

2020

## **Strategies to Mitigate Employee Turnover in the Human Services Special Needs Industry**

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Kenneth L. James

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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2020

Abstract

Strategies to Mitigate Employee Turnover in the Human Services Special Needs Industry

by

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MS, Strayer University, 2012

BS, University of South Carolina at Aiken, 2009

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2020

## Abstract

Leaders in the human services special needs industry are experiencing a high turnover of special needs workers. Employee turnover adds high costs to the budgets of human services special needs organizations. Grounded in Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies managers of human services special needs organizations used to reduce employee turnover. Participants comprised 8 managers of human services special needs organizations in South Carolina who have successfully implemented strategies to mitigate employee turnover. Data were collected from face-to-face semistructured interviews and reviews of organizations' human resources documents, such as employee turnover data, employee satisfaction surveys, and reports from board and commission meetings. Thematic analysis revealed three themes: employee compensation, employee job satisfaction, and a positive working environment. A key recommendation for leaders in the human services special needs industry is to increase job satisfaction by developing better relationships with subordinates and improving working environments by implementing employee recognition and appreciation programs. Implications for positive social change include potential reduced unemployment rates, resulting in increased tax revenue for funding programs and services beneficial for the represented communities and the special needs clients that are served by these programs.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this research to my biggest supporter since birth, my mother, Mary B. James. This process has not been easy, but your consistent motivation has willed me to completion. I want to thank my cousin, Alexandria McHellon for always asking me about my study, and encouraging me to keep working. To my “Gatekeepers”, Travlaus Clark, Esq. and Denzel Pryor, thank you for your consistent motivation to finish strong. To Eden Logan, Keion Rowes, Jennifer Smalls, Amesha Arnold, Tramaine Gadson and Deshaun Mayes your words of encouragement did not go unnoticed. To my James family, thank you all for always supporting me. To my Kappa Alpha Psi, Nu Nu Chapter Brothers, thank you for your push and reminders to always achieve. Last, but certainly not least, to my Grandmother, Lureen F. James, who passed away many years ago, but will always be my strength to achieve anything I set my mind to.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Research into the reasoning behind employee turnover is limited (Flint, Haley, & McNally, 2012). Leaders should place high importance on developing strategies to retain employees and reduce/eradicate turnover (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). High turnover is a major issue facing the human services special needs industry (Kayyali, 2014). Employee turnover places a burden on the yearly budget (Kim, 2012). Organizations are suffering and cannot lose more skilled professionals in the industry (Kayyali, 2014). Because managers play a key role in employee retention by ensuring proper development of employees and encouraging organizational commitment (Rahman & Nas, 2013), the objective of this study is to focus on the strategies human services special needs managers could implement to reduce employee turnover.

### **Background of the Problem**

The impact of turnover is significant for both employees and companies. Turnover impacts the culture of the organization and the bottom line (Biron & Boon, 2013). Organizations have all developed unique goals that are significant for their vision and mission (Deery & Jago, 2015). The organization's mission and vision, along with goals, should be promoted by management through the hiring of new employees and ongoing training to reduce employee turnover (Jung, 2012).

The South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDDSN) board made a request to increase the operations budget for FY 2018-2019. The request was for a FY budget of \$34.6 M, with \$11.3 M designated for employee salary increase due to competitive wage increases in surrounding organization (SCDDSN, 2018). The

turnover within SCDDSN is steadily rising, and in this budget, they noted that competitive wages are needed in order to compete with other organizations in the state. Working in an environment that is positive is important as it relates to employee retention (Markey, Ravenswood, & Webber, 2015). A positive working environment is one that includes effective employee training and a proportion of work-life balance (Wynen & de Beeck, 2014). Negative working environments directly impacts the turnover rate. Some negative factors include, but are not limited to, lack of training, low pay, and no option for advancement (Wynen & de Beeck, 2014).

### **Problem Statement**

The average turnover rate of human service special needs workers, also known as direct support professionals, is 45%, with a statewide range of 18%-76% (President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities, 2017). The cost of replacing one worker in the human services special needs industry is estimated to be \$5,400 (Kleist & Benway, 2017). The general business problem is that some employers are not retaining qualified employees in the human services special needs industry. The specific business problem is that some managers in the human services special needs industry lack strategies to mitigate employee turnover.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore successful strategies human services special needs industry managers use to mitigate employee turnover. The targeted population consisted of eight current and former managers and executive leaders of the human services special needs industry who have successfully

implemented strategies to mitigate employee turnover. The geographical location of the study was the southeastern region of the United States. The implications for positive social change include the potential to retain employees in the human services special needs field and decrease the turnover rate. The benefit of retaining these employees is that doing so would keep qualified employees working versus searching for other jobs. The community would benefit from the diverse population of people in the community and the resources being in place to integrate the special needs residents into the community.

### **Nature of the Study**

Although I chose to conduct a qualitative study, I first considered multiple methods of research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Examining relationships or differences through analyzing numerical data is a focus of quantitative methods (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Using a quantitative method would have only allowed me to explore the significance of relationships among variables for turnover rates. Using a qualitative method, however, provided the ability to analyze the problems associated with turnover, explore results, and identify different strategies used to achieve these results. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2015), utilizing the qualitative methodology would allow more freedom to explore different strategies being used to mitigate employee turnover. Using a mixed methods approach was the initial choice, but I decided against it because quantitative methods were not the desired choice for this study.

