in collegiate competitions. The seven top performers, according to the dashboard, were selected. Points were earned based on individual performance in various roles during mock trial practices, learning materials, and appropriate application of the mock trial rules. Individuals and teams also earned points for demonstrating Restorative Leadership skills during mock trial training drills and practices.

2.3 Data Collection. The American Mock Trial Association judging form (AMTA, 2019) was adapted into a Restorative Leadership assessment tool. This tool is developed into both a self-assessment checklist and an observer checklist. The self-assessment checklist included 14 behavior questions with a scale ranging from 0 (“Fails to Practice Skill”) to 8 (“Practices Skill and Encourages Others to”). During the semester, as part of the assigned course work, both honor’s courses completed the Restorative Leadership training videos, were required to provide a certificate of completion, and took a 10-question quiz about the materials. In addition to this, each participant was asked to complete a self-assessment checklist to assess their performance of the Restorative Leadership skills after engaging in a roleplay activity. The observer checklist included 14 questions with the same scales, and after roleplays where the participants were observers, they were asked to complete the observer checklist. Two focus groups were conducted with the mock trial’s Green and Gold Team members. The focus groups were designed to ask participants’ experiences and reflections on the use of gamified team strategy.

3. Results.

Figure 1
Design Model



Research Question 1. *How effective was the restorative leadership training in helping participants apply the skills in application exercises?* This question was to assess participants performance applying restorative leadership skills after receiving restorative leadership training. The noncompetitive teams, 47 of the 48 participants completed the individual quiz. The range was 5-10, the average was 7.85, and the standard deviation was 1.54. Over 76% scored above a seven, and about 30% scored nine or higher on this quiz. These results indicate that students could recall 50% or more of the key concepts from the Restorative Leadership videos. Of the 48 students required to complete the training, 47 students participated in all or most of the activities, 23 were required to submit a certificate of completion as part of the module requirements (honor’s college course). This certificate was only obtained after they completed quizzes built into the training. 19 of these 23 submitted a certificate. In the business honor’s course, 24 of the 25 who participated earned the certificate. To receive a certificate, participants had to score higher than 80%.

Research questions 2-4 were specific to the competitive teams because they addressed the influence of the gamified team strategy, a leaderboard/dashboard, on participants’ performance and preparedness both individually and as a team. Quantitatively this was to be assessed by the mock trial restorative checklists and an anonymous mixed-methods Qualtrics survey. These Quantitative results were to be augmented with two focus groups, one with each team. However, only ten mock trial members completed the survey, four Gold Team and six Green Team members. Because this was anonymous, it is also possible that some of these participants also participated in the focus groups.

Research Questions 2. *How did the use of the gamified team strategy impact participants' individual performance?* This question was specific to the competitive teams to see how the gamified strategy impacted their individual performances. Though there were only ten members, the results showed that 90% paid some attention to the dashboard (yes, somewhat, no), and only one member did not Mean = 4.70, $SD = .64$. On a 5-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), 70% of the participants felt that the dashboard somewhat too strongly influenced their individual performance, Mean = 2.30, $SD = .78$. When exploring how the dashboard influenced their individual preparedness, the participants reported the dashboard somewhat to strongly influenced their preparedness, Mean = 2.20, $SD = .76$.

Research Question 3. *How did the use of the gamified team strategy impact team performance?* This question was specific to the competitive teams to see how the gamified strategy impacted their team's performances. When asked to assess the influence of the leaderboard on team performance, there was more of a divide. 40% somewhat agreed, 20% remained neutral, and 40% somewhat disagreed, Mean = 3.00, $SD = .89$. The results for how the leaderboard influenced the team's preparedness were varied, 40% strongly or somewhat agreed, where 40% somewhat or strongly disagreed again 20% remained neutral, Mean = 3.00, $SD = 1.18$.

Research Question 4. *How did the use of gamified team strategy influence participants' preparedness for class?* This question was specific to the competitive teams to see how the gamified strategy impacted their individual preparedness for class. When exploring how the dashboard influenced their individual preparedness, the participants reported the dashboard somewhat to strongly influenced their preparedness, Mean = 2.20, $SD = .76$.

Research Question 5. *How did the dual assessments impact participants' performance?* This question was to assess participants perceptions and use of the restorative leadership checklists. At least 38 participants responded to portions of both checklists. The responses were not identical for both the self-assessment checklist and the observer checklist. Of the 38 participants who completed the self-assessment checklist, 37, or over 97%, stated they understood what was being asked of them, 20, and understood their response options, 17. For the observer checklist, 21 of the participants, just over 55%, said they understood what they were being asked, 15, over 39% said they understood their response options, one participant, 2.6%, said they did not know what they were being asked. One participant marked other, 2.6%. When examining the checklists, there is a difference between the self-assessments and the observation checklists. See Figure 2 for a comparison between two checklists.

