

2020

## **An Exploratory Study to Identify Strategies for Retaining Laboratory Professionals in Hospital Setting**

Ambrose E. Ewane  
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# Walden University

College of Health Sciences

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Ambrose Ewane

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2020

Abstract

An Exploratory Study to Identify Strategies for Retaining Laboratory Professionals in  
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by

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M.P.A, State University of New York, Brockport, 1982

BS, State University of New York, Brockport, 1980

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Health Services

Walden University

August 2020

## Abstract

Medical laboratory professionals have faced more than 20 years of workforce shortages. The causes of these workforce shortages include poor retention of new professionals and an insufficient number of new graduates who enter the workforce. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that are used by managers in hospitals for the retention of laboratory professionals. The theoretical framework comprised Mobley's theory of turnover and Porter's organizational commitment theory. The research questions for this study addressed what managers perceived as the biggest challenges for the retention of laboratory professionals and what effective strategies they thought could help improve retention. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face to face or by telephone to collect data from a sample of 10 laboratory managers from 4 hospital settings in Georgia. Five themes emerged from analysis of the data collected. The key findings showed the need for laboratory managers to concentrate on job satisfaction on laboratory professionals because satisfied employees were more likely to be more committed to their job, and committed employees imply improved retention and low turnover. The study results may provide managers with new information and strategies to reduce turnover rates and improve the retention of laboratory professionals. This will help reduce the costs associated with recruiting, replacing, and training new employees, as well as contribute towards providing quality healthcare services to the community.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation first to the Almighty God, my creator, redeemer, and savior who, in Jeremiah 33: 3 said, “call Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which I do not know.” I called every day, and you gave me the strength and patience to get to this level of my dissertation. I also dedicate this dissertation to my children Cecile, Vicky, and Rita, who, from time to time, encouraged me not to give up despite the challenges faced in the dissertation process. Finally, to my wonderful wife, Maryline N. Ewane, who has been a constant source of encouragement and great cheer at every step of this dissertation journey. To the rest of my family and friends who had watched my journey and constantly gave me encouraging words never went unnoticed. I wish all of you the best in your personal and professional lives.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

It is essential to have talented personnel carry out the organizations' mission and vision in health care settings (Reig et al., 2015). Health care organizations must attract the best talents and retain them for the long term. One of the challenges health care managers face is the ability to retain highly skilled staff (Kossivi & Kalgora, 2016). This study focused on the retention of laboratory professionals in hospitals. The need to recruit and retain laboratory professionals continues to grow because laboratory and human resource managers in hospital settings struggle to retain laboratory staff (Albrecht, Bakker, Macey, & Saks, 2014).

Staffing shortages have become a major issue in many clinical laboratories in the United States. Researchers have indicated multiple causes for the low retention rates, including an aging workforce, an increase in retirement, stressful working conditions, poor management, lack of professional development opportunities, all leading to the shrinking of the medical laboratory workforce (Balagotk & Hamilton, 2015). Although it seems data are sufficient as to why the retention of laboratory professionals is low, a more specific understanding of the present root cause, as well as solutions, are necessary. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the most effective strategies for laboratory and human resources managers in hospital settings to retain laboratory professionals. This study has the possibility to positively affect social change by addressing the retention issue of laboratory professionals. The results will also help laboratory and human resources managers to better understand the underlying issues

which will help them implement strategies that will improve retention. In effect, improving the retention of laboratory professionals will help to meet physicians' demands for accurate test results.

Chapter 1, includes a summary of literature related to the scope of the selected topic, which is followed by the problem statement. Next, I present the purpose of the study, definitions of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations. Significance, and finally, a summary.

### **Background**

In the United States, adequate staffing in most hospitals has become an obstacle to effective and efficient operation of clinical laboratories (Slage, 2013). Slage (2013) indicated that the retention of trained laboratory professionals might become problematic as a result of the increase in demand in the workplace. It is estimated that an additional 22,700 clinical laboratory professionals would be needed nationwide by the year 2022 (Schill, 2017). In summary, the number of those who have some experience in the profession and are eligible to retire, outnumber graduates that are newly entering the workforce (Schill, 2017). In most cases, the goal of some organizations is to reduce staff turnover for stability and retention in the workforce (Zhang, Ling, Zhang, & Xie, 2015). A workforce that is unstable with constant turnover can have a financial impact on performance as well as the competitiveness of the organization. (McClean & Detert, 2013). Hilton (2015) explored burnout and organizational commitment to determine if they had an impact on laboratory professionals' retention rates in Florida. The results indicated that both variables played a significant role in laboratory professional's

turnover rates and retention in Florida hospitals. Hilton indicated that future research should explore strategies that managers' laboratory and human resources managers in hospital settings can use to reduce the high turnover rates and retention of these professionals.

Although there is some evidence of sufficient data as to why there are low retention rates, there is not enough research to demonstrate a cause or solution. The research has, however, shown that when managers do not have knowledge with regard to retention and do not understand the challenges associated with the retention of employees, it can influence the retention rates for the organization and reduce employee performance (Chen, Sparrow, & Cooper, 2016; Kwon, Chung, Roh, Chadwick, & Lawler, 2012; Munish & Rachna, 2017; Schill, 2017). To address the gap noted in the literature in this study I focused on retention strategies used by laboratory and human resources managers in hospital settings to assist them in putting in implementing effective strategies to improve the retention of laboratory professionals in the organization.

### **Problem Statement**

Medical laboratory professionals (i.e. medical laboratory technicians, and clinical laboratory scientists) are healthcare professionals who are important in providing information from laboratory analyses to help physicians in diagnosing and treating patients. (American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science [ASCLS], 2017). The profession has faced a continued workforce shortage for more than 20 years (Schill, 2017). It is estimated that an additional 22,700 clinical laboratory professionals will be needed nationwide by the year 2022 (Schill, 2017). In the short-term, the number of

professionals who are eligible for retirement and are experienced is greater than the number who newly graduates and enters the workforce (Schill, 2017). The causes of workforce shortage include poor retention of new professionals and an insufficient number of new graduates who enter the workforce (Schill, 2017). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) indicated that the employment of laboratory professionals is expected to grow more than all occupations through 2026. This increase is largely due to an aging population, leading to a greater need to carry out laboratory procedures. To continue to maintain adequate staffing that will improve the quality of patient care, it is essential that medical laboratory, and human resources managers retain current employees and also recruit new ones to replace those who will be retiring or leaving the profession.

With the demand for laboratory professionals growing, it is essential to understand why medical laboratory professionals do not last long in their various positions. Recently, Hilton (2015) identified organizational commitment and burnout as important factors in laboratory employee turnover rates and retention in Florida hospitals. In addition, the 2014 Vacancy Survey conducted on laboratory professionals across the United States indicated that the vacancy rates throughout the country had increased since the last survey conducted in 2012 (Garcia et al., 2015). These results revealed that the inability to retain employees was a major problem for the laboratory (Garcia et al., 2015). Researchers have noted various reasons as to why this profession has these low retention rates; including burnout, lack of good management, general changes within the medical profession, and a lack of professional development courses, among other factors (Balagot



& Hamilton, 2015). Although it seems data are sufficient as to why there is low retention in laboratory professionals, little research has been conducted to demonstrate a cause or a solution to this problem.

When managers do not have knowledge regarding retention and do not understand the challenges associated with it, this can reduce employee performance (Kwon et al., 2012). This reduction in performance can ultimately have an impact on the retention rates for the organization, especially if some of the staff resign (Kwon et al., 2012). To address the gap noted in literature, in this study I explored the retention strategies used by laboratory and human resources managers in hospital settings to assist them in implementing effective strategies to help improve the retention of laboratory professionals.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore effective strategies that laboratory and human resources managers in hospital settings can use to retain laboratory professionals. The findings of this study may help these managers to develop policies that reduce turnover, retain employees, and improve the work environment of the organization.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: Do managers in hospital settings believe that job satisfaction and organizational commitment impact retention rates in laboratory professionals?

RQ2: What do managers in hospital settings believe can be done to increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment in laboratory professionals?

RQ3: What do managers working in hospital settings believe are the best strategies for retaining their laboratory professionals?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The framework used for this study comprised Mobley's (1977) turnover theory; and Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian's (1974) theory of organizational commitment. The turnover theory indicates that being satisfied with the job has an important role in the turnover rates of employees in every profession (Mobley, 1977). In addition, Mobley stated that there is a sequence of steps that each employee goes through before making the decision to leave their job, especially if their job satisfaction is low. These steps include thinking about quitting, experiencing job dissatisfaction, evaluating the cost of quitting, having the intention, beginning to search for new jobs, making comparisons between jobs, carrying out jobs evaluations versus the job they currently hold, and, finally, intending and having the behavior to quit their current job (Mobley, 1977).

I applied this theory to the current study to determine the thought process behind the strategies used by hospital managers to address the challenges to retain laboratory professionals. In other words, this theory was used as the basis to explore the strategies employed and challenges confronted by laboratory and human resources managers to retain their laboratory professionals prior to employees reaching the final stages of Mobley's model. This will impede the employees from progressing through all the noted stages in retaining their employment.

In their organizational commitment theory, Porter et al. (1974) stated that employees' being satisfied with the job led to greater organizational commitment which

is important in employee turnover rates. The attitudes an employee has towards the organization they work for has a large impact on turnover rates as well (Porter et al., 1974). In this theory the authors suggested that the following three factors can affect organizational commitment and the retention of employees: believing strongly in the goals, and values of their employers, the willingness for the employee to cooperate within the organization, and the desire to continue their employment with the organization (Porter et al., 1977). if the employees meet all three of these factors, retention rates will improve (Porter et al., 1977).

I applied this theory to the present study by exploring whether laboratory managers were helping laboratory professionals meet all of these factors. This theory was used as the foundation of this study; through the creation of a set of guidelines for me to keep in mind as themes developed throughout the interviews. The use of this theory may also allow for future suggestions in the strategies managers in hospital settings use to retain their laboratory professionals.

### **Nature of the Study**

To address gap found in the literature, I used a qualitative, exploratory, case study. The research study approach used was a qualitative, exploratory, case study design. This type of research design permits the researcher to gather information using exploratory, face-to-face or phone interviews to determine patterns or themes among the variables of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Qualitative methods are usually linked to a constructive theory of knowledge because they tend to focus on understanding experiences from the point of view of those who live them (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

This research method is a means to explore, understand, and describe the individuals lived experiences in their natural settings (Edward & Vincent, 2014). Researchers who use the qualitative case study design have the possibility to explore multiple or single phenomena within a real-world context through different types of data and sources (Yin, 2014). The design was most appropriate for this research study because it helped to understand retention strategies laboratory and human resources managers use to retain laboratory professionals in hospital settings.

### **Definitions**

The following terms are used in this study.

**Commitment of the organization:** An Individual's psychological attachment to an organization (Naz & Gul, 2015)

**Employee engagement:** An increase in the emotional and logical commitment an employee expresses to their organization, manager, and a job which commonly results in an employee applying for additional work (Swarbalatha & Prasanna, 2014)

**Employee retention:** A technique that an organization can adopt to maintain an effective workforce as well as operational requirements (Mita, Aarti, & Ravneeta, 2014).

**Employee turnover:** The automatic or deliberate separation of employees quitting their present place of work (Kam & Meyer, 2015).

**Health care professionals:** Individuals who provide preventive, curative, promotional, or rehabilitative health care services in a systematic way to families, people, and communities (Rodriguez, 2017).

Job dissatisfaction: When employees experience unhappiness related to their jobs (Kam & Meyer, 2015).

Job satisfaction: The level of contentment an employee feels with their job (Chen et al., 2017).

Medical laboratory professionals: These professionals carry out laboratory analyses to help physicians in patient diagnosis and treatment (Rohde, 2015).

Retention: An action taken by an organization to encourage employees to stay and to maximize the period an employee will maintain employment within the organization (Ratna & Chawla, 2013).

Voluntary turnover: When the employees willingly decides to leave their job in the organization. (Davis, Trevor, & Feng, 2015).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are the conditions the researcher assumes and accepts without the ability to verify facts or truths related to the conditions (Pilcher & Cortazzi, 2016). They are concepts believed to be true but not proven (Simon, 2013). There were three assumptions that affected this qualitative dissertation. First, I assumed that the participants answered the interview questions in an honest and candid manner. Another assumption was that the participants had all experienced the same or similar phenomena of the study. Finally, I assumed that the participants had an interest in and were sincere about participating in the research without any other motives, such as getting a better grade in a course. Assumptions were important in the context of this study because, I personally assumed some conditions while carrying out this study.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Delimitations are the characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study (Simon, 2013). Two delimitations that affected this study were the choice of the research questions and the population investigated. The geographic region covered in the study, the profession and organizations involved were also delimitations. I conducted this study to identify strategies that laboratory and human resources managers use in hospital settings for the retention of laboratory professionals. The participants worked in management positions in clinical laboratories hospitals in the state of Georgia and were involved in employee recruitment and retention. I excluded support staff who work in the laboratory and human resources departments of the hospital.