The selection of the research design is key to any doctoral study. For this study, the case study design was the most appropriate. I decided against other qualitative designs, such as phenomenology or ethnography. Phenomenological researchers seek to describe the perception of the meanings of individuals' lived experiences, for describing and evaluating a phenomenon (Ozyigit, 2017). Ethnographic researchers, on the other hand, become a part of the culture they are researching; however, I am not a manager in this industry. Case study researchers seek understanding of a real-world case, such as strategies for reducing the turnover rate in the human services special needs field. Yin (2018) discussed using case study research to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in real-world context, to present boundaries between phenomenon and context, and to use different types of data in the form of *rich data* and *thick descriptions* to explore phenomena. Case study research design is useful when determining whether specific theories and models work in the real-world.

### **Research Question**

The central research question guiding the study was: What strategies do human service managers use to mitigate turnover?

### **Interview Questions**

I used the following interview questions to structure the investigation:

Q1. What is your current job title and how long have you worked for this organization?

Q2. What do you know about the turnover rate of your organization?

Q3. How has your organization evaluated the causes of employee turnover?

- Q4. What strategies are you using to mitigate employee turnover?
- Q5. What changes have your organization made to mitigate employee turnover?
- Q6. Of the changes you just stated, which have proven to be the most successful?
- Q7. How has your organization supported the successful strategies for mitigating human services special needs employees' turnover rates?
- Q8. What additional information can you provide on your organizations efforts to mitigate employee turnover?

### **Conceptual Framework**

In this study, I used the two-factor theory as the conceptual framework. The two-factor theory, or the Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, was developed by Frederick Herzberg (Islam & Ali, 2013). The two-factor theory suggests there are varying levels of dissatisfaction in the workplace because two different types of stimuli are used to generate the emotional state of the level of dissatisfaction. Motivation addresses factors that contribute to employees' satisfaction with their jobs, and hygiene addresses those factors that are extrinsic to the work itself. To understand the level of dissatisfaction, one must understand what drove the employee to leave their jobs. To add further clarity to the Herzberg's two-factor theory, I also used Gilbert's behavior engineering model to assist with explaining the processes used to mitigate employee turnover. Gilbert's behavior engineering model (Richey & Klein, 2014) suggests that behavior is directly related to the character of the individual and the environment. Gilbert suggested that there are six conditions of behavior: data, instruments, incentives, knowledge, capacity, and motives. For performance to occur, all six of these conditions must be present. To improve



employee performance, managers must use the six conditions to develop a strategy. This framework could facilitate understanding the findings from the study since the ultimate goal is to identify different strategies to mitigate turnover in the human services special needs field.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Employee retention:* Employee retention refers to human resource programs for management staff to identify and maintain talented employees that are dedicated to the specific organization (Idris, 2014).

*Human services:* Human services refers to social services designed to provide human needs. Human services is identified by six key elements: the provider, the recipient, the environment, the organization, the need, and the method (Zins, 2001)

*South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDDSN):* The SCDDSN is a state agency that provides services to individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities (SCDDSN, 2015).

*Turnover:* Turnover is the measurement of the percentage of employees leaving an organization over a selected period of time given in a ratio (Russell, Humphreys, & Wakerman, 2012).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

In this section, I identify assumptions affecting this case study, as well as limitations of the current study and its delimitations, or breadth.

**Assumptions**

Assumptions are sentiments that I cannot control, but are relevant for the success of my study (Simon, 2011). One assumption was that the participants answered the interview questions respectably and honestly. Another assumption was that the selected managers in the human service field have the full knowledge to prevent high turnover rates due to their success at minimizing high turnover. The third assumption was that proper management is key to eliminating turnover in the human services industry.

**Limitations**

Areas of potential weaknesses that I cannot control are known as limitations (Connelly, 2013). During the interview process, certain questions were asked to get the participant to drive the study content. The first limitation would be the unwillingness for participants to discuss certain information based on their understanding of turnover, and how it is being handled by organizational leadership. Another limitation could be the potential risk of bias in the method. The third limitation would be that the information obtained was restricted to managers in the human services special needs profession.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations, according to Garg and Van Weele (2012), refer to the scope and extensiveness of the study. The study is delimited because it does not include employees outside of the human service industry. Other industries and regions are not included in this study. Participants are from specific counties in South Carolina. However, information provided in the study may have merit for other organizations throughout other regions.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study into mitigating employee turnover in the human services (special needs) industry would provide greater insight into the causes of the alarming turnover rates. With the employee turnover rate in the human services special needs industry growing each year, it is important to research ways to mitigate this rate.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The results of this study should provide an in-depth understanding of strategies for mitigating employee turnover. The findings can identify strategies business leaders can implement to address organizational concerns. Employers may be provided with different ways to mitigate employee turnover. The intent of this study is to identify strategies employers can use to mitigate employee turnover. Understanding these strategies can assist employers in knowing why they are not maintaining qualified employees and provide tools they can use to retain them.