Qualitative Results for Research Question 5. The decision not to run any statistical tests was made because of the qualitative feedback from the mixed methods Qualtrics survey. A common theme that emerged from participants regarding the self-assessment was changing the formatting, reordering the questions, putting an N/A option, or including open-ended questions. However, just as many responses stated that no changes were needed, it was clear and concise. When asked what reason participants would recommend, or not, recommend the self-assessment for assessing leadership skills, the predominant theme was that participants would recommend this assessment because it helped participants reflect on their actions, "I would recommend the self-assessment because it allows one to reflect and become aware of one's past actions in order to make improvements."

Another theme that emerged was how this tool provided a way for participants to be a better leader, as noted by the following two quotes. "I think the self-assessment overall is a good tool because not only does it remind you of the leadership skills, but it also provides a checklist of actions that you can evaluate yourself on and maybe encourage you to do better in the future." And "I would recommend simply because I have learned so much from it of how to be a better leader, get out of my comfort zone when it came to talking about personal problems from the past, and just be more supportive others throughout this process."

The Observer Checklist had contradictory themes and seemed to cause participants confusion. Based on responses, it appeared that instructions were not clear on how to use the Observer Checklist. Participants were not sure if they were to focus on each individual in the role play or the overall efforts or objectives of the exercise. Some participants felt that the identified skills did not go with the activity they were observing, "I felt like some of the questions did not apply to the situation, so I was confused on how to respond. Also, clearer instructions would have helped to know how to answer the question." Of the 21 responses to what participants would change, 13 stated "NA," which indicated that they had read the question and had no comments about changes. One participant recommended that we have a comments section about what observers enjoyed about the activity they were observing.

When the participants were asked if they would or would not recommend the Observers' Checklist, like the self-assessment, the common theme was yes. Participants felt that this assessment enabled them to "properly" assess the players in the role play. Others found it to be helpful in a social learning context, "I would recommend this survey because by reflecting on what others did well and what they could have improved upon, you can improve your own approach. You may see some similarities between yourself and others and decide that didn't work out for them, so I'm not going to do it either." Of the 21 responses, two participants stated "NA," again indicating they had read the question, one person said, "I did not use it but they people on my team that did helped us see what we did not," and one person said they were not sure if they would recommend it because they feel an open-ended assessment would be more "valuable way of reflecting."

Figure 2

Noncompetitive Team Restorative Leadership Checklists Comparisons

| Restorative Leadership Skill | | 0 Fails to practice | 2 Attempts/ Fails | 4 Attempts/ Occasional Succeeds | 6 Usually Practices/But Occasionally Stops | 8 Practices Skill and Encourages Others To |
|---|----------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|---|
| Invite others to participate | Self | | | 3 | 18 | 20 |
| | Observer | | 1 | 2 | 10 | 24 |
| Affirm others | Self | | 1 | 4 | 12 | 24 |
| | Observer | | | 5 | 14 | 18 |
| Respectfully listened to other's | Self | | | 1 | 11 | 39 |
| | Observer | | | 2 | 7 | 28 |
| Encouraged others | Self | | 2 | 7 | 17 | 15 |
| | Observer | | 1 | 3 | 14 | 19 |
| No gloat when I win | Self | 1 | | 5 | 9 | 26 |
| | Observer | | | 3 | 8 | 26 |
| Recognize others' efforts | Self | | 1 | 3 | 16 | 21 |
| | Observer | | | 2 | 7 | 23 |
| Provided others with support | Self | | 2 | 6 | 13 | 20 |
| | Observer | | | 7 | 11 | 19 |
| Demonstrated courage by not giving up | Self | 1 | | 6 | 15 | 19 |
| | Observer | | | 3 | 14 | 20 |
| Summarized others' point of view | Self | 1 | 3 | 5 | 15 | 17 |
| | Observer | | 1 | 6 | 11 | 19 |
| Restored relationship after conflict | Self | | 4 | 4 | 14 | 19 |
| | Observer | | 3 | 6 | 11 | 17 |
| Used "yes and" statements in my responses | Self | | 3 | 10 | 6 | 16 |
| | Observer | | 2 | 12 | 10 | 13 |
| Critically assessed the weaknesses of arguments | Self | | 1 | 8 | 15 | 17 |
| | Observer | | | 8 | 15 | 13 |
| Critically assessed the strengths of arguments | Self | | 2 | 3 | 20 | 16 |
| | Observer | 1 | | 4 | 12 | 20 |
| Critiqued authority | Self | | 2 | 12 | 15 | 11 |
| | Observer | 1 | 2 | 5 | 16 | 13 |

Note. The cells are split for ease of comparisons between self-assessments on the Restorative Leadership skills and observers' assessments of applied Restorative Leadership skills during roleplays. The number reflects the number of participants that marked those specific ratings.