The framework used for this study comprised Mobley's (1977) turnover theory and the organizational commitment theory (Porter et al., 1974). The theory of turnover indicates the level job satisfaction contributes to the turnover rates of employees in every profession (Mobley, 1977). This framework, also used to limit the scope of the relevant data by focusing on specific viewpoints that the researcher took in analyzing and interpreting the data gathered. Furthermore, Mobley noted that there is a sequence of steps each employee goes through before deciding to leave their job, especially if their job satisfaction is low. For example, having the intention to quit, then thinking of quitting, and then evaluating the cost. This theory was, applied to the current study to determine the thought process behind laboratory and human resources managers' strategies and challenges to retain laboratory professionals. Porter et al. (1974)

organizational commitment theory indicates that being satisfied with both organizational commitment and the job itself are important factors in employee turnover rates.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are those characteristics of methodology or design that can influence the interpretation of the findings of the research (Kirkwood & Price 2014). I identified three limitations that had an impact on this qualitative case study. First, due to the study having a small sample size, the findings might not be representative of the larger population (see Creswell, 2014). Second, some participants' might not have had the required experience and expertise to provide useful answers related to employee' retention. Finally, conditions or factors unknown at the facility where the participants work could have biased the participants' responses. To address these limitations, I used purposeful samples of knowledgeable laboratory managers in the field. The basis for selecting these participants was due to their experiences and job understanding of the laboratory staff that they supervised and managed in the hospital setting.

### **Significance**

I expected this study to be valuable, because the findings can be used to help inform both present and future laboratory and human resources managers in hospital settings. The additional information provided in the findings of this study may help them make better choices in the development and application of innovative strategies to retain better choices in laboratory professionals who work in hospitals. This may equally lead to patients to have access to qualified laboratory professionals to conduct quality testing services that are imperative to patient care. Not using the most effective strategies for the

retention of these professionals' may result in higher costs associated with the hiring and training of new employees (Alkahtni, 2016; Zhao et al;2014). Managers' understanding implementation of the necessary strategies, keep laboratory professionals from leaving the organization. can help contain costs and retain talented laboratory professionals. The study results may benefit laboratory professionals and laboratory and human resources managers by providing them with information that can be used to implement better practices in their retention plans; and help to improve the retention rates of laboratory professionals. This can help bring about positive social change to the greater community by improving the quality of patient care.

### **Summary and Transition**

With the increase in demand for laboratory professionals, it is imperative to understand why laboratory professionals do not stay in their jobs. Researchers have noted various reasons as to why this professional group has low retention rates in hospital settings; including general changes within the medical field, poor management, and a lack of professional development courses, among other factors. Although it seems there are sufficient data as to why there is low retention of laboratory professionals, little research has been conducted to demonstrate a cause or solution to this vital problem. The findings of this study address the noted gap in the literature by exploring the strategies being used by laboratory and human resources managers to effectively retain laboratory professionals in hospital settings.

In Chapter 1, provided an overview of the research study giving details concerning the background of this topic. The problem statement, the purpose of the study,



and the research questions were also included. In this chapter, I also explained the theoretical framework, the nature of the study, the definitions of terms used in this study, the assumptions, scope and delimitations, and the limitations of the study. Finally, I discussed the significance of the study and how it might benefit laboratory professionals and human resources managers.

In Chapter 2, I will restate the problem and the purpose of the study and provide a concise synopsis of the current literature that established the relevance of the problem. Information will be presented on the literature search strategy and the theoretical foundation. I will briefly discuss the literature related to key variables. Chapter 2 will end with a summary and conclusions based on all available literature.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Retaining quality employees in the clinical laboratory setting is of great importance because, the profession has faced continued workforce shortage for more than 20 years (Schill, 2017). According to Himmerick, Amah, and Chapman (2017), workforce shortages of professional laboratory employees may be less well known because they are often less visible to the public; however, the authors noted that, clinical laboratory professionals are critical to health care delivery and efficiency. Concerning retention, much has been published in the professional literature in recent years, but the problem of the departure of qualified staff remains unsolved, and for the most part, solutions continue to elude the laboratory sector in hospital settings (Evans & Bay, 2016). The causes of workforce shortage in this sector include the poor retention of new professionals due to lack of management and an insufficient number of new graduates who enter the workforce (Schill, 2017).

Although it seems the data are sufficient as to why there is low retention in laboratory professionals, little research has been conducted to demonstrate a cause or a solution to this vital problem. However, research has shown that when managers do not have knowledge of and do not understand the challenges associated with employee retention, it reduces the performance of the employee (Kwon et al., 2012). This can ultimately have an impact on the retention rates of the organization, especially if some employees resign (Kwon et al., 2012). In this study, I addressed this gap by exploring the retention strategies used by laboratory and human resources managers in hospital settings

and to assist them in implementing effective strategies to improve the retention of laboratory professionals. Laboratory human resources managers need to understand the factors that influence employees to leave the organization if they want to enhance retention and increase efficiency (Mohamed et al., 2013). The findings of this study can be used to help managers develop policies for employee retention, reduce turnover rates, and improve the work environment of the organization.

I begin this chapter by detailing the literature review search strategies and explaining the theoretical foundation, which comprised Mobley's theory of turnover and Porter, Steer, Mowday, and Boulian's organizational commitment theory. Following these sections, I discussed the extant literature related to key variables of this study; including employee retention, employee turnover, job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction, employee engagement, workforce shortage, and professional development.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

To locate literature for this review, I focused on peer-reviewed articles, scholarly journals, and website content to substantiate the importance of laboratory managers' effective strategies for the retention of laboratory professionals in hospitals. Google was used to categorize and discover key terms to use in database searches. Accessing Walden University's online library allowed me to search for research in the fields of health care and health sciences. The databases searched were: ProQuest Nursing, Allied Health Sciences, and MEDLINE. I used the following search terms, which were a combination of relevant phrases and keywords: *personnel retention, laboratory, hospital manager, retain employees, employee performance, and quality of patient care*. I selected peer-

reviewed articles that were published within the last 5 years to ensure that the information was current. While these articles make up part of the literature I cite in the study, some articles were included, that were published more than 5 years ago but were necessary clarification.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The framework used to address the research questions in this study comprised Mobley's (1977) turnover theory and Porter et al (1974) organizational commitment theory. Mobley's turnover model clearly shows how complex the decision for an employee to quit truly is. Mobley suggested that an employee's decision to quit a job occurs in multiple stages. The employee starts with thoughts about quitting which might lead to the process of searching for as well as evaluating other alternatives, and eventually, the employee might start intending to quit the job.

### **Employee Turnover**

According to Mobley's (1977) model, there are two types of turnover associated with an employee deciding to quit an organization. The first category is avoidance turnover, which refers to an employee quitting the organization due to dissatisfaction with their job (Britt & Jex,2008). During their decision making process to quit, the organization, has the possibility to step in and prevent employees from quitting (Britt & Jex, 2008). Employees' dissatisfaction or satisfaction with their job is considered as the first aspect of this model, and this aspect should be addressed first by an organization if there is a turnover problem (Britt & Jex,2008). The key for any organization is to keep

satisfaction levels high among its employees to prevent them from quitting Mobley's (1977) model.

To prevent turnover that is avoidable from taking place, an organization can monitor the satisfaction levels of employee, such as administering questionnaires that measure employee satisfaction levels. A survey of job satisfaction, can highlights areas where the employee has low levels of satisfaction with their job. For example, the survey could reveal how an employee has low satisfaction with aspects like promotion opportunities, nature of their work, or their salary. The survey might then help the organization be aware of certain areas where they may need to make adjustments. Most importantly, if an organization monitors their employee's satisfaction levels regularly, they might be able to prevent employees who are in the evaluation step of Mobley's (1977) model from following through with their plan to quit (Britt & Jex, 2008).

The second form of turnover in the model is referred to as unavoidable turnover. In this situation, when the employee decides to leave the organization, the organization cannot do anything to prevent them from leaving. This could be situations where a spouse is being transferred to a new location, or a family member gets sick, and the employee decides to leave their job to take care of them. There are many instances that occur where an employee must leave their current job, but it is out of the control of the organization to keep them from departing (Britt & Jex, 2008).

Most of the research on turnover focuses on avoidable and voluntary turnover because this type of turnover can be controlled by management (Price, 1977). Turnover continues to be of interest to certain researchers across diverse occupations in the present

literature (Christian & Ellis, 2014). Employees who are satisfied with their work are less likely to quit and more likely to remain with the organization (Linhartova, 2012). A hospital setting is a good example of this. If the organization has a turnover rate that is high, and employees are quitting the organization on their own, this might be indicative of some underlying issues in the organization. It is necessary for the organization to understand and recognize the factors that might contribute to employee turnover and develop innovative strategies to address these issues.

Long and Perumal (2014) suggested that the concept of turnover has attracted the attention of many due to its economic and psychological dimensions, as well as its significance to the organization. Even though there is a large amount of research in the literature concerning employee turnover, there is relatively little recent research on the factors that affect the retention of laboratory professionals in hospital settings. The rationale for choosing this theory to use as part of the theoretical framework of this study was to explore the strategies that laboratory and human resources managers use to retain laboratory professionals before they get to the final stages of Mobley's (1977) model as well as the challenges they confront.

Using Mobley's (1977) model, researchers have the tendency to focus on voluntary turnover because this unpleasant situation is considered a greater threat to organizations. This model focuses on how employees quit, and the process leading up to the decision to change employment.

## **Theory of Organizational Commitment**

Multiple definitions of organizational commitment are found in the literature. Porter et al. (1974) defined organizational commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (p. 2). Bateman and Strasser (1984) defined organizational commitment as “multidimensional in nature, involving an employee’s loyalty to the organization, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization and the desire to maintain membership” (p. 95). The theory of organizational commitment used in this study originated from the research of Porter et al. According to these authors, an employee’s attitude towards the organization is likely to have a much greater influence on their decision to remain employed with the organization than their attitude towards the job itself. They suggested three factors that contribute to organizational commitment: (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organization; (b) a strong desire to remain with the organization; and (c) the determination to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization (Porter et al., 1974).

Previously, organizational commitment concentrated on an individual’s affective attachment to the organization, despite the several facets it has that influence organizational outcomes. Meyer and Allen (1997) proposed that the three components of commitment are affective (i.e. having the determination to stay with the organization because of emotional attachment and involvement in the organization), normative (i.e. having a moral obligation to stay with the organization), and continuance (i.e. feeling stuck and staying due to being too expensive to leave). The commitment depends entirely

on a different category of people and the value they place on organizational offerings. For example, the career opportunities that are offered by organizations such as career development or opportunities for continuous improvement. Having some satisfaction with the job, for instance, might help to increase employee commitment and motivation. Tnay, Othman, Siong, and Lim (2013) found that most employees stated that career opportunities and development were the foremost reason to stay in an organization because they lead towards job satisfaction.

Angel and Perry (1981) indicated that problems could easily arise if the employees' dissatisfactions are not seriously considered. Employees with some level of dissatisfaction will eventually leave the organization, and this might lead to the organization losing the competence that the employees had brought into the organization (Angel and Perry,1981). Blau and Boal (1987) studied a group of insurance workers and discovered that those employees who had higher levels of commitment had lower levels of absenteeism and turnover.

There have been numerous studies of organizational commitment from the early stages of definition to the point of identification of the outcomes. This theory has been applied in previous studies that are similar to the current study. Under normal circumstances, organizational commitment is critical to retain and attract well-qualified staff (Blau and Boal,1987). Eisenberger et al. (1990) noted that those employees who feel that managers and organization are taking good care of them not only have higher levels of commitment, but are also more conscious about their responsibilities, more involved in the organization, and more innovative.



The retention of employees seems to be one of the most studied outcomes of organizational commitment with numerous studies having been conducted on turnover and commitment. The rationale for the topic of the current study was that there seemed to be a lack of studies regarding laboratory professionals in hospital settings. These professionals work under similar conditions as other health care professionals, and since organizational commitment and turnover have been found to affect all employees, it was important to explore these factors with laboratory professionals in hospital settings specifically.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

The literature review provided an extensive review of the current literature. It included related studies, chosen methodology, and ways in which researchers in the discipline approached the problem, justification from the literature, what was known, and what remained to be studied. Also, the synthesis of studies that are related to the research questions and why the approach was selected. The subheadings for this literature review included Employee Retention, Employee Turnover, Job Satisfaction, Job Dissatisfaction, and Employee Engagement.