To address turnover, organizations must explore compensation, opportunity and advancement, rewards and recognition, relationships between the supervisor and coworkers, training and development, communications, meaningful work, and work schedules (Arnold, 2016). By mitigating employee turnover, organizations can retain experienced employees, reducing costs for training new employees (Bradberry, 2009).

### **Implications for Social Change**

The human services special needs industry is a growing industry within communities. The clientele of the industry is individuals who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. Most recently, more states are depopulating institutionalized

settings, and creating more home and community-based settings (National Council on Disability, 2015). As a result of a federal mandate to increase person-focused (consumer-focused) environments, there has been a dramatic increase in demand for employees. The positive social change resulting from this study may be that decreasing employee turnover helps keep businesses profitable, which would allow communities to grow and prosper. Economically, jobs may remain in the community with the potential for creating more jobs.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The goal of this multiple case study was to explore strategies managers in the human services special needs industry used to improve or mitigate employee turnover. As a researcher, I must possess the objective to improve, or add to, the knowledge of a specific discipline (Kruth, 2015). Lambert and Lambert (2013) discussed the purpose of a literature review as analyzing, recognizing, and understanding literature produced by scholars. This section includes the literature review process of reducing employee turnover.

### **Herzberg's Two-Factor (Motivation-Hygiene) Theory**

Herzberg's two-factor theory was used as the main conceptual framework in this study. The two-factor theory, or the Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, was developed by Frederick Herzberg (Islam & Ali, 2013). The two-factor theory suggests there are varying levels of dissatisfaction in the workplace, because two different types of stimuli are used to generate the emotional state of the level of dissatisfaction. Motivation addresses factors that contribute to the employee to be satisfied with their jobs and

hygiene addresses those factors that are extrinsic to the work itself. To understand the level of dissatisfaction, one must understand what drove the employee to that state.

Herzberg developed strategies to determine employee satisfaction (Band, Shah, & Sriram, 2016). There is a difference in employee satisfaction and what caused dissatisfaction amongst employees (Carter, 2018). A study was conducted to better understand the attitudes and motivation of employees (Sankar, 2015). Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory was developed as a result of a study conducted to determine workplace factors that caused satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Herzberg's study included engineers and accountants from Pennsylvania (Sankar, 2015). The 200 participants were asked to share their work experiences that made a negative or positive impact on the job (Herzberg et al., 1959). The results showed that job dissatisfaction is directly related to the working environment, job satisfaction, and job content (Herzberg et al., 1959). The results also showed that hygienic and motivational needs were primary, which led the researchers to conclude that the two are the leading factors in job satisfaction (Carter, 2018). Herzberg (1974) concluded the factors that affect job satisfaction and dissatisfaction differ.

Understanding the hygienic factors that could produce job dissatisfaction is important for employers (Herzberg, 1974). The hygienic factors are those that produce extrinsic rewards when employees perform a specific job duty (Hauff, Richter, & Tressin, 2015). Hygiene factors are (a) supervision, (b) interpersonal relations, (c) working conditions, and (d) salary (Kim, Kim, & Heo, 2016). When these factors are not present, there is a likelihood of job dissatisfaction. Alfayad and Arif (2017) asserted that when the

hygienic factors are present, it may not increase job satisfaction, but it will reduce job dissatisfaction for employees. In short, job dissatisfaction will decrease significantly when hygiene factors are present in a work environment (Vijayakumar & Saxena, 2015). Voluntary employee turnover will reduce as employee job dissatisfaction is reduced (Chen, Brown, Bowers, & Chang, 2015). Turnover intentions are directly related to the motivation of employees.

The next factor in Herzberg's theory is motivation. Motivational factors that lead to job satisfaction are known as intrinsic rewards (Hauff et al., 2015). These motivational factors are (a) achievement, (b) recognition, (c) work itself, (d) responsibility, (e) advancement, and (f) growth (Herzberg, 1974). The absence of these factors will lead to job dissatisfaction. The motivational factors are related to job content. When these motivational factors are evitable to employees, management will see positive attitudes causing job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Employee retention is improved because employees are satisfied with their current roles (Terera & Ngirande, 2014).

Employers must understand what motivates employees to work, in an effort to reduce turnover (Msengeti & Obwogi, 2015). Researchers have used Herzberg's two-factor theory to understand what influences people to work, decrease job dissatisfaction, improve employee retention, and mitigate employee turnover (Damij, Levnajic, Skrt, & Suklan, 2015). Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by hygiene and motivation (Herzberg, 1974). The study was based in Slovenia, and they used 273 employees. The results of the study showed the factors that motivated employees were salary, prestige, good working conditions, positive employee relationships, and personal

growth (Damij et al., 2015). Damij et al. (2015) researched what motivates employees to work using the two-factor theory. Employee turnover is reduced with job satisfaction is high and employee retention is improved (Rose & Raja, 2016).