Qualitative Results, Focus Groups. Though a focus group for the noncompetitive team did not occur, the individual interview supported the theme of confusion regarding instructions. The participant did make it clear that she enjoyed learning about Restorative Leadership. However, when asked if her team was using restorative skills, she stated that the team was not using them in their interactions. Then later, she stated that the restorative leadership training was helping the team understand the different ways they communicated.

A major issue was discovered too late in the study. The program director and coach of the Green Team did not administer the Mock Trial Restorative Checklists as the teams' dual assessments. He created his own assessment. Based on the low number of participants and the feedback from the focus groups, these assessments were found to be confusing as time went on during the semester, and members from each focus group stated that they were confusing and did not help performance or preparation. The following two quotes exemplify what was reported in both the survey and the focus groups: "I don't think that I saw any changes after the implementation of the assessments. I think most of the team side as a chore and they were confused 90% of the time that they were filling it out, and the only feedback I could give reach out to the Professor [blank]or try your best because," and "I don't know if they necessarily help because, like a lot of us just ended up working with people that we already kind of knew how they worked in a sense, and so like. It was definitely a.... I guess a little weird like kind of going in and like sometimes I felt like seeing the assessment question did like apply, but also didn't apply and so."

These quantitative findings are supported by what was discussed in both focus groups. The results were mixed. However, there was a definite difference between the Gold Team and Green Team themes. The Gold Team's introduction to the leaderboard caused the team confusion, but they also felt it was mismanaged and not transparent. It caused them to focus on their individual performance at the cost of team cohesion. Two participants stated, "I was worried that they would then come in and take a spot, and then they would take away the team chemistry and it wouldn't work as well, and not - not even mentioned the fact they would also have to learn the material and a much more quick rate and may not be able to catch up as fast." And, "You know, but instead we were kind of focused on kind of our own individual things that we had to do so that we could just get on the team to begin with, with you know what felt like kind of an arbitrary leaderboard system. So, it definitely kind of forced us to working on our own when we should have been working together." The Gold Team's coach's comments also indicated this dual result, "the gamification piece was helpful in the in the way that it incentivizes them to work harder. And it pushed them it basically gave them a reason to kind of go further than what they go beyond what they use what."

When asked what surprised the Gold Team participants the most, one of the focus group participants stated, "What surprised me most was how much better prepared, we were this year for the competition, we were last year um it was it seemed like we were much more. We had a much better grasp of the material; we knew what we were doing a lot more." Overall, the themes for both the assistant coach and Gold Team members reflect how the leaderboard did impact their individual performance and helped their preparedness. However, initially, it was at the cost of the team cohesion, or what this focus group called team "dynamics."

On the other hand, the Green Team felt that the leaderboard helped provide them feedback on their performance and what they needed to earn points and be better prepared. They also mentioned how Canvas impacted their preparation. This latter theme was labeled under “other” in the Tools to Impact Performance theme. This is because a key difference between the Gold and Green teams’ is that the Gold Team is voluntary, and the Green Team comes from a mock trial course that students are getting course credit for.

The results from both the quantitative portion of this study and the qualitative indicate that the Restorative Leadership training helped help participants recall and apply restorative skills during their quizzes for the certificate and the 10-question quiz given in the class as part of their Restorative Leadership Module. In addition to the quizzes, the mixed methods survey regarding the checklists overwhelmingly said these checklists helped evaluate and apply their skills, despite some confusion regarding labeling of skills and instructions for the observer checklists.

The quantitative and the qualitative data indicate that the leaderboard did influence both performance and preparedness, individually more than the team. It appears that the Green Team benefited positively from having the leaderboard, both as feedback on their performance and as guidance on what to do. For the Gold Team, they felt that the leaderboard harmed their team dynamics initially. As time went on, they felt that it could be a good tool, with more transparency and better management. See Figure 3 for a summary of the outcomes for the research questions.