#### **Employee Retention**

The biggest challenge faced by organizations, such as hospitals, today is not just the management of human resources but also how they are retained. To secure and retain skilled employees plays a vital role in an organization. This is because skills and knowledge are central to the organization's ability to compete economically (Das & Baruah, 2013). Taking into consideration the importance of retention in hospital settings,

making it necessary to carry out this study that reviewed available literature on employee retention, but most especially, on laboratory professionals.

A study conducted by Munish and Rachna (2017) stated that in retaining a good and talented workforce, the organization must create a conducive working environment. In this study, it was indicated that organizations that are successful, respect their workers, and make policies that are flexible. According to Cooley (2016), the manager must be able to solve problems brought to his or her attention by the employees. In addition, factors an employer might consider when increasing their employee retention rates include salary, development of employee career, clarity of organizational values, practices, and policies, staff appreciation, and respectful treatment of employees (Chandani & Mall, 2016). This study was aimed to identify and clarify what employee engagement was and what its importance was on employee retention in healthcare organizations, such as hospitals. In one study, a researcher found that in healthcare organizations such as hospitals, communication was considered to be one of the most important aspects of employee retention (Floyd, 2016). For this to succeed, having monthly meetings with staff shows that the organization cares about their employee problems.

However, there is an opposing argument about retention. Many individuals argue that an increase in retention is not an important subject as it relates to employees and the organization that they work for (Picoult, 2017). Just because an employee is retained, does not guarantee the employee is happy in their position. Picoult (2017) indicated that the opposition believes that instead of focusing on whether the employee stays in the

healthcare organization, the focus should be to ensure that the employee is engaged, satisfied, and motivated. It is vital in any organization to ensure that the employees remain full of happiness while they are in their positions. It is also important to focus on employees being constantly motivated to do well in their current position (Picoult, 2017). Thus, employee happiness is very important. Of course, in large organizations, it may not be possible to make every individual happy. It was also essential that both employees and managers understand that they are in a hospital setting to ensure that the patients are well taken care of. The patient's happiness is very vital. To ensure that the patients are cared for efficiently, managers in the laboratory, and human resource departments of hospitals must focus on increasing retention and decreasing turnover (Picoult, 2017).

### **Employee Turnover**

Employee turnover, the departure of employees from an organization, is a reality that is dealt with by managers in organizations such as hospitals. The departure can either be involuntary or voluntary (Arokiasamy, 2013). Voluntary turnover occurs when an employee decides to look for other employment. Involuntary turnover could be due to unforeseen situations, such as retirement, ill health, or when an employer decides to discharge an employee. Both types of employee turnover can hinder progress in an organization. According to the National Health Care Retention and Staff Report (NHCRR), hospital turnover rates were 18.2%, which is the highest recorded turnover in the industry for almost a decade (Mega Wells, 2017). Currently, the healthcare industry is growing, and roughly 40% of the hospitals surveyed in the report anticipate an increase in their labor force throughout 2018. The blend of high turnover and growth is creating

staffing gaps that have an impact on a hospital's bottom line. As labor gaps grow, it is necessary to identify the areas within the healthcare industry that are particularly susceptible to turnover and learn what can be done to the slow rates.

After analyzing the NHCRR, several patterns of turnover present themselves. This includes bedside registered nurses noted a 16.8% turnover, physician assistants (PA) 14.2%, medical technologist 10.5%, and pharmacists have a turnover rate of 8.3%, just to name a few (NHCRR, 2017). By tenure, 23.8% of new hires left within a year, which accounts for 32% of all healthcare turnovers, 53.3% of employees who left spent less than 2 years at their facility (NHCRR, 2017). By facility, the current turnover rate for acute care hospitals is 18.2%, with government-owned facilities experiencing the highest rates of total turnover (19%; NHCRR, 2017). Hospitals having less than 200 beds have the lowest turnover rates (16.8%), and those with 350-500 beds have the highest turnover rates (19.5%; NHCRR, 2017).

The next step to go into is the cost of turnover and staffing gaps. According to Ratna and Chawla (2012), employee turnover could lead to financial problems in an organization. The problem could be associated with costs incurred with recruitment, replacement, and training of personnel. There are many factors that go into the true cost of turnover. For example, when a healthcare professional leaves, the hospital must account for staffing costs, overtime payouts, travel nurses, training costs, continuity of care, absenteeism, and more. Industry experts estimate the average cost of turnover across all occupations in the healthcare industry is around \$60,000, though specific positions will have a varying impact on a hospital's bottom line.

Understanding why turnover is a problem in the healthcare industry, particularly in hospital settings, is the first step towards being able to solve it. The common issues that perpetuate turnover numbers might be the following:

- Lack of workplace engagement
- A tight labor market, and stiff competition for talent
- Baby boomers reaching retirement age leaving vacancies

Healthcare managers believe that the key to solving the turnover problem lies in the ability to improve workplace engagement. Improved engagement can minimize a worker's consideration of other job opportunities, attract top talent in a competitive landscape, and keep current employees happy. The recruiting aspect, retaining, and engaging employees is essential to continue to care for patients, staff morale, and profitability. To offer an enhanced employee engagement experience, facilities must get to the core of what their employee wants from the employer, whether it be financial wellness, workplace flexibility, or otherwise. Listening to employee's feedback is a key ingredient for successful recruiting, retention, and employee engagement (NHCR, 2017).

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is an important topic for researchers to study. Job satisfaction reflects good treatment. It could also be considered an emotional well-being indicator. Managers should concentrate on employees' job satisfaction since satisfied employees are more likely to be more productive and committed to their job, and committed employee implies low turnover (Rashmi & Kulkarni, 2017). The health care sector is a

more people-centric sector, which is growing rapidly in recent years. Ensuring hospital employee job satisfaction is important to retain the employees and to deliver effective health services (Rashmi & Kulkarni, 2017).

The purpose of this review was to explore and establish the importance of job satisfaction. Schermerhorn et al (2008) defined job satisfaction as the degree to which individuals feel positive or negative about their jobs. It is an attitude or emotional response to the tasks of an individual as well as the physical and social conditions of the workplace. According to Werner (2011), job satisfaction has five facets that can be put together to measure a job descriptive index as follows:

- The work itself-responsibility, interest, and growth
- Quality of supervision-technical help and social support
- Relationships with coworkers-social harmony and respect
- Promotion opportunities-chances for further advancement
- Pay-adequacy of pay and perceived equity vis-à-vis others

The importance of studying job satisfaction was that hospital staff has difficulties in meeting the needs of patients if their own needs are not equally met; therefore, laboratory and human resource managers have the responsibility to satisfy both patients and staff. Employee satisfaction and that of patients are both important from the point of view of the hospital (Rashmi & Kulkarni, 2017). Patient satisfaction forms one of the main outcomes for the quality of patients in hospital settings. Job satisfaction is an important aspect, especially in health care settings. Overall growth and job satisfaction are important factors to retain employees of the hospital in the long run. In a hospital

setting, employee satisfaction has been found to be related positively to service quality and satisfaction of the patient. Employees like laboratory professionals in hospital settings could directly influence patient satisfaction because of their involvement and interactions with patients.

Azeem and Akhtar (2014) studied the effects of perceived work-life balance and job satisfaction on organizational commitment among healthcare employees. It was predicted that perceived work-life balance fosters job satisfaction, which leads to the commitment in the organization among employees in the long run. Results showed that respondents have moderate levels of perceived work-life balance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The conclusion was that work-life balance and job satisfaction are important for developing and enhancing organizational commitment among workers in healthcare. Further, Singh (2013) conducted a study on hospital employees to probe the factors influencing job satisfaction. The author states that the positive performance of employees in the organization is an outcome of their satisfactory job experience. The study investigated the factors influencing job satisfaction among the private hospital employees of the Manipur in India. There was a significant association between job satisfaction of employees and relationship behavior factors, pay and compensation factors, and training and the growth of career factors. Compensation and pay factors were the most important factors positively correlated with employee job satisfaction (Singh, 2013).

Jain and Singh (2013) highlighted the job satisfaction of employees and its impact on their performance as well. Employees who are happy play an important role in the

areas of customer service and sales as they are the ones to interact with the customer daily. A good work environment is a key factor in job satisfaction. A good work environment and good working conditions are a contributory factor to job satisfaction. The studies were conducted using secondary data listed in different databases (Goggle & KSOM Library) articles with keywords “job satisfaction.”

### **Job Dissatisfaction**

Employee job dissatisfaction, according to Alrawahi, Sellgren, Alwahaibi, Altouby, and Brommels (2018), is caused mainly by staff shortages and an increased workload, which can lead to counterproductive behaviors on the part of employees, such as aggressive attitude, absenteeism, and turnover. However, there are factors that have a direct effect on job dissatisfaction, such as poor work conditions, unequal or substandard pay, feelings of nonsupport from managers, and poor communication with the administrators of the organization such as hospitals (Larsen, 2016). For example, in Britain, nurses are dissatisfied with work because of lower professional status, poor communication with the administrators of the hospitals, and poor relationships with the doctors (Larson, 2016). In a study using Greek nurses to determine the effect of stress on their job satisfaction, it was found that there is less job satisfaction when autonomy is perceived as limited and when the workload in the hospital is too heavy (Alrawahi et al., 2018).

According to Marinucci et al. (2013), 90% of medical laboratory technologists indicated that the highest factor that affects their job satisfaction was mainly the lack of professional development and training opportunities. All these are informative and were



performed in Western organizations. Another issue causing dissatisfaction with these professionals was the promotion system. This system that has been in existence since 2014 appeared to the medical laboratory technologist as unjust since it made no distinction between old and new employees and did not reward individuals for experience (Alrawahi et al., 2018). Under the new system, promotion is not automatic but triggered by the length of time a person spends on the job. Rather, the only way a promotion could be achieved is if a new post is advertised or if someone leaves, and the post becomes vacant. In these circumstances, anyone who is interested in it must apply for it and must meet all criteria stipulated to be appointed. In fact, such outcomes were seen in the study focusing on nurses and medical technologies in a hospital in southern Sweden where reduced job satisfaction resulted from a reduction in rewards and led to employee retention issues (Alrawahi et al., 2018).

### **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement has always received increased attention. Interest in this concept has been encouraged since it is not only enough for employees to report to work but equally to be passionate about the work (Kamau & Sma, 2016). Retention of employees in an organization is, however, not enough as one may have the best talent, but the employee may not be passionate about the work that was given to them. According to Pandita and Bedarker (2014), one of the toughest challenges facing managers in organizations is to ensure that when their employees report to work daily, not only do they do it mentally but emotionally and physically as well. It means that the organization has to ensure that its employees are engaged for them to have the possibility

to contribute positively towards the achievement of the organizational goals. There is a need to identify the key drivers of engagement and initiate the necessary interventions to improve engagement levels among the employees, such as laboratory professionals in the hospital settings.

Though there are many factors that influence employee engagement, this study carried some literature review from past researchers. Factors discussed are leadership, communication, and job characteristics. A study by Pandita and Bedarker (2014) identified two factors that are linked positively with engagement, namely, management and mentoring behaviors, such as imparting confidence to employees, communication, power-sharing, articulation of vision, providing role clarification and team-oriented. Men (2015) noted that by nurturing quality employee-relationships, transparent communication drives indirect employee engagement. This study was concerned with how employees' engagement is associated with another outcome variable of employee-organization relationships and how it is driven by organizational contextual factors of authentic leadership and communication that is transparent. The study looked at both indirect and direct effects of transparent communication and leadership that is authentic on engagement. The study found out that engagement is positively influenced by quality employee-organizational relationships (i.e., employee trust, commitment, control, and satisfaction).

Castellano (2015) noted that employees react positively to five core dimensions, including a variety of skills, identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. The study further stated that there is evidence from research that employees who do jobs that

are high in these dimensions in an organization such as hospitals show high work motivation, satisfaction, and attendance. The studies reviewed used mostly qualitative methods. Data collection techniques used included questionnaires and interviews. The researcher proposed the need for combining two instruments to compare the results.

From the reviewed literature, it has been found that conceptualizations of employee engagement vary depending on the perspective taken. A proper conceptualization is required to enable appropriate interventions to boost levels of employee engagement in organizations such as health care. Since factors affecting employee engagement may be different from one organization to the other, it is necessary that specific studies are carried out in those contexts so as to provide appropriate solutions. It is also evident that some factors may affect engagement directly or indirectly, and therefore, making it necessary for studies to be geared towards identifying direct and indirect effects done to ensure the right interventions are undertaken (Kamau & Sma, 2016).

### **Workforce Shortage**

Medical laboratory professionals have been described by various terms, and sometimes placed into one broad category, regardless of the credentials and education. This makes research into the data on workforce shortages more difficult, as some organizations, such as the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor statistics, still use outdated terms (ASCLS, 2017). Professionals, once called clinical or medical technologists and technicians, should be referred to as medical laboratory scientists and medical laboratory technicians working in the practice field of clinical laboratory science.

The grouping of laboratory professionals includes generalist technologists and technicians, specialists with roles in immunohematology, hematology, chemistry, immunology, and microbiology.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a nationwide need for a 13% average increase in medical laboratory technologists and technicians between 2016 and 2026. Another data source, from the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Human Resources and Service Administration, projects a substantial increase in demand/growth for medical and clinical laboratory technologists and technicians between 2012 and 2025 of 22%. In addition to this projected demand for additional laboratory professionals, laboratory managers continue to report high vacancy rates (ASCLS, 2017). The average rate is 7.2% for 17 laboratory departments identified in the 2016-2017 vacancy survey. These vacancies are felt across the nation, with the Northeast region reporting the highest overall vacancy rate (9.4%) compared with the other regions; the South-Central Atlantic had the lowest vacancy (6.3%).

With the increases that have been projected in need for medical laboratory professionals and the current high vacancy rates, the profession is suffering from a workforce shortage that is approaching crisis levels for medical laboratory professionals. Reasons for the shortage include the retirement of the aging workforce, an increase in demand for laboratory services, changes in the practice of clinical laboratory science due to technology advances, poor retention practices, and an insufficient number of new graduates entering the workforce. Over the past 20 years, Bennet et al. (2014) discovered found out that the number of clinical laboratory training programs immensely decreased

from 720 to 552, by 25%. Furthermore, the decrease in training programs can have a negative impact on health care organizations such as hospitals with laboratory employees searching for work.

### **Professional Development**

Laboratory professionals are expected to maintain their knowledge as a result of the advancement in technology. For example, most recent laboratory testing procedures may be developed. Programs must be developed that can address these expectations (Kasvosve et al., 2014). In developing countries, accessing continuing professional development (CPD) programs is a major challenge for laboratory professionals, partly due to their limited availability. An assessment was made among the clinical laboratory professionals in Botswana to identify and priorities CPD training needs as well as preferred modes of CPD delivery. Thus, 350 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 275 were completed and returned with an overall response rate of 79%. The most frequently selected topics for training in rank order according to key themes were (mean, range; a) quality management systems, most important 79%, and (b) pathophysiology, data interpretation, and research 68%, technical competence 65%, and laboratory management, leadership, and coaching 60%. The top three topics selected by the participants were (a) quality systems essentials for medical laboratory, (b) implementing a quality management system, and (c) techniques to identify and control sources of error in laboratory procedures (Kasvosve et al., 2014).

The top three preferred CPD delivery modes, in rank order, were training workshops, hands-on-workshops, and internet-based learning. Journal clubs at the

workplace was the least preferred method of delivery of CPD. According to Kasvosve et al. (2014), CPD programs to be developed should focus on topics that address quality management systems, case studies, competence assessment, and customer care.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Every health care professional has a vital role to play in a health care organization, such as in a hospital setting. When there is a shortage of these individuals in any section of the organization due to retention and turnover issues, it creates many problems. Reviewing the literature has been very important and has provided significant insight into the variables that are the focus of the current study. There was evidence that even though much has been done in this area, it was necessary to continue doing more research so as to understand what laboratory and human resources managers perceived as the biggest challenges for the retention of laboratory professionals in hospital settings. The reason why this study was conducted was to explore retention strategies used by laboratory and human resource managers in hospital settings. In other words, the study identified strategies that these managers used for the retention of laboratory professionals. The study could help managers to develop policies that reduce turnover rates, retain employees, and improve the work environment of the organization.

In this review, some researchers conducted studies and found that retaining a good, talented workforce in an organization creates a positive environment for productive working (Munish & Rachna, 2017). In another study, some researchers found out that in healthcare organizations such as hospitals, communication is considered to be the most important aspect of patient care and employee retention (Floyd, 2016). Some other

researchers identified voluntary turnover--the result of an employee's decision to look for alternative employment and involuntary---attributed to uncontrolled factors such as ill-health; however, it is noted that voluntary is far more prevalent than involuntary. To explore the effective strategies to help retain and reduce the turnover of laboratory professionals in hospital settings, it was necessary to identify strategies that laboratory and human resource managers use in the retention of this category of personnel. The goals of Chapter 3 were to describe the research design and the methodology that would be used for this study to address the research questions.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the most effective strategies that laboratory and human resources managers in hospital settings use for the retention of laboratory professionals. The findings of this study have the possibility to help these managers develop policies that reduce turnover, retain employees, and improve the work environment of the health care organization. In this chapter, I explained the rationale for choosing the selected research design and its ability to address the research questions. This chapter also includes a discussion of my role as a researcher, the methodology, participants, procedures for data collection, instruments used, analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: Do managers in hospital settings believe that job satisfaction and organizational commitment impact retention rates in laboratory professionals?

RQ2: What do managers in hospital settings believe can be done to increase job satisfaction and organization commitment in laboratory professionals?

RQ3: What do managers working in a hospital setting believe are the best strategies for retaining their laboratory professionals?

I used a qualitative case study design in this study because it allowed for an understanding of the specific phenomenon of how laboratory and human resources managers in hospital settings implemented workforce strategies to retain laboratory



professionals. Qualitative case studies involve focusing on a single experience (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is critical because he or she collects data and implements analysis (Creswell, 2016). Patton (2016) also noted that the role of the researcher includes making an analysis of and interpreting the data collected. My role in this study was that of an interviewer. I interviewed participants, collected and analyzed data, and presented the findings from the analysis.

Unlcer (2013) noted that the qualitative researcher should clarify and explain any relationship with participants. Although I am a professional in the health care industry, I tried to prevent having personal relationships with the participants or a relationship that involved me having an influence on the results of the study. Furthermore, to my knowledge, I had no prior relationships with any of the participants.

Another role of the researcher is to make sure that the bias is minimized and appropriate steps are taken to minimize all the preconceptions that might have an impact on data collection and analysis (Mealer & Jones, 2014). To reduce bias and prevent viewing data from a personal perspective, it was necessary for me to use an interview protocol to ensure that the participants remain focused on the research topic and interview questions. Using an interview protocol ensured that the interviews were completed within the agreed upon period. The rationale for using an interview protocol was not only to make sure the interview process was consistent but also to mitigate bias.

It was important that, as a researcher, I follow the ethical guidelines of *The Belmont Report* (see Cugini, 2015; Lolis & Goldberg, 2015). It is necessary to protect the rights of participants. I ensured that the potential participants were interviewed and had all the requisite information to make the important decision on whether to participate in the study.

Participants had the right to withdraw if they had any doubts concerning the study. They could contact me via e-mail, text, phone, or written request at any time without any problems. I adhered strictly to the interview protocols, by obtaining proper approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct interviews with participants. Coding systems were included to ensure confidentiality and protect the identities of the participants. The principle of beneficence was considered seriously by outlining the risks and benefits of participation for participants of the study.

### **Methodology**

In research, there are three common research methods used: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Yin, 2014). Qualitative methods are linked to a constructivist theory of knowledge and focus on understanding people's experiences (Creswell, 2014). Often data are collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant' observation (Creswell, 2014). The questions asked using this method are open ended and give the participants the opportunity to respond using their own words as opposed to responses that are fixed as in the quantitative method (Yin, 2014). In contrast, quantitative methods try to confirm hypotheses with regards to a phenomenon and use structured methods, such as surveys or

questionnaires(Creswell,2014). With the mixed -methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative methods occur at the same time in the study (Creswell, 2014). I used a qualitative method with an exploratory case study design in this study. This approach permitted me to have an in-depth opportunity to interview laboratory managers to understand their workforce strategies for retaining laboratory professionals in hospital settings.

### **Sampling Strategy**

Sampling involves the inclusion of a subset of a population but not the entire population as part of a study(Patton,2015). In qualitative research, only a sample (i.e. subset) of a population is selected for a given study (Creswell, 2014). The study's research objectives and the characteristics of the population to be studied (such as size and diversity) determine which and how many people to select (Patton, 2015).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the most effective strategies that laboratory and human resources managers use for the retention of laboratory professionals in hospital settings. I used purposive and snowball sampling techniques to recruit participants with experiences related to the research topic (Cronin, 2014). Purposeful sampling allows for the use of a sample of a particular group of people who have the best information with regards to the problem to be investigated (Walker, 2012). I used purposeful sampling to gather 10 managers from the laboratory departments of four hospital settings as the participants for this study.

## **Participants**

Recruitment of participants for the study begins with the identification of potential participants. I used the information available on the public contact website of the hospitals to get e-mail addresses and phone numbers for potential participants. Possible participants were then contacted via public contact methods and invited to participate in the study. The goal of this e-mail was to describe the intent of the study and to make it clear that participation was voluntary. The population contacted included managers of laboratory departments who had some knowledge of strategies on the retention and reduction of turnover of laboratory professionals in the hospital.

Individuals had to meet the specific inclusion criteria to participate in the study. (see Andraski et al., 2014). The selection of participants is an important task for a researcher when using a qualitative method (Patton,2015). In this study, the inclusion criteria were that participants (a) must be over the age of 18 years old (b) have at least 2 years of experience, (c) be in a management position, and (d) have experience in the retention of laboratory professionals they are responsible for. The study population was made up 10 clinical laboratory managers who oversaw laboratory professionals. The rationale for this number of participants was to ensure that the study included enough subjects with specific knowledge about the topic of retention of professional laboratory employees.

I identified, contacted, and recruited participants through public contact methods, where the e-mail addresses and phone numbers of potential participants were made available to me. I reached out to potential participants via e-mail, phone, and/or or text

messages. After first e-mail was sent to the participants, I followed up by phone to determine if they were interested in participating. Once they expressed their interest, I set up an in-person interview to obtain consent and gather responses to the interview questions (see Appendix). This required that I screen for inclusion with their responses. The study was completed prior to reaching 12 interviews because data saturation occurred first after interviewing 10 participants.

Data saturation was used in this qualitative study as a criterion for discontinuing data collection and/or analysis. Fusch and Ness (2015) claimed categorically that failure to reach saturation has an impact on the quality of the research conducted. Given (2016) considered saturation as the point at which additional data do not lead any new emergent themes. Sample size, is a term used in research for defining the number of subjects included in a sample (Patton, 2015). The sample is a group of subjects from the general population that are considered representative of the true population for that specific study (Patton, 2015). The relationship between saturation and sample size is that saturation is seen in all qualitative research and is considered commonly as the ‘gold standard’ for determining sample size with little distinction between different types of qualitative research (Morse, 2015). The goal of qualitative researchers is to attain saturation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommended the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies.

### **Instrumentation**

Salkind (2015) defined instrumentation as the tools or means by which investigators make attempts to measure variables or items of interest in the data –

collection process. Research instruments in qualitative research are tools that are developed by the researcher so as to achieve their stated objectives to carry out a research study. Some of the instruments that were used for data collection in this study included an instrument created by me, the researcher, an audio recorder, and an interview protocol. The primary data sources were interviews with laboratory managers.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The primary data collection instrument in qualitative studies is the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In qualitative research, researchers collect primary data through semi-structured interviews, videotapes, and an audio recorder (Yin, 2014). In this study, the primary data source was face-to-face or phone interviews with participants. I used, self-developed interview questions that included a focus on both demographic information and the variables. Various sources of information were used in this study to help substantiate and give depth within the topic (Yin, 2014). I adhered to a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions. The use of open-ended questions permitted participants to give their responses using their own words. Yin (2014) also noted that in a case study design, another instrument for data collection could be documents reviews. In this case, I reviewed available documents on policies and procedures with regards to the retention of laboratory professionals through the public hospital website or by asking participants during the interviews for such documents.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The data collection technique used in this study included conducting, recording, and transcribing semi-structured interviews. Byrne and McGarvey (2015), found that

these types of techniques of information gathering are common in studies related to qualitative health care. In this study, I sent participants consent forms by email to sign and return to provide consent for their participation. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or by phone. Notes were taken and the interviews recorded as well. Patton (2015) stated that a digital recording device, a Song digital voice recorder, was used to capture the semi-structured interviews. The interviews took place in a quiet location in the hospital environment or at a public library. Once the interview was over, I thanked the participants.

### **Data Organization Technique**

The organization of data is an important aspect of a qualitative case study (Yin, 2014). According to Patterson et al. (2014), data can be stored and organized in digital format to ensure portability, security, and tracking. In my study, to keep track of the interview recordings, an electronic folder was created for each participant. Also, generic codes were assigned to each participant. Gibson, Benson, and Brand (2013), indicated that assigning codes to participants assures some level of confidentiality. The purpose of assigning letter codes was for easy identification of participants for the collection and analysis of data (Miles et al., 2014). Furthermore, a portable USB drive was used to store all electronic records and transcripts. The USB drive, the consent forms, field notes from the interviews, and hard copies of the interview transcript was safely stored with a password, which was only known and accessible to me. Data were equally stored in a locked safe located in my residence. All data collected will be stored within a locked file for a period of 5 years after completing the study. At the end of the study, I will destroy

the data in accordance with the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

After completing the interview, I conducted member checking to enhance the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments. Researchers who use qualitative methods can apply member checking in order to improve the validity and reliability of the research data (Patton, 2015). Member checking is the sharing of data interpretation of the researcher with participants to make sure the' interpretation is correct (Patton, 2015). Dixon (2016) used this method to ensure that the data interpretation represented the participant's responses. When carrying out member checking, I endeavored to interpret and synthesize the participants' responses. Participants individually received a copy of the interpretation to confirm it as being correct and representative of their experiences with the research questions that were presented to them. Furthermore, allowing the participants to add and clarify and add responses helps to facilitate theme development on the research topic (Moustakes, 1994). The follow up of the member checking was a continuous process until no new data existed to collect from the participants.

The data analysis process for this qualitative case study included methodological triangulation from data collected by the use of semi-structured interviews with laboratory managers in the hospital settings. The documents to be reviewed included employee retention policies, which included workforce strategies that managers use for the retention of laboratory professionals. According to Carter and Neville (2014),



methodological triangulation permits researchers to collect comprehensive data for analysis.

Steps in qualitative data analysis that ensured a robust data analysis included a transcription of the interview, organizing and coding data, validating the data, and finally, concluding of the data analysis. After collecting data from the field, the first step was data transcription. Transcription is simply the conversion of all data into a textual form. According to Fletcher and Norquist (2016), there is the possibility to choose one of the many computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software that will help in making the analysis. Examples are CAQDAS, ATLAS.ti, and NVivo. Concerning this study, after conducting interview, the data were entered into Microsoft Word. The next step in the process was organization of the data.

Data coding was the next step in this process. Coding is the best way to compress the data into easily understandable concepts for more efficient data analysis. Coding in qualitative analysis is concerned, it involves categorizing your data into patterns and concepts. Coding was an important step in this qualitative data analysis. It helped me to give meaning to the data collected in the field. Some popular coding terms included descriptive coding- making a summary of the central theme of the data; in-vivo coding- using the language of your respondents to code; pattern coding-finding patterns in your data and using them as the basis of your coding. After data coding, I created five themes to gain deeper insight into the meaning of data. Thus, the process of data analysis included the use of coding to compile, organize, and sort the data.

Another step in this process was data analysis, which involved the importation of data into the NVivo 11 software. The NVivo 11 as a software program allows researchers to code and categorizes the content of the data imported (Edward, 2014). This software may be used to code, store, organize, create visual images, and identify data patterns. Qualitative researchers use software programs like NVivo to code and group data collected from interviews or written documents, such as archival organization documents (Yin, 2014). The most important benefits for the use of this program in data analysis includes (a) managing large quantities of data, (b) flexibility increase, (c) enhance credibility and dependability, and (d) analysis being accurate (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015).

The next step in this process was the validation of the data. This is one of the pillars of successful research. Since Data is at the heart of research, it becomes very important to make sure that it is not flawed. There are two sides to data validation. First, validity, which concerns the accuracy of the design/methods. Secondly, reliability, which is the extent to which the procedures produced a consistent and dependable result (Co.uk, 2016).

The final step to the data analysis was the conclusion. With this conclusion, I meant stating the findings and the outcome of the research purpose. As the research has been concluded, it would be essential to find a link that is valid between the data analyzed and research questions/purpose. The last of these stages, which is vital, was to present a final report. In the dissertation, the processes and methods of the research and

the study limitations were presented. Furthermore, the implications of my findings and areas of future research were stated.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

The concepts of validity and reliability, which are common in quantitative studies, are not relatively in usage to the field of qualitative research. Instead of focusing on validity and reliability, qualitative researchers substitute data trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness consists of the following components in qualitative studies: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and finally, dependability (Gigi, 2018).

#### **Credibility**

To establish credibility, there are appropriate strategies that were used. They included member checking and triangulation. Participant validation or member checking involves the confirmation of the collected data. The researcher's interpretation of the interview data and the participant's conclusion ensures accuracy (Reilly, 2015). The member check follow-up process gave the interviewees the opportunity to clarify information, and to ensure that interpretation of the researchers' data was correct.

According to Gigi (2018), participants generally show appreciation of the member checking process with the knowledge that they had the opportunity to verify the statements they gave during the interview process. Another method to enhance credibility in a research study is triangulation. Qualitative researchers can use triangulation to show the research study's findings are credible. According to Heals and Forbes (2013), triangulation is the use of different types of methods in gathering data like interviews and documents reviews. In addition, using triangulation can be helpful to researchers in

reducing biases that may sometimes arise from using one data collection method (Walsh, 2013).

### **Transferability**

Qualitative researchers have the possibility to use thick descriptions to show how the research study's findings can be applied to other contexts, circumstances, and situations. In other words, there is a possibility for readers to make connections between findings of the study and their experience. In this study, participants were asked the same questions to ensure that a comprehensive description of the research findings was provided.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is the extent to which a study could be repeated by other researchers, in which case, the findings would be consistent. For example, if a person wants to replicate a study, he or she needs to have enough information from your research report to do so and obtain similar findings like the previous study (Gigi, 2018). A qualitative researcher can use an inquiry audit in order to establish dependability. It requires an outside person to review and examine the research process and the data analysis to make sure that the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Gigi, 2018). In this study, I ensured dependability by creating audit trails and triangulation throughout the process.

### **Confirmability**

For confirmability to be established, qualitative researchers need to provide an audit trail, which highlights the necessary steps of data analysis that were made in order

to provide a rationale for the decisions made. This helps to establish that the research study's findings portray the participant's responses accurately. Member checking interviews when followed-up can serve as a technique to address confirmability. When follow-up member checking interviews are carried out, they help participants to review and provide more information that concerns the researcher's interpretation (Reilly, 2015). In this study, I again used an audit trail along with triangulation to ensure that other researchers could confirm or verify my data if interested in doing so.

### **Data Saturation**

Data saturation occurs in qualitative studies when there is no new information available for study findings to be enhanced. To reach data saturation, it was essential to solicit participants' views on the research topic using in-depth interviews. The technique that I used to ensure data saturation in this study was to conduct follow-up member checking interviews. The member checks process involved providing participants with accurate information of the interview responses making sure that the interpretation represented the responses they gave to the questions without additional information. Fusch and Ness (2015), noted that data saturation occurs when there are no new patterns or perspectives on the research topic from the participants. Thus, for this study, to get to data saturation and achieve a high-quality qualitative study, I conducted follow-up member checking interviews until the occurrence of repetitive data emerged from participants.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical procedures in research are vital. According to Tina and Jessop (2015), ethics are the norms or standards for conduct that helps to make a clear distinction between right and wrong. They help to determine the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors on the part of the researcher. For those who are interested in research, it is essential that researchers follow the appropriate guidelines for issues in their research activities. Some of the issues to be considered include human rights, compliance with the law, conflicts of interest, and safety (Tina & Jessop, 2015). The core ethical principles that are important in qualitative research include beneficence-minimizing the risk (physical, social, psychological). The research is not expected to pose any harm to participants. Respect for persons, of the autonomy, and decision making, and dignity of participants are key ethical aspects that were highly considered during the research process.

As far as qualitative research is concerned, ethical principles are centered primarily on the protection of participants. Roshaidai (2018) suggested that participants should understand what is being expected of them and involved persons must be competent to consent. Research participants should have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Drake, 2015). Furthermore, the participants will receive no compensation or offered any incentive for taking part in the study. In this study, the participant's agreement to participate in the study was obtained after an explanation of the research process. I ensured that the participants for the study were provided with informed consent. I equally ensured the ethical protection of the potential

participants by receiving approval from the Walden University IRB. The use of an IRB also helped to protect the institution and the researchers against potential legal implications from any behavior that may be deemed unethical.

Ethical standards also protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. According to Tina and Jessop (2015), researchers should not share information between participants and should have procedures in place to protect the data and names of participants. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, I used letter coding for each participant. Assigning the codes served as an organization tool for collecting data, analyzing, and reporting.

All data collected will be stored in a secured location for 5 years to protect the participant confidentiality. Ensuring the confidentiality of participants is a fundamental guide in ethical research. To access document can only be through a password that will be protected by computer, and this will contain electronic copies of data collected. I used a locked file cabinet to store hard copies of all analytical materials and data. After 5 years, I will make sure that I destroy the electronic data. This will be carried out by deleting files and shredding physical documents.

### **Summary and Transition**

The summary of Chapter 3 includes the introduction and the purpose of this qualitative case study, which was to explore the most effective strategies that can assist laboratory and human resource managers in hospital settings with the retention of laboratory professionals. In this chapter, I restated the purpose statement as described in Chapter 1 and discussed the research design and rationale with the research questions

stated. Principally, the following sections have been included the role of the researcher, methodology, sampling strategy, participants, instrumentation, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness. I further discussed the ethical issues related to this study.

Chapter 4 includes a brief review of the research purpose with research questions, the setting, demographics, data collection and analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of the study. Chapter 4, presents the research findings and transition to Chapter 5.



## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I provided a brief review of the purpose and research questions; a description of the study, the setting, demographics, data collection and analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and a discussion of the results of the study, including participants' demographics and the procedures used to conduct the study.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the most effective strategies of laboratory and human resources managers in hospital settings for the retention of laboratory professionals. The turnover of laboratory professionals is a challenge that managers experience in hospital settings. The findings of this study can be used to help these managers develop policies to reduce turnover rates, retain employees, and improve the hospital work environment. The research questions that guided this study were:

RQ1: Do managers in hospital settings believe that job satisfaction and organizational commitment impact retention rates in laboratory professionals?

RQ2: What do managers in hospital settings believe can be done to increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment in laboratory professionals?

RQ3: What do managers working in a hospital settings believe are the best strategies for retaining their laboratory professionals?

### **Setting**

There were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants or their experiences during the study or that influenced my interpretation of the study

results. There were no changes in participants' personnel as I conducted the interviews. I did not offer an incentive of any kind to participate in the study. There was equally no trauma because all participants selected via public contact methods were managers of laboratory departments. All of them came from hospital settings, which was my principal focus.

I recruited participants from four different hospitals in the state of Georgia through public contact methods. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or by phone in a quiet location in both circumstances to avoid any distractions during the interview process.

### **Demographic Information**

The participants' demographic information for this study was made up of the facility and gender, (see Table 1). I recruited laboratory managers in four facilities.

Table 1

#### *Facility and Gender of Study Participants*

Facility	Participants	Male	Female
H01	6	4	2
H02	2	1	1
H03	1	0	1
H04	1	0	1

Participants provided relevant demographic information used in the study. Table 2 indicates the eligibility information that was key to participating in this study. This criterion included that the participants were between the ages of 35 to 68 years old and had at least 2 years and at most 40 years of experience in their various positions. The

inclusion criteria included all ethnicities and races. The results demonstrated a diverse situation, with some participants being White, Black, Hispanic, and Indian. All participants resided in the State of Georgia. I used letters PA to identify: participants PA1 to PA10.

Table 2

*Characteristics Relevant to Study Participants.*

Participants	Gender	Age	Ethnic Culture	Number of years in position	Residence
PA1	F	35	India	02	GA
PA2	F	58	Black	09	GA
PA3	M	55	Black	26	GA
PA4	F	50	White	13	GA
PA5	M	62	White	25	GA
PA6	F	67	Black	40	GA
PA7	M	60	Hispanic	18	GA
PA8	M	65	Indian	20	GA
PA9	F	54	Hispanic	16	GA
PA10	M	68	White	33	GA

*Note: M = male, F =female*

### **Data Collection**

In this study I collected data from 10 laboratory managers employed at H01, -H04 in the state of Georgia. The original anticipated sample was 12 participants; however; I reached data saturation after 10 interviews. I collected the data after receiving IRB (Approval No.12-06-19-0339066) from Walden University. Data were collected through face-to-face and phone interviews using the questions listed in the Appendix. Over a period of 3 weeks, from January 16th, 2020 to February 5th, 2020, the interviews with participants took place

In addition to a variety of study methodologies available, there are equally different ways of making a record of what is said and done during an interview, such as audio-recording or handwritten notes. To complement audio-taped interviews, I also maintained a folder of “field notes.” According to Sutton (2015), field notes can provide important context to the interpretation of the audio-taped data and can be helpful to remind the researcher of situational factors that could be important when data are being analyzed. I maintained and secured the notes in a similar manner to the audio-tapes and transcripts, because they contained information that was sensitive and relevant to the research.

During the interviews, no unusual circumstances arose and there were no variations in the data collection Process. I e-mailed the consent form to the participants, and they gave their consent, which permitted me to schedule the time for the interviews. The interviews that were conducted face-to-face took place in a quiet private location agreed upon with the interviewees to minimize distractions and interruptions. The interviews conducted by phone were done after making sure the participant was in a quiet location as well as myself. Each interview lasted 30 minutes and was audio recorded after obtaining each participant’s permission to do so.

When the interview process was complete, I transcribed all the interviews recorded verbatim into Microsoft Word documents and stored copies of the data transcribed in multiple locations on my personal computer. I also stored them on an external storage device with a strong, secure password. This approach was taken to help

in preventing the loss any data collected. Additionally, I secured field notes and memos in a cabinet in my office with a special key accessible only to myself.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Report Process Used**

The goal of data analysis is to reach some inferences or conclusions by condensing large amounts of data into relatively smaller, more manageable bits of information that is understandable (Glaser & Strauss, 2007). Following the suggestion of Robertson (2014), I analyzed the data collected in this study by the use of automatic coding. This type of coding allows for large volumes of textual data, which permits a researcher to do some review later in the process as well as refine the data for further analysis Robertson (2014). The participant responses from all the locations were merged to draw comparisons from them. I identified themes by finding similarities in how the laboratory managers responded to questions. The following five themes emerged from the data analysis, (a) commitment and job satisfaction, (b) rewards and recognition, (c) training and career development, (d) comfortable work environment, and (e) effective communication. The transcripts of each semi-structured interview, and field notes, served as types of data that were used for analysis and methodological triangulation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). According to Merriam (2009), researchers can make sense of the data collected by including the process that has been used to provide responses to their research questions.

I employed consistency in the process of interviewing the participants. They were all asked the same questions, which permitted me to auto code most of the transcribed

data into NVivo. Using the NVivo data analysis technique helped me to deduce meaning of the participants stories and narratives about their experience concerning the retention of laboratory professionals in hospital settings. The interview questions generated participants' responses that were consistent and addressed all the questions asked. This made it possible for me to arrange and organize the data collected accordingly, taking into consideration the research questions and the corresponding interview questions.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

According to Patton (2015), to enhance the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis, a researcher should apply techniques that are rigorous to the method of gathering and analyzing qualitative data by paying particular attention to reliability, validity, credibility, and triangulation. Researchers have an ethical responsibility to their participants, which includes truthfulness and trustworthiness (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Evidence of trustworthiness in this study will be demonstrated in the discussion of credibility (i.e. confidence in the truth of the findings), transferability (i.e. showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts), dependability (i.e. showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated), and confirmability (i.e. the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondent and not researchers bias or interest; Jane & Zubin, 2015).

### **Credibility**

The credibility of a study can be established by conducting a study in a believable manner (Casey et al., 2013). I established credibility by assuring the confidentiality of participants because I ensured we were in private locations during the interview process. I

also established credibility by repeating my questions to participants to make sure they were clear. Furthermore, the credibility of the interviews was assured by interviewing laboratory managers who were able to express themselves well in the English language.

A researcher can use several techniques to establish the credibility of a study, including triangulation and member checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Triangulation is the process of making use of multiple data collection methods to obtain the best version of the truth (Abdalla et al., 2018). Through the process of the interview and member checking, a researcher can garner a complete view of the situation (Abdalla et al., 2018). Triangulation of qualitative data sources means “crosschecking the consistency of information derived at different periods and by means within qualitative methods” (Patton, 2015, P 661). I used triangulation to reach data saturation in this study and stopped interviewing when, no new and significant data appeared. The data gathered were validated by cross-checking responses of the laboratory managers during and after the interview. I used the process of member checking to confirm my understanding or correct my misunderstanding of the data collected based on the responses that I received from participants’ in the follow-up phone call. This process ensured that the collection of data was in alignment with the participant’s viewpoints and ensured the credibility of the data.

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to findings applied to other circumstances under different settings or other backgrounds (Anney, 2015). The transferability of a research study refers to the degree to which the research can be transferred to research outside of which

it was intended (Forerno et al., 2018). Research can be transferred if it can serve a purpose in other environments or contexts. It is unlikely for the researcher to know if the study can be transferrable to some other environments (Forero et al., 2018). Through the process of providing rich descriptions of the research approach and methods, the researcher has the possibility to provide other research colleagues with information to determine if the study can conveniently fit their environment, and therefore, enhance transferability (Nowell et al., 2016). Transferability does not only add to the reliability and validity of a study, but it equally widens the impact of a study because the results are transferable to other contexts, situations, and environments (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Regarding this study, I used rich and thick descriptions of all processes.

According to Merriam (2009), rich and thick descriptions are a strategy used for the transferability of a study to be presented in a detailed description of findings with adequate evidence in the form of quotations from the interviews of a participant. I presented the background of the study, data collection method, design, strategy, participants, and sampling. I also provided data analysis of the study as well as details of the study results. The detailed information I provided will surely give accessibility and transparency of the study. Making available information that is detailed and addresses the specifics of the study gives other researchers the path to reproduce if they determine that the research is transferable to the context and environment of their study (Forero et al., 2018).



## **Dependability**

Dependability is the extent to which a study could be repeated by other researchers, in which case the findings would be consistent. According to Forero et al. (2017), dependability determines the repeatability and consistency of research. For example, if a person wants to replicate the study, the person needs to have enough information from a research report to do so and must obtain similar findings like the previous study (Gigi, 2018). Processes and methods of increasing the dependability of a study can include an audit trail, member checking, and triangulation.

The dependability of this research study was achieved by using an audit trail. An audit trail entails maintaining notes that are comprehensive. I used detailed methods of explaining the research, which included notes and opinions. This included population and sampling, data collection decisions, and analysis. I equally used member checking to make sure that the understanding and the interpretation of the data were consistent with the participant's thoughts and intentions. Member checking is an effective method to establish dependability in the research (Nowell et al., 2017). It is the opportunity for the researcher to ask follow-up questions to ensure comprehension and avoid or correct any misunderstanding situations. I also used triangulation by crosschecking the consistency of the information derived at different times. These methods of explaining the research leave transparency that permits another researcher to follow the previous study. If the path that was initially used leads to the same results, the study is deemed dependable.

## **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the notion in which a research study could be confirmed or supported by other researchers in the community (Forero et al., 2018). Research with confirmability is a study conducted by a researcher with findings directly derived from the data. In this situation, the researcher bases the interpretations and findings on the data.

In this study, I described the logic behind each decision taken for the purpose of my study. For confirmability to be established, I documented and provided an audit trail, highlighting the necessary steps of data collection and analysis. I accomplished this by documenting and providing rich detail in the form of descriptions, notes, and decisions. Another approach to reach confirmability is member checking. I used this approach to confirm my understanding or correct my misunderstanding of the data collected from participant responses that I gathered from phone calls. According to Reilly (2015), when follow-up member checking interviews are done, they help the participants to review and provide more information that concerns the interpretation of the researcher. Another approach to reach confirmability is triangulation (Abdalla et al., 2018). In the context of this study, triangulation was the process of using multiple methods of data collection so as to obtain the best version of the truth (Abdalla et al., 2018). Through the process of the interview, member checking can get a complete view of the phenomenon (Abdalla et al., 2018). It is by using triangulation that I detected data saturation. As I continued to collect data, contents and themes were reoccurring, and no new information appeared in the process.

Triangulation, member checking, audit trail, and repeatability were input into confirmability. The components of credibility, transferability, and dependability are requirements for confirmability. When researchers follow and reproduce the findings or results of the study, the research is reliable, dependable, and, of course, trustworthy. A study of this nature can be useful to other researchers in other contexts or environments (Forero et al., 2018).

### **Study Results**

In this research study, to answer the research questions, I conducted, recorded, and transcribed semistructured interviews with 10 laboratory managers recruited through public contact methods from four different hospital settings in the state of Georgia. As I progressed with the transcription and analysis, I noted that, in most part, participants gave responses to the interview questions that were similar. In the process of carrying out the transcription, I paid particular attention to the tone and sounds of the participants' voices. I focused my attention on capturing all the details relayed in the course of the interview process. I used Microsoft Word to transcribe and organize audio-recorded semistructured interviews.

After examining the data thoroughly, I revised my categories and decided to apply thematic coding, which revealed recurring themes. Five major themes emerged from analyzing the participant's responses to the interview questions. Themes were chosen based on word similarities, statements, and phrases as they emerged during the analysis of the data. I used NVivo data analysis software to organize, analyze contents, and link like coding categories together for data analysis. The following themes emerged in this

study (a) commitment and job satisfaction, (b) reward and recognition, (c) training and professional development, (d) comfortable work environment, and (e) effective communication.

### **Theme 1**

**Commitment and job satisfaction improved retention of employees.** This is one of the themes that came out of the study, where organizational commitments and job satisfaction are factors in the retention of laboratory professionals. Organizational commitment plays an important role in any organization as employees that are satisfied and committed naturally work better in the organization, improve the productivity of the organization, and avoid resigning (Abdul & Farooq, 2015). Medical laboratory job commitment and satisfaction are considered to influence hospital output and the performance, as research has generally clarified that satisfied employee is more dynamic and committed to their occupations, whereas non-committed one face turnover (Abdul & Farooq, 2015).

**Commitment in organization.** The idea of commitment with regards to the responses by the laboratory managers interviewed during data collection was prominent as a successful strategy for the retention of employees in their various departments of the organization. Commitment was considered in two parts; commitment of the organization to the employee and commitment of the employee to the organization. All participants agreed that commitment was an important aspect of retention of the employee in the organization. PA1, PA3, PA5 and PA7 indicated that organizational commitment to employees should include incentives and rewards, which are either monetary or non-

monetary, that would increase their commitment to the organization. For example, PA7 specifically noted “that I use rewards for my employees so that they understand how much I appreciate the work they do for the organization.” This would lead to reduced turnover. The monetary incentives preferred by the employees included salary adjustments and compensation benefits. However, the nonmonetary incentives included flexible schedules, time off duty, as well as leave approval.

Regarding employee commitment to the organization, the above-mentioned participants indicated the following commitment to be on time at work, take care of patients by analyzing the results readily, and to commit to the goals, vision, and mission of the organization. PA3 and PA4 indicated that organizational commitment to employees should include a provision of health insurance, periodic market adjustments in employee salaries, and training with financial investments. For example, PA4 noted “that I propose periodic market adjustments for my employees’ salaries when necessary to the administration.” Regarding employees’ commitment to the organization, they included avoiding coming late to work, readily complete assigned tasks, and commitment to complete assigned tasks. PA6 and PA10, with regard to organizations commitment to employees, proposed that they should be given a good work environment, avoid having a heavy workload, and be given the opportunity for career growth. For example, PA6 mentioned “that I try to provide a comfortable environment and prevent my employee from having heavy workload.” On the side of employee commitment, they repeated points as in PA3 and PA4, which are health insurance provisions, periodic market adjustments in employee salaries, and training as need be. Finally, PA8 and PA10

proposed the organization's commitment to employees as rewards, recognition, and tuition reimbursement for professionals interested in going to college/university. With regard to employee commitment to the organization, it was proposed that they should respect and obey the rules and regulations put in place, and most importantly, to readily analyze the results of patients. The above analysis illustrates participant's collective thoughts about organizational commitments.

It is generally believed that the commitment of employees is the result of high satisfaction. Porter et al. (1974) organizational commitment theory revealed that being satisfied with the job with commitment in the organization is important in employee turnover rates. It was further revealed that the attitudes an employee has towards the organization they work for have a large impact on turnover rates as well (Porter et al., 1974).

**Job satisfaction.** This is the perception (negative or positive) of an employee towards their job (Garima & Megha, 2013). In general, job satisfaction is a positive feeling about the job of an individual. It is the extent to which individuals like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) of their job. This aspect emerged in this study from the participant's responses. Participants in this study acknowledged that job satisfaction could help improve employee retention. Hassan et al. (2017) stated that employees are satisfied with their job when they have the possibility to obtain outcomes considered important in professional and personal life. Most participants acknowledged that employees were satisfied by factors that are different. For PA1 through PA7, factors that have some meaning to one employee were inconsequential for another employee.

Employees have the possibility to view the significance in the job they are doing in a variety of ways (De Simon et al., 2017). Most participants suggested that certain employees derived meaning not only from the job they are doing but from the fact that the job was a way of providing for their family. It shows here that factors that can influence job satisfaction can either be positive or negative. This is only possible if the organization can easily identify those factors that are influencing job satisfaction. For example, PA7 noted “that certain factors she identified and uses for her employees was to be a good listener and acknowledging the job well done to her employees.”

Job satisfaction was an important finding in this research study. Within the job satisfaction theme, all participants provided a response to help to broaden the understanding as to how laboratory managers used job satisfaction as a predictor to retain employees. The findings demonstrated that those who were satisfied with their jobs had some commitment to the organization, and therefore, remained with the organization that promoted workplace knowledge. Each participant in this study accepted that job satisfaction was a significant strategy of success based on the identification of what was significant to employees as an individual.

PA1, PA3, and PA5 discussed the importance of career development opportunities to influence job satisfaction. They all asserted that career opportunities were beneficial for the hospital and the laboratory professionals working within it. This approach will help the hospital to have internal candidates readily prepared to handle higher positions and leadership roles. All three participants, PA1, PA3, and PA5,

indicated that career development opportunities were important for the employees to stay well equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for their jobs.

PA2, PA6, and PA9 indicated that laboratory professionals in the hospital setting should be given independence or a leadership role as a tool that will influence job satisfaction. These participants indicated that independence or a leadership role was profitable for both the laboratory professionals and the hospital. These participants indicated that satisfied employees would be happy and productive in such a way that they can carry out some activities within their competence for the benefit of the hospital.

PA4 and PA7 indicated that laboratory professionals in hospital settings should have growth opportunities in their careers. These participants referred to this aspect because the laboratory professionals need to be more successful and satisfied. They noted that career development or continuing education would have an effect on the retention of laboratory professionals in hospital settings.

PA8 and PA10 acknowledged the importance of using compensation packages to improve the retention of laboratory professionals in the hospital setting. All of the participants were of the opinion that compensation packages should consist of salary and other employee benefits such as flexible schedules, career development, and rewards/recognition. These participants stressed the importance of salary increases to improve the retention of laboratory professionals in hospital settings.

These participants equally discussed the importance of flexible schedules to help in the retention of laboratory professionals. The participants equally discussed the career development aspect as a non-monetary incentive that can influence employee retention.



PA10 stated that career development showed the support of employees to further their career goals with a positive influence on the retention of employees. Similarly, PA8 declared that career development would promote growth and stability. After a literature collection, two aspects were chosen, usually mentioned as influences of the decision or intention to leave the organization, which are “job satisfaction” and “organizational commitment” (Porter et al., 1974) and Mobley (1977).

Table 3

*Participants Responses on Themes Selected on this table*

Themes	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	PA6	PA7	PA8	PA9	PA10	Total
Commitment											
Organizational	2	0	2	2	3	2	3	1	0	1	16
Employee	2	0	1	2	1	0	3	1	0	0	10
Job	2	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	2	16
Satisfaction											

## Theme 2

**Reward and recognition.** Rewards and recognition of laboratory professionals by managers was the second key theme that emerged from my data review. Most of the laboratory managers agreed that rewards such as financial and recognition were the key to improving the retention of laboratory professionals. Participants PA1, PA2, PA4, PA5, PA6, PA7, PA8, and PA10 indicated that rewarding and recognizing employees is a strategy that they use. PA10 actually indicated that he shows his employees that he values and appreciates them, and therefore, recognizes the contribution they make in the execution of their tasks in the department. In return, employees show their loyalty. PA1

indicated that she promotes recognition and rewards, and this can be as simple as a well-timed coordinated email to the employees to inform them that they are doing a great job.

In addition, most of the participants indicated rewards and recognition should be taken seriously. PA2, PA6, and PA7 indicated that with regard to rewards, the strategy they use includes proposing a raise, tuition reimbursements for those willing to improve on their educational levels, and promotions. When it comes to recognition, they indicated that good work needs to be recognized by giving, for example, a certificate of recognition to employees who perform well with their work. Similarly, PA3 and PA8 stated that rewards are meaningful and impact the employee's perception of the department, in particular, and the organization as a whole. Thus, this helps in the retention of employees and turnover reduction.

Table 4

*Responses of Participants on Chosen Themes: Rewards and Recognition.*

Themes	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	PA6	PA7	PA8	PA9	PA10	Total
Rewards and Recognition	2	4	0	3	3	2	2	3	0	3	22

### **Theme 3**

**Training.** The third theme that emerged from the semistructured interviews is the necessity for laboratory and human resource managers to provide development opportunities and effective training for laboratory professionals as a key strategy for the retention of the professionals in the organization. Eight of the participants indicated that providing professionals with training or career development opportunities updated their

expertise and knowledge base, which led them to be promoted to higher positions leading to the professional's retention and reduction of their turnover rates. These participants accepted that building these categories of employees professionally increased their attachment with the health care organization, and thus, resulted in retaining them and reducing turnover. Thus, this is an indication that career development is an important component of training, which leads to the retention of employees. PA1, PA3, PA4, PA5, PA6, PA7, PA9, and PA10 indicated the importance of a training and development strategy for the retention of laboratory professionals (see Table 5). The strategy includes (a) career development and (b) skills and knowledge.

**Career development.** This is an important strategy that helps to retain employees. There were 8 participants that reported that providing laboratory professionals with training or career development opportunities will enhance their expertise and knowledge, which will facilitate them being promoted to higher ranks and reduce their turnover. The eight participants indicated that building these laboratory professionals professionally will increase their commitment to the department and the organization as a whole. This would then result in the retention of these professionals. With regard to career development, PA1, PA3, PA4, PA5, PA6, PA7, PA9, and PA10 reported that it was a key strategy that commits and retains the laboratory professionals as it would be the case for other employees in the organization. PA1 noted "that whenever I see any career growth opportunities, I propose them to my employees." PA3 complemented PA1's statement by adding that "an individual's career development would be beneficial to him/her and the organization as a whole." In addition, PA7

indicated that, based on his experience, “laboratory professionals grow in their career, which permits them to move up in higher levels within the department.”

PA4 explained that career development is about understanding what the goals of the laboratory professionals are and then helping them to reach their career development goals. Unfortunately, PA2 and PA8 did not give any responses relating to the training and career development of the employees, which was the purpose of this study to explore the most effective strategies that can assist laboratory and human resource managers in hospital settings. However, PA8 indicated that “career development is a key retention strategy for laboratory professionals because they feel that they are working towards their goals that would make them feel fulfilled.” Thus, career development is a key retention strategy that managers in hospital settings should apply.

**Skills and knowledge.** Skills technical or manual, are usually learned or acquired, and knowledge that represents bodies of information that are applied directly to the performance of work functions are imperative strategies for retention of employees in an organization. PA6 and PA9 indicated the importance of enhancing employees’ skills and knowledge to become better health care professionals and to enhance the results of patients. Also, PA7 noted that building skills by employees being exposed to different types of activities could help in their retention in the department and the organization as a whole.

#### **Theme 4**

**Work environment.** This theme emerged from the data as an important strategy for the retention of laboratory professionals in hospital settings. This data is presented in

Table 5. The results of the study indicated the importance of managers creating a conducive environment for the laboratory professionals, meeting organizational goals, and positively influencing their effectiveness in laboratory analysis. Participants emphasized the necessity to create a work environment where the professionals have the possibility to enjoy their work and those they work with as one of the best strategies for the retention of them. Thus, preventing them from thinking about quitting their job (PA1, PA3, PA4, PA5, PA6, PA7, and PA10). However, PA1, PA3, PA5, and PA8 emphasized that these professionals having a comfortable environment to work in will permit them to stay with the organization. For example, PA3 noted, "I create a lovely, friendly, and safe environment to enhance job satisfaction and retention of my employees." PA6 indicated that "the reasons why employees quit their jobs are because they have poor working conditions." Based on the study results, there is a necessity for managers in hospital settings to provide a comfortable and agreeable environment for laboratory professionals to remain in the hospital settings and provide the necessary services to the patients.

A comfortable work environment is created by providing a relaxing atmosphere with a clean and comfortable office, working equipment, celebrating important events for the professionals, which are simple, but important to help in their retention (PA1, PA3, PA5, PA6, & PA10). With regard to a clean and comfortable office, it can have tremendous effects on the interactions among colleagues. Good working equipment will permit them to produce quality results. As concerning events, celebrating, such as birthdays and promotions of a colleague, can be very encouraging to these professionals and may cause them to continue working for the organization. Based on this study's

results, providing a clean, comfortable office, good equipment, and celebrating events of these professionals will prevent them from quitting the job.

Table 5

***Themes 3 and 4: Participants and their Responses***

Themes	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	PA6	PA7	PA8	PA9	PA10	Total
Training and Development	3	0	2	4	2	2	4	0	3	2	22
Work Environment	1	0	3	1	1	3	2	0	0	3	12

**Theme 5**

**Effective communication.** Effective communication emerged from the analysis of some participants' responses that can help in the retention and reduction of turnover of laboratory professionals. Most participants in this study acknowledged the importance of using effective communication to build trust between the manager and his or her subordinates, to prevent laboratory professionals from leaving, and to accomplish goals. Responses came from seven out of the ten participants who were interviewed. Table 6 displays the responses per participant.

PA3 indicated that laboratory and human resource managers must practice effective communication and ensure that feedback is getting back to laboratory professionals. PA5 stated, "I improved the retention of laboratory employees by using various communication tools to pass information to them. I make sure that I respond to them quickly to all the emails and resolved problems brought to my attention." Employee turnover can be low or high; it is low when few professionals leave the organization and high when many leave. However, no matter the positions, low or high, taking note of

employee turnover is essential for positioning an organization, such as a hospital setting, on the right path of growth and organizational success.

PA1 indicated, “I use frequent communication between myself and the laboratory professionals to encourage their commitment to the hospital and avoid thinking of quitting.” He further indicated that he makes sure that he sends information that is needed to do their job. PA1 demonstrates the effectiveness of communication in the workplace and the effect it has on retention. Similarly, PA7, PA8, PA9, and PA10 discussed the importance of effective communication to improve retention in a hospital setting. Each of the seven participants out of the ten talked about the importance of effective communication in retaining laboratory professionals in the hospital, even though there was no interview question on communication. For example, all the participants that responded shared that a manager must communicate with the laboratory professionals to ensure that they have the necessary tools that would help them achieve their goals. The study shows that managers’ methods and strategies of effective communication have a great deal of impact on employee turnover. The study results indicate that when managers in hospital settings invest in effective communication strategies, it results in an improvement in employee retention, such as laboratory professionals for whom this study has been conducted.

Table 6

*Responses of participants on the theme: Effective Communication*

Theme	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	PA6	PA7	PA8	PA9	PA10	Total
Effective Communication	2	0	4	0	2	0	3	2	2	3	18

## Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present an analysis of the strategies to retain laboratory professionals in hospital settings. The lived experiences of laboratory managers from the four facilities I interviewed participants in Georgia responded to questions that guided this study. To get a much deeper understanding of this study, I designed three research questions that guided the research. I recruited 10 study participants from four hospital settings in the state of Georgia who met all the eligibility criteria. The ten participants provided responses that formed the data that I used in the study. Tables one to six summarizes themes and key findings that emerged from the analysis of participant's responses to the research questions. The participants in the study discussed different ways they strategized in the retention and reduction of turnover of laboratory professionals in the hospital settings. These strategies included their commitment and job satisfaction towards the professionals, rewards and recognition, training and career development, comfortable work environment, and effective communication. However, not all the participants gave the above-mentioned strategies, as indicated in the five themes.

In Chapter 5, there will be a brief overview of the study's purpose. In addition, the interpretation of the findings will be detailed using the theoretical framework for the study. Finally, the limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications and conclusion will be provided.



## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the strategies that are used by laboratory and human resources managers to retain laboratory professionals in hospital settings. The research questions for the study addressed what laboratory managers perceived as the biggest challenges to retain laboratory professionals and what strategies they believed were effective at improving the retention of laboratory professionals in hospital settings. The information generated in this study addressed the gap in the literature on this topic. They may be used by laboratory and human resources managers to implement effective strategies for improving the retention of laboratory professionals. This may help reduce costs associated with replacing, recruiting, training new professionals and helping to provide quality health care to patients in hospitals.

The study findings emerged from analyzing participant's responses that were collected through in-depth face-to-face or phone interviews. Participants were recruited through public contact methods. Ten participants who were laboratory managers accepted to voluntarily participate out of 12 initially planned. Data saturation, was reached with 10 participants, so I stopped interviewing there. Semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix) were asked to elicit detailed participant's responses to address the three research questions that guided the study.

There were five key findings. First, the findings confirmed that the commitment of the organization to the laboratory professionals might lead to their retention and reduction of turnover rates. The second key finding showed the need for reward and

recognition of laboratory professionals, which is key for their retention and reduction of turnover in hospital settings. The third finding was that providing effective training and career development to laboratory professionals would enhance their expertise and knowledge, which would facilitate being promoted to higher ranks and lead to them being retained and turnover reduction. The fourth key finding confirmed that creating a comfortable work environment where laboratory professionals could practice high-quality patient care and be satisfied would lead to their retention. Finally, the last key finding, indicated that when managers in hospital settings invest in effective communication, it can result in the improvement of retaining laboratory professionals. However, this finding was not agreed upon by all participants in the study.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The three research questions that guided this study were:

RQ1: Do managers in hospital settings believe that job satisfaction and organizational commitment impact retention rates in laboratory professionals?

RQ2: What do managers in hospital settings believe can be done to increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment in laboratory professionals?

RQ3: What do managers working in hospital settings believe are the best strategies for retaining their laboratory professionals?

Given that a majority of the participants provided similar responses to the three research questions, I interpreted the results according to the emergent themes related to each research question in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. There are both

findings that confirm the knowledge found in the peer- reviewed literature as well as findings that extend the knowledge found in the peer- reviewed literature.

### **Findings Confirm the Knowledge Found in the Peer Reviewed Literature**

Although it seems that there are sufficient data demonstrating why there is low retention in laboratory professionals, little research has been conducted to demonstrate a cause or a solution to this vital problem. The first finding of this study confirms what Rashmi and Kulkarni (2017) concluded, which was that laboratory managers should concentrate on the job satisfaction of these professionals because satisfied professionals are more likely to be more committed to their job and committed professionals imply improved retention and low turnover. The second finding, according to Porter et al. (1974), concluded that being satisfied with commitment in the organization, such as a hospital setting, will contribute to improving the retention of laboratory professionals and promote low turnover rates. The third finding confirms the conclusion of Azeem and Akhtar (2016) who found that the perceived work-life balance of these professionals would increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The fourth finding demonstrates what Chandani and Mall (2016) noted when they said that the best strategies for retaining these professionals include commitment and job satisfaction, rewards and recognition, training and career development, comfortable work environment, and effective communication.

In this study, most laboratory managers affirmed that retaining employees and reducing employee turnover depended on most of the strategies already indicated. For example, commitment, job satisfaction, and providing rewards and recognition to the

employees. The findings of this research study align with the prior literature that employees will quit their job if the previously mentioned strategies are not applied. Mobley (1977) noted that an employee's decision to quit a job starts with the thoughts about quitting, which may eventually lead to searching for other employment opportunities. The key for any organization, is to keep satisfaction levels high among their employees to prevent them from quitting. Cooley (2016) explained that the manager must be able to solve problems brought to his or her attention by the employees.

### **Findings Extend the Knowledge Found in the Peer Reviewed Literature**

The finding of this study extend the knowledge related to laboratory manager's beliefs regarding to the retention of laboratory professionals in hospital settings in several aspects. The study results extend the information found in the literature review; in that it provides laboratory managers with a profound understanding of effective strategies for the retention of talented laboratory professionals. The first finding showed that having satisfaction with the job can help to increase the commitment of laboratory professionals who can make specific choices, such as career development, as the foremost reason to stay in the organization. The second finding indicated the need for laboratory managers to understand the factors that influence laboratory professionals to leave the organization if they want to enhance retention and increase efficiency. The third finding touched on an important factor that guides the goals of the hospital setting. The managers understand that patients are well taken care of. To make sure this is successful, managers must focus on increasing retention and decreasing employee turnover in the hospital setting.

### **Analysis and Interpretation in the Context of the Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used for this study comprised Mobley's (1977) turnover theory and Porter et al.'s (1974) organizational commitment theory. The findings of this study affirmed the necessity to retain and reduce the turnover of laboratory professionals in hospital settings. Most participants indicated that the organizations' commitment to employees in the hospital should include incentives and rewards, which are either monetary or non-monetary, that increase the commitment of the employees to the organization and lead to a preference not to quit. With regard to Mobley's theory, it suggests that an employee's decision to quit a job occurs in multiple stages. The employee starts with the thought of quitting which leads to the process of searching for other alternatives, and eventually, developing intentions to quit the job.

During this process of deciding to quit, the organization, must look for possibilities to prevent the employee from quitting. In the current study, some participants noted that to prevent employees from quitting, the organization needs to monitor the job satisfaction level of their employees. The initial step for management to take is to monitor the satisfaction levels of the employee, which could be done through a simple survey. An employee's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their job should be considered first by management if there is a turnover problem. This is an indication of how job satisfaction has an impact on whether an individual decides whether to quit an organization. Therefore, the key for an organization is to make sure the satisfaction levels are high among the employees to prevent them from quitting.

The organizational commitment theory of Porter et al. (1974), is multidimensional in nature, and involves an employee's loyalty to the organization, willingness to exert effort in and for the organization, and desire to be highly committed. Porter et al suggested three factors that can contribute to commitment in an organization: (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization, (b) a desire to remain with the organization, and c) the determination to exert some effort on the organization's behalf. The commitment, however, depends entirely on a different category of individuals and the value they place on the organizational offerings. For example, in a hospital setting, this may depend on how laboratory managers handle the laboratory professionals with regard to factors that would permit them to stay or quit the organization. Commitment also depends on if the laboratory professionals have opportunities for career development offered to them by the organization for continuous improvement

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations are the potential weaknesses of which the researcher has no control over and that can easily have an impact on the study outcome(Simon,2013). The study included four different hospital settings in the state of Georgia in different communities and locations. The information collected from laboratory managers seemed to align despite the different hospital settings and locations. However, the responses from the 10 study participants may not represent the global experience of strategies to retain laboratory professionals in hospital settings in the United States. Collecting data from four different hospital settings gave the study more credibility than if the data were

collected from only hospital setting. If participants came from one hospital, the data would have most likely only represented the views of the laboratory managers as they carry out the retention policies and procedures in that organization.

Even though the participants came from four different hospital settings, having a small sample size is one of the limitations of this study. Other limitations of the study were the limited time frame to collect data, and that the time of engagement with participants was not long enough. These limitations could also impact the quality of the data. I conducted this study single handily. I was responsible for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data as well as reporting the findings. Some critics may argue that the study is a product of a single researcher's lenses.

### **Recommendations**

I recommend that further studies include the following. All laboratory and human resources managers should understand the five main strategies that would help them to retain and reduce the turnover of laboratory professionals in hospital settings:(a) the commitment and job satisfaction of laboratory professionals, (b) rewards and recognition, (c) training and career development, (d) comfortable work environment, and (e) effective communication. In addition, laboratory managers need to develop additional strategies, such as establishing trust with and empowering employees, which can help retention and reduction of turnover of laboratory professionals in hospital settings.

since the small sample size was one of the limitations of this study and the study was conducted in one state, my second recommendation is to achieve generalizable study findings, future researchers may need to increase the number of participants in the study

as well as consider undertaking the study in different states. The final recommendation is that future researchers should consider undertaking a similar study in a different department of the hospital, such as in the department of radiology or dental to determine if the same themes are the foundation of retaining employees.

### **Implications**

#### **Positive Social Change**

The positive social change for this study was to raise the awareness of laboratory managers concerning the most effective strategies that may play an important role in retention of laboratory professionals in hospital settings. Healthcare managers, such as laboratory and human resources managers, with specific responsibilities, have an important role in attracting and retaining employees in the healthcare organization (Ashrafi & Sarker, 2018). The study might help laboratory managers to develop policies that reduce turnover, retain employees and improve the work environment of the organization. Moreover, having this study has the possibility to help laboratory and human resources managers of taking proactive solutions for potential problems in the management of laboratory professionals in hospital settings. Concerning patient care the research study has the potential to improve the quality of patient care. By retaining well trained, experienced laboratory professionals, analysis from the laboratory might be timely and accurate to help physicians in the diagnosis and treatment of patients. Furthermore, the development of effective retention strategies might increase employee job satisfaction and commitment in the organization. Prince et al. (2016) indicated that healthcare managers who successfully apply employee retention strategies have the



possibility to increase job satisfaction, which will lead to the improvement of employee retention.

This study might help change the attitude and behavior of laboratory and human resource managers in responding to the issues presented to them by the employees such as career development or comfortable work environment. This type of commitments of managers to their employees might lead to their being loyal to the organization and productive in analysis of patients results. This might also bring about social change not only to society but also to the greater community by improving the quality of patient care.

A qualitative study method was used, which is linked to a constructivist theory of knowledge. The method focuses on understanding individuals' experiences. It gave the participant the opportunity to respond using their own words as opposed to responses that are fixed in a quantitative method (Yin, 2014). This is exactly what was applied to my study on strategies to retain laboratory professionals in hospital settings. This method permitted me to have an in-depth opportunity to be able to interview laboratory managers to understand their workforce strategies to retain laboratory professionals in hospital settings.

### **Recommendation for Practice**

The healthcare industry changes progressively with a variety of hospitals, each having its own goals, visions, missions, and provided services. The potential recommendation for practice includes the fact that laboratory and human resources managers need to understand the strategies that are effective so as to be competitive and be able to adapt to the changing technology. To succeed, they must understand the

different approaches available to retain and reduce employee turnover. The second recommendation is that managers should provide training and career development opportunities for employees to increase their knowledge and enhance their expertise. Helping to develop the employees by taking into consideration their professional line will increase their attachment with the organization, and most likely, this might result in retaining and reducing turnover rates.

The third recommendation is that managers should improve effective communication by clarifying the vision and mission of the hospital organization and also making sure regular feedback is provided to the employees. These could be carried out by having face-to face-meetings, implementing communication channels such as brochures. This communication aspect was proposed by many participants despite the fact that there were no research or interview questions on this topic. Brian et al. (2015) confirmed that the adoption of effective communication systems is an important factor in reducing conflict of interest between the employees and management and helps in the retention and reduction of turnover rates.

The fourth recommendation for practice by laboratory and human resources managers is to permanently put in place a comfortable work environment that plays an essential role for employees in general. The environment in the workplace becomes a critical factor for retaining employees (Aram & Samir, 2017). Participants in this study believed that the best strategy to retain laboratory professionals in the hospital settings was to create a comfortable working environment for these professionals where they can practice high-quality patient care and be happy and satisfied. As the fifth

recommendation for practice, laboratory managers need to come up with additional strategies, such as establishing trust with and empowering employee, which can help retention and reduction of turnover of laboratory professionals in the hospital setting. This recommendation was not indicated from the responses received from participants but that this additional strategy could be put in practice to help in the retention process.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the strategies to retain laboratory professionals in hospital settings. I conducted semistructured interviews in hospital organizations located in the state of Georgia with laboratory managers who provided insight into effective strategies that can possibly influence retention and the reduction in turnover of laboratory professionals. I explored strategies that managers use for the retention of these professionals in the hospital setting. I analyzed the data from 10 participants and from four different hospital settings who had the required criteria discussed in Chapter 3.

Five themes emerged from the analysis of the data collected during the study. The themes identified included (a) commitment and job satisfaction, (b) rewards and recognition, (c) training and career development, (d) comfortable work environment, and (e) effective communication. The themes align with the theoretical framework of this study and have implications for social change, further research studies, and professional practice. Retention strategies for laboratory professionals are important components that managers should implement to strengthen practices in the hospital setting. The findings of the study provide laboratory and human resource managers with a profound

understanding of effective strategies to retain professionals who are heavily talented. This leads to positive outcomes whereby the employees will be highly committed, satisfied, and eventually, productive.

Developing employee retention, such as applied to laboratory professionals, starts with making an investigation, probably through a survey in the organization regarding how the current professionals feel about their job and why they feel that way. As the workforce is continuing to evolve dramatically in a highly competitive talented environment, managers should create a competitive advantage by putting in application retention strategies found in this study. The benefits of putting in the employee retention strategies found in this study are a large investment in the workforce with very high returns that could include increased commitment, job satisfaction, meeting physician's demands for accurate results, improvement in the quality of patient care, and positive social impacts.

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## Appendix: Interview Questions

- 1) What effects does commitment in your health care organization have on the retention of laboratory professionals?
- 2) What Strategies did you put in place in your department to retain laboratory professionals?
- 3) Of the Strategies you put in place, which of them do you believe have been most effective in the retention of laboratory professionals in the hospital?
- 4) What procedures and policies are put in place that could be helpful in the retention of your employees?
- 5) Of the strategies that you put in place to retain laboratory professionals in your department, which of them do you believe can help to improve job satisfaction?
- 6) What strategies, if any do you think can lead to your employee dissatisfaction based on their implementation?
- 7) What changes as a manager would be necessary for you to put in place for the improvement to retain laboratory professionals?
- 8) What working conditions did you put in place to reduce employee turnover in your department?
- 9) What have you experienced with regards to career opportunities that could reduce employee turnover?
- 10) What more can you share as additional information concerning the retention of laboratory professionals?