Employee turnover can be affected by the salary and environment. A study was conducted with the basis of pay and working conditions directly affecting employee retention (Msengeti & Obwogi, 2015), which is consistent with Herzberg's two-factor theory. Msengeti and Obwaogi (2015) concluded that employee retention was influenced by salary and work environment. Employee retention rates were much higher when workers are compensated for their work and conditions are good. This ultimately means that employee turnover was low. MsenOni-Ojo, Salau, Dirisu, and Waribo (2015) used the two-factor theory to examine how employees viewed job incentives and satisfaction. The researchers chose 121 employees to participate in the study. The employees were a combination of management and non-management. The researchers determined that employees worked better with financial incentives externally and that incentives cause employees to feel valued by the organization.

### **Stressful Work Environments**

The stressful nature of working in the human services industry is key to the high turnover in these agencies (Callahan, 2014). The turnover in the industry ranges from 19%-33% annually (Callahan, 2014). The human services special needs industry is a part of multiple industries, including healthcare and long-term care. As a result, similar concerns with working conditions affect employees' desire to leave (Kramer, Halfer, Maquire, & Schmalenberg, 2012). Work environments that were not empowering to

employees produced a greater desire for them to leave (Gruss, McCann, Edelman, & Farran, 2004). Gruss et al. (2004) examined the working environments of higher care units in the long-term care environments and the exposure to higher amounts of stress.

Working conditions significantly affect the mental health of human services special needs employees and their desires to leave an organization (Zhang, Unruh, & Wan, 2013). In the human services special needs industry, an employee deals with a number of problematic behaviors (e.g., physical aggression, self-injurious behaviors, etc.). Workplace aggression can lead to stressful working conditions, and the adverse outcomes for the employees can be serious (Dellasega, Volpe, Edmonson, & Hopkins, 2014). Van Dyck (2013) discovered aggressive working environments increased work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, and turnover intentions.

### **Employee Retention**

The factors that contribute to employee turnover should be understood in order to fully understand employee retention. Cho and Lewis (2012) noted that the highest turnover rates belong to both new and retirement-eligible employees. Proposition-tangibles and intangibles play a part in why employees leave agencies. Proposition-tangibles are pay and benefits, and intangibles are supervisor, relationship, work-life balance, work content, career path, and management trust (Oladapo, 2014). The organization and its human resources (HR) office affect its retention rate by how it administers its talent management program (Oladapo, 2014). Oladapo (2014) detailed how good hiring practices of qualified and motivated candidates are the start to effective retention practices. Beginning with the hiring process and continuing throughout the



lifecycle of employment is the management of organizational talents. Leaders should identify their top talent positions and those employees who possess the potential to be groomed to fill those positions when available (Kello, 2014). When an employee is invested in an organization, it makes it easier for leaders to build talent for upper-level positions. When employees are identified by leadership for their effort and are shown the company is invested in their future, it gives them the confidence to remain with the organization (Kello, 2014). In short, this improves employee retention.

Employee retention is impacted by a healthy work environment (Gothard & Austin, 2014). Managers and employees are more likely to invest in a company that have some sorts of incentives (Korsakiene, Stankeviciene, Simelyte, & Talackiene, 2015). Employee satisfaction is influenced by good working relationships, the ability to maintain work-life balance, and competitive financial incentives (Korsakiene et al., 2015). Warshawsky and Havens (2014) suggested knowing more about the satisfaction of managers in their current roles and understanding the career plans of their employees will help build an effective succession plan.

Many things impact employee turnover. To impact employee turnover, organizations provide candidates with a plan for continued success. Companies must prioritize selecting the right leadership team and to shape the culture of the organization, since this directly affects turnover. HR managers must rise to the occasion of overcoming the intent of employee turnover (Long & Perumal, 2014). Organizations must be proactive, and not reactive, when it comes to employee turnover (Kello, 2014). When organizations have an effective succession plan, it may identify gaps of internal and

external candidates. Karevli (2012) argued that external candidates bring fresh ideas, knowledge, and new perspectives to companies.

### **Employee Turnover**

There are many factors that lead to employee turnover. Miminoshvili (2016) described how workers move in and out of an organization, and the rate at which this occurs, as employee turnover. *Intent to quit*, *intent to leave*, and *turnover intention* are terms that are used in conjunction with each other (Memon, Salleh, & Baharom, 2016). There has been great research about employee turnover; however, a theory depicting its behavior has not been identified (Shin, Koh, & Shim, 2015). Factors in turnover can include optional retirement, leaving a position, and termination (Clausen, Tufte, & Borg, 2014), as well as burnout (Thomas, Kohli, & Jong, 2014) and work hours (Mitchell & Zatzick, 2014). Quartey (2013) expressed that all organizations should expect turnover, but it is the responsibility of that organization to keep the rate minimal.

Turnover occurs in organizations for many different reasons. Senior leadership must look at compensation, opportunity and advancement, rewards and recognition, relationship with the supervisor and coworkers, training and development, communications, meaningful work, and flexible work schedule (Arnold, 2016). Two factors of employee retention are professional respect and job satisfaction (Bang, 2015). A leader must be effective in keeping employees interested in the work and give them outlets when work is becoming a lot (Bradberry, 2016). Brown (2016) developed the following themes that helped discover ways to reduce turnover: engagement and management support, education and career development, teamwork and work

atmosphere, recognition, relationship building and communication, and health reform and innovation. A common theme of why turnover occurs are a dissatisfaction in the quality of work and pay rate.

Organizations are now starting to research how and why employees are leaving organizations. Shipp, Furst-Holloway, Harris, and Rosen (2014) analyzed employee's experiences and how it relates to reasons they decided to leave. Shipp et al. (2014) went further to note the differences in those that left and returned, and those that left and never returned. The writer concluded the employees who left did so because of how they were treated by employers, lack of pay, and other work opportunities.

Turnover can be broken down into two different types. Renaud, Morin, Saulquin, and Abraham (2014) established two types of turnover: functional and dysfunctional. An employee that provides little to no value to the organization deciding to leave is known as functional turnover (Renaud et al., 2014). Dysfunctional turnover occurs when a valued employee decides to leave their position (Renaud et al., 2014). The health and sustainability of an organization is directly impacted by turnover (Wynen & de Beeck, 2014). Harhara, Singh, and Hussain (2015) pointed out that turnover is impacted by individual, organizational, and environmental factors.

Employees often leave organizations due to a lack of leadership, or the strength in leadership (Jain, 2013). How an employee views the actions and behaviors of management influences their intention to leave (Rahman & Nas, 2013). Ladelsky and Catana (2013) details how voluntary turnover, loss of enthusiasm, and dissatisfaction proves the inadequacies of organizational leadership. Employees are more likely to

remain with organizations when they are given challenging tasks, and the necessary training needed to complete them (Matsuo, 2015). When employees feel appreciated, workload is manageable, good work environment and content with roles, the turnover rate is more likely to decline (Duxbury & Halinski, 2013). Turnover is reduced when employees feel as if they are a valuable asset to the organization (Islam, Khan, Ahmad, & Ahmed, 2013). Leaders that recognize the reasons for turnover are able to reduce turnover, improving the impact on the budget.

### **Cost of Employee Turnover**

The cost of employee turnover has been a steady rise, and it directly impacts the productivity and profitability of the organization (Khoele & Daya, 2014). When an employee decides to leave an organization, it impacts to productivity (Alhamwan & Mat, 2015). Leadership has been focused on ways to increase revenue and decrease expenses (Huffman, Casper, & Payne, 2014). Turnover costs, staff development, and the decline of knowledgeable workers are all concerns for leadership (Khoele & Daya, 2014). Leadership must recognize that these concerns exist and develop strategies to improve them.

Employee turnover can negatively impact organizational costs. All managers must be able to manage the cost of employee turnover (Huffman et al., 2014). Management must keep in the mind cost of recruiting, hiring, and training replacements of those who have left the organization, when developing the annual budget (Nazir, Shafi, Qun, Nazir, & Tran, 2016). The knowledge of those employees that have left play a part in the cost of employee turnover (Renaud et al., 2014; Singh & Sharma, 2015), and training those new

employees (Sharma & Namabudiri, 2015). The cost of turnover is impacted by paying out accrued vacation time, agency fees, advertising openings, relocating new employees (if applicable), and new hire orientation (Harrison & Gordon, 2014). Business leaders must develop ways to retain valuable employees, which would reduce turnover cost.

Business managers must continue to develop ways to increase employee retention to reduce the cost for hiring, training, and turnover (Marasi, Cox, & Bennett, 2016). Shareholder value will increase when managers are keeping turnover cost to a minimal (Renaud et al., 2014). Wei (2015) details how the cost of risks and loss of human capital lessened when employees are satisfied with their organizations. This was explained in the research. Wei (2015) used the person-organization fit (P-O fit) to understand better ways to engage employees, ultimately causing employee retention to increase.

Organizational costs dramatically increase when turnover is high (Cheng & Waldenberger, 2013). Organizations must rapidly reduce turnover (Nazir et al., 2016). Organizations that retain their current workforce, have seen a reduction in their recruiting and training costs (Laudicina, Moon, Beck, & Morgan, 2014). Hiring costs have reduced with the use of the Internet, as it reduces the cost of recruiting (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). Inabinett & Ballaro (2014) also noted when employees beliefs and values are in alignment with their job duties, it reduced turnover. Organizations are seeking and hiring experts that leave competitors (Renaud et al., 2014). When expert level employees leave organizations, it leaves lasting effects on the business.

## **Effects of Employee Turnover**

Employee turnover has a negative impact on all organizations no matter the industry (Jenkins-Nelson, 2019). The consequences of employee turnover impact the different levels of the organizations, executives, work units, and groups (Hausknecht & Holwerda, 2013). Recruitment efforts must be enhanced to pique the interest of diverse, qualified applicants (Grzenda & Buczyński, 2015). There are direct and indirect cost related to excessive turnover in an organization (Pang, Kucukusta, & Chan, 2015). These types of cost are (a) separation, (b) recruitment/advertising, (c) referral cost and agency fees, (d) cost for reference checks and medical check-ups, and (e) hiring costs (Pang et al., 2015). Junchao, Lee, Mitchell, Horn & Griffeth (2016) discovered the cost of recruiting and training new hires range from 90% to 200% of the salary of a former employee. Employee turnover can produce lower profits and likelihood of survival and retaining employees has to be vital (Wareham, Smith, & Lambert, 2013). In an effort to retain employees, managers can use different avenues to determine why the turnover happened.

In a study conducted by Grissom and Mitani (2016), they used 525 school district employees to investigate work decisions and turnover intent. Grissom and Mitani (2016) determined the turnover rate for superintendents in Missouri school districts was approximately 20%, where more of them left the profession altogether. Having to constantly search for superintendents raised concerns for school district boards, which showed excessive turnover. Annual compensation was one of the main factors for superintendents moving to new positions. Superintendent salaries in rural districts was

much lower and were a major factor in the consistent turnover and intentions (Grissom & Mitani, 2016). Leadership talent shortages in rural districts were caused by a combination of low pay and turnover; leadership focused on different methods to attract qualified personnel into superintendent positions to assist in the inconsistencies (Grissom & Mitani, 2016). Employee turnover could be reduced by changing some HR practices, such as rewards, recognition, and training (Ferreira & Almeida, 2016). According to Tae-Yung and Shaw (2013), when experienced employees leave, the organization suffers because of the loss of accrued human capital.

In another study, conducted by Garner and Hunter, the interviewed 105 clinicians. This study measured work attitude to how clinicians responded to various changes that occurred over time. Garner and Hunter (2014) compared job satisfaction to the psychological climate of supervisor support, and how it impacted turnover and turnover intentions. Garner and Hunter (2014) concluded that turnover impacts organizational focus on employee attitudes like turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and how it can reduce employee turnover. Decreased organizational performance directly impacts high employee turnover (Tremblay, Haines, & Joly, 2016). Boros and Curseu (2013) concluded when an employee resigns, it costs organizations about the annual salary said employee. When employee turnover is high and consistent, it reduces staff morale, which negatively impacts the quality of products and services, and causes customer satisfaction and company profit to decline (Pang et al., 2015). In short, when employee morale is high, employee turnover will decline.

In a study conducted by Wendsche, Hacker, and Wegge (2017), they examined the relationship between understaffing and turnover intentions. The results showed understaffing contributed to the increased rate of employee turnover. When an organization is understaffed the workloads increase, professional interactions reduce and lower job satisfaction (Wendsche et al, 2017). Employee turnover caused a costly quest to replace qualified professionals, which could extend up to 125% of the annual salary for that employee (Wendsche et al, 2017). When new hires come onboard, there are losses that result in exponential increases in per capita hiring, workloads increase for the remaining team members, and it can cause tenured staff to leave or apply for early retirement (Kurnat-Thoma, Ganger, Peterson, & Channell, 2017). Job stress and employee turnover intention will both decrease when organizations reduce understaffing and work-life imbalance (Ahmad & Omar, 2013). The dynamics that drive employee turnover, or voluntary termination, are adjustable (Kurnat-Thoma et al., 2017). Staff retirement and death are two natural causes for turnover. Garner and Hunter (2014) acknowledged additional research is needed to develop strategies to reduce the extent staff turnover adversely impacts as a result of stress on the remaining staff.

### **Strategies of Reducing Turnover**

When a business retains employees, it contributes to its success (Lussier & Corman, 2015). Business leaders should be more proactive in their approach to learn strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover more than looking into why employees are leaving the organization (Selden & Sowa, 2015). Saha (2014) discovered the reasons for voluntary turnover are career opportunity and higher salaries. The greatest effect on



voluntary turnover is the growth of salary (Olsen, Orr, Bell, & Stuart, 2013). When wages grow, there is a reduced impact to voluntary employee turnover with qualified employees (Schaefer & Simpkins, 2014). When wages are increased, and bonuses are offered, employees were found to remain in an organization longer (Cain, 2017). As the employees remain, the quality of work improves throughout the organization.

Organizations must change their focus to retain quality employees. Qualified employees remain with an organization long term based on levels of appreciation. They have different preferences such as a desire for more cash versus benefits package (Cain, 2017; Olsen et al., 2013). A reason an employee may leave an organization is their relationship, or lack thereof, with management and coworkers, and stress in their current roles (Gialuiss & Coetzer, 2013). Employers must be willing to make their employees feel valued and engaged, which comes from listening to the employees (Boyas, Wind, & Ruiz, 2015). Employers must review every aspect of the organization to ensure they maintain qualified employees.

An organization's vision, values, and policies must also include voluntary employee turnover strategies (Ozmen, Oner, Khosrowshahi, & Underwood, 2013). Watty-Benjamin and Udechukwu (2014) and Ozmen et al. (2013) concluded employers often fail to fully understand why employees are leaving. The lack of professional development, inadequate compensation, unfair treatment, and poor working environments and conditions are causing some employees to leave organizations (Yoon Jik & Poister, 2014). Employers must take the time to fully engage with their employees. If not, employee turnover will continue to rise.

The proof that organizations need to develop strategies for voluntary employee turnover is there is high voluntary employee turnover (Boxall, Hutchison, & Wassenaar, 2015). Turnover can be mitigated by implementing strategies for voluntary turnover, but it takes willing organizational leaders (Ozmen et al., 2013; Yamamoto, 2013). The lack of diversity has become a reason for many employees leaving organizations (Boxall et al., 2015). A strategy to reduce voluntary employee turnover is having diversity in the workplace (Ozmen et al., 2013; Yamamoto, 2013). Organizations should ensure diversity in gender, age, and race (Richard, Kirby, & Chadwick, 2013). Oftentimes, organizations employ a person to a certain job based on the worker's culture (Gialuiss & Coetzer, 2013). However, Peltokorpi, Allen, and Froese (2015) did find that employees are hired by their job skills and not culture.

Cain (2017) found that job embeddedness is defined as the manner of job onboarding and the surrounding community. Organizational leaders can develop strategies to increase the commitment of employees based on the concepts of job embeddedness (Boxall et al., 2015; Richard et al., 2013; Yamamoto, 2013). Voluntary employee turnover reduces in an organization that has the commitments of its employees (Gialuiss & Coetzer, 2013; Richard et al., 2013). Employee commitment will be increased as employers develop practices to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Cain (2017) and Paillé (2013) determined the strategies that may reduce voluntary employee turnover are in performance, recognition, compensation, job security, training, and development opportunities. Employees are motivated by different factors, and it is revealed through interaction (Allen & Shanock, 2013). When compensation, job security,

promotion, and a challenging work environment are present, these organizations have shown a decrease in voluntary employee turnover (Meuris & Leanna, 2015).

Organizations that present different competitive practices are more likely to enhance the quality of its employees.

### **Training and Development**

Promoting a healthy culture in any organization begins with training and development. Effective training can influence the level of confidence in employees as it relates to difficult working environments, and shape diversity in the workplace (Holladay & Quiñones, 2008). Employee competence is directly related to successful implementation of a strategic training program (Long & Perumal, 2014). Organizations can only be successful with a proper training program (Long & Perumal). The writer suggested that employee competencies are dependent on solid foundational training program. Leaders must ensure the right people are in place with training before employees assume their positions (Hall-Ellis & Grealy, 2013). Leaders participate in the training process, as it enhances the information with the presentation of real-life examples or experiences.

An effective opportunity for employees to learn would be hearing experiences from leaders (Thomas & Kamalanabhan, 2012). The change within an organization can be related to the overall training of an employee and personal growth from learning through a career (Hall-Ellis & Grealy, 2013). Establishment of mentoring programs by leaders can be used to develop goals, encourage idea sharing and provide feedback

(Craig, Allen, Reid, Riemenschneider, & Armstrong, 2012). Leaders should encourage employee mentorship program to develop a strong level of comradery.

There are benefits to management when knowledge is transferred from leaders to employees and from employees to leaders (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012). Training and development are activities assigned by management that are knowledgeable (Durst & Wilhelm). Assets related to knowledge and intellect are valuable to any management team (William & Schaefer, 2013). The writers concluded that the value that is generated from employees' knowledge and the sharing of information among the different employees and departments help develop the best operational practices.

The success of an organization is predicated on leaders' ability to increase the sharing of knowledge (Hau, Kim, Heeseok, & Kim, 2013). Knowledge-sharing is achieved when an intellectual stimuli is provided by one individual to another resulted in a logical response (Horaguchi, 2014). Employment, mentoring and shadowing, and development of a knowledge management system is the process in which knowledge is shared (Winship, 2012). Individuals gain access to new resources and broadens their skill enhancement through development programs. (Parker, Johnson, Collins, & Nguyen, 2013). Employees cannot be effective by completing more work with less training (Hagel, 2013). Knowledge management ideologies are needed in order for insight to be provided by leaders (Andreeva & Kianto, 2012). Knowledge-sharing can only be facilitated when leaders provide the proper time and training (Connelly, 2013). Organizational leadership is key to the success of the different tiers of employees.

## **Organizational Leadership**

Organizational leadership is the building of collaborative partnership that will provide assistance in the creating and management of succession planning (Zepeda et al., 2012). The conceptual framework that guides this particular study is organizational leadership theory. In an effort to meet the long-term goals of an organization, new transformational leadership must adapt to SP (Bass, 2009). Gundersen, Hellesoy, & Raeder (2012) posited three behaviors that are associated with transformational leadership: (a) inspirational motivation; (b) individualized consideration; and (c) intellectual stimulation. A transformational leader is one who can gain the interpersonal trust, common loyalty, and long-term reciprocity with supervisors (Tse, Huange, & Lam, 2013). The ability to empower leaders to influence followers' engagement at work is evidence of transformational leadership (Breevaart et al., 2013). Considering a positive link between work engagement and performance, individual resources and work engagement may be critical in explaining the transformational leadership performance link (Hayati, Charkhabi, & Naami, 2014). A transformational leader is one that through modeling, shows their enthusiasm and inspiration (Hayati et al.). Tse (2013) describes transformational leadership as one that occurs when organizational interest exceeds the self-interest of employees. The writer determined by introducing social change between the organization and employees, it will lessen the intent and behavior to produce employee turnover.

Bass and Bass (2009) discussed how conditions affect the managers and leaders who influence an (a) organization's environment, (b) the team, (c) the technology and

task, (d) levels of stress, (e) distance, (f) closeness, (g) leadership succession and (i) transfer of executives. Authority is defined as the power one possesses to validate tradition, law, agreement, religion, and rights of succession (Bass & Bass, 2009). Bass and Bass stated that there a situation that may mold an incoming leader from the previous leadership, which would involve resolving problems they may inherit. As a key part of the stakeholder group, the successor must find an effective blend of well-timed mentorship (Wang et al., 2004). Succession planning consists of four factors: (a) development of successor, (b) influence of predecessors, (c) intergenerational relationships, and (d) advice received from management (Wang et al., 2004). An effective succession plan will ensure there is not a lapse in proper management of the organization.

### **Management**

Employee turnover takes a significant toll on an organization. Turnover increases cost directly and indirectly. Biron and Boon (2013) stated the direct cost occurs in recruitment and selection training, and the indirect cost is the loss of knowledge and reduced productivity. Turnover may occur as a result of the leader-member exchange (the relationship between colleagues and supervisors; Biron & Boon, 2013). An attempt to reduce turnover can occur if leadership works to create transparency and integrate an approach to succession management (Jantti & Greenhalgh, 2012). Jantti and Greenhalgh (2012) further discussed leadership development through articulating opportunities, expectations, and self-improvement opportunities in existing roles.

Managers are successful when they provide logical options that are consistent with sound metrics and standards (Winchell, 2013). Executive dismissal is more likely to

happen when there is poor individual and organization performance (Hilger, Mankel, & Richter, 2013). Executive wages and the removal of senior leaders are increased in underperforming industries (Gao, Harford, & Li, 2012). In these same industries, turnover can occur as penalty for underperforming (Gao et al., 2012). Turnover occurs in organizations that have unstable leadership because it disrupts the continuity of business (Ganu & Boateng, 2012). The instability of leadership is a key that the succession plan was ineffective.

Succession management is enhanced when succession-based efforts are aligned with strategic planning (Gothard & Austin, 2014). Leaders must plan for the uncertainty (fraud, executive succession, and risk management) in preparation for the future (Lewis, 2015). Sinkin and Putney (2015) developed four major phases of internal succession: (a) evaluating the talent currently in the organization, and determining what additional talent is needed; (b) talent development through generic competency development, firm culture-specific development or mentoring; (c), and proper financial arrangements by admitting new partners and buying out retiring partners; and (d) establish a transition plan for partnered positions, and execute it when they retire.

Organizations thrive when they have leadership development programs to develop future leaders from their current employees (Miodonki & Hines, 2013). Off-site training, 360-feedback, participants filling out instruments, executive coaching, mentoring, real-world situations to problem solve, and application of knowledge planning are all components of leadership development (Coloma, Gibson, & Packard, 2012). Leadership development must be ongoing for all staff in order to continue meeting organizational

needs and potential challenges (Keenan et al., 2014). The succession plan and the succession decision are a part of the leadership role (Whaley & Walker, 2014). Executives should allow the next generation of leaders to foster economic value, and create positive social change (Ganu & Boateng, 2012).

Changes in work conditions and how employees respond to changes are factors in organizational downsizing (Boyd, Tuckey, & Winefield, 2014). According to Brauer and Laamanen (2014), downsizing is reducing the number of people an organization accomplished through hiring freezes, attrition, and layoffs. Hansson (2015) encourages management to reduce the effects of downsizing caused when there is a lack of knowledge, skills, and ability to fill positions when employees are retained.

There are tool managers can use to keep employees up to date on their performance. Using performance review systems allows employers to identify talent pools within the organization. Performance feedback is intended to help employees improve work-related behaviors that are measured by the observer (Cavanaugh, 2013). Organizational leadership can use performance review systems to measure team members and production. Many organizations used the 360-performance review system to measure the job performance of employees. The 360-performance review system provides stakeholders with performance data systematically collected on an individual or group (Akhtar, Nath, & Kalita, 2014). A multilevel approach is taken when using the 360-performance system to obtain feedback (Rodarte, 2017). The effectiveness of the 360-performance system is predicated on the users, and variances within the structure of the organization are revealed. There are some weaknesses within the 360. The 360 is time-



consuming, subjective, and can vary between stakeholders (Merla, 2018). There is a similarity between the 360 and Scorecard methods. Both tools target performance indicators (Rodarte, 2017). Some business leaders use both methods for various purposes, depending on the organizational weighting. The Scorecard method also uses performance indicators and available degree of information (Martin, 2013). Employees are scored based on definitive metrics that are aligned with the objectives developed by organizational leadership. Scorecard method reduces subjectivity. Scorecard method measures production over feedback.

### **New Hires**

The hiring process consist of many steps, to begin the onboarding process vacant positions must be identified and job descriptions must be created (Dwoskin, Squire, & Patullo, 2013). The HR department must develop a well-written job description, to ensure all candidates understand what is expected in the positions. Employment satisfaction depends on a clear understanding of job details, more like to reduce employee turnover. Once potential employees understand job details, they will apply and receive an interview. Interviews are an important step in the hiring process because it is where potential employees learn about the organization, and it builds a good foundation for potential long-term employees. Asking the right questions is critical to a successful interview (Dwoskin et al., 2013). A successful interview is one that provides a clear view into the organization, because the interview is the earliest point where a candidate can connect with the organization.

There are many features that play an essential role in the hiring process. In today's society, social media is one of those features. According to Perez, Silva, Harvey, and Bosco (2013), social media