Figure 3
Research Question-by-Outcome Joint Display

| Research Question | Quantitative Outcome | Qualitative Outcome | Differences/ Similarity | Integrated Statement |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| RQ 1 & 5 | The numbers seem to support that the training did help the noncompetitive participants apply the restorative leadership skills, as seen with the quiz results, the certificate completion, and the | The qualitative data supports that the checklists help participants recognize and engage in restorative leadership skills. However, there were possible formatting issues on the self-assessment, and the directions and identified skills were confusing on the observation checklist. The majority of the | The differences were that though the checklists and quiz questions may have caused some confusion, participants still felt the checklists helped with applying the Restorative Leadership Skills. The quiz results indicate that the participants understood the | There results from both the quantitative portion of this study and the qualitative indicate that the Restorative Leadership training was supportive in helping participants apply restorative skills. The results, especially the qualitative, indicate a need to address the instructions for the checklists, specifically the Observers Checklist, |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| | checklist results. | responses recommended no changes or recommended both checklists. | main concepts from the videos. | and how to use the checklists during activities. These results also indicate a need to revise the Observers Checklist for clarity and ensure that these identify skills are observable and measurable. |
| RQ 2, 3, & 4 | The results are mixed on whether the leaderboard impacted individual and team performance and preparedness. It appears that the leaderboard had more influence on individual performance and preparedness than on team performance and preparedness. | Participants' comments in the focus groups, the coach's interview, and the open-ended survey questions also support the mixed results. The main themes here were that participants felt others did not pay attention to the leaderboard, or they only paid some attention to it. While others said it did impact them individually, however many reported as a team, and they felt it did not impact them. Nevertheless, at least one participant said it did help knowing team status as well as individual. | The focus groups had the biggest differences. It was clear that the Gold Team felt that the leaderboard could be effective if it were managed well and how points were earned was more transparent. However, they felt that other things could determine a successful team, such as observing the dynamics of individuals and just plain time and practice, as echoed by the coach. For the Green Team, overall, they found the leaderboard helpful and the points motivation. They also mentioned other factors in their | Based on the overall results, it is clear that there is a need to be clearer on the purpose of the leaderboard, better management and that the leaderboard alone does not help with team preparedness or performance but appears to impact individual preparedness and performance more. There appear to be two emergent themes that should be examined further, the role of motivation and experience on performance and preparedness. |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| | | | preparedness, such as Canvas and having the materials to prepare from. | |
| Emerging themes or ideas for continued research | <p>Use a motivation skill</p> <p>Evaluate experience level with mock trial</p> <p>Be sure to have competitive teams use the checklist</p> <p>Be sure to have trained observers use checklists for both competitive and noncompetitive teams</p> | <p>Address self-assessment about motivation.</p> <p>Run focus groups for noncompetitive teams</p> <p>Determine if identified themes should be used as a priori themes for the next study</p> | NA | <p>It would be good to revise the observer checklist and continue to test both of the checklists as assessments.</p> <p>See how best to begin collecting data for inferential statistics.</p> |

4. Discussion. Several issues emerged when recruiting participants for the focus groups, for both the competitive teams and noncompetitive teams. It was clear that the primary researcher needed to be the one who sent all communications to the participants, such as making the requests to participate in the focus groups, completing the Restorative Leadership Checklist assessments, having the Gold Team review the Restorative Leadership instructional videos, and ensuring that the competitive team participants received invites and follow-ups to complete the Qualtrics survey. By not having the primary researcher in charge of the above processes, valuable input was lost from having neutral outside observers use these checklists to evaluate the competitive teams' mock trial skirmishes or competition. This insight would have given the study more data about how to revise the Restorative Leadership Checklists for clarity as well as helping determine how the current revised checklists' reliability and dependability were viewed by an individual who is unbiased and knowledgeable about mock trial processes.

Three interesting themes emerged during the focus groups: the role of motivation, experience vs. nonexperience, and how the Gold Team felt that the dashboard did little to improve the Green Team's performance as the semester wore on. The program director has begun redesigning the team so that motivation and experience levels might be offset because a mock trial class will no longer be offered. He is determining what the prerequisites will be for joining the mock trial team. He is determined to keep the leaderboard, and hopefully, the results from this study will help him create more clear guidelines and management with the leaderboard.

The significance of this study is that once these instruments prove to be valid and reliable in settings beyond a mock trial course, they can be used to help train a workforce in Restorative Leadership and ensure that employees are transferring the skills to their workplace. The results of this study are promising about the possibility of interdisciplinary application of the Restorative Leadership instructional videos, Restorative Leadership application exercises, the Restorative Leadership checklists as assessments of applied skills, and does warrant more in-depth studying.

4. Limitations and Future Directions

There were many limitations to this study. One major limitation was that convenience sampling was used, which meant that one of the noncompetitive teams was co-taught by the primary researcher, the program director from the mock trial team, and another professor. This could have produced response bias, researcher bias, and some threats to internal validity, such as timing or maturation. Not only is this study subject to these biases and threats, but the sampling process, which was a combination of convenience and purposive, also makes generalizing our results difficult. Because there were unplanned changes to the design that impacted research questions one and five, not to mention the low number of participants for research questions two, three, and four.

These limitations, however, guide numerous directions for future research. After revising the observer checklist, it will be good to test the instructions and ensure that the identified skills are observable. Next, the videos should be evaluated using Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 2006). The researcher will want to evaluate the reaction and learning levels. A mixed-methods survey could help assess if and how the videos helped apply restorative leadership skills. Finally, another area to explore more is how participants are motivated and how they view either the leaderboard and/or the Restorative Leadership training.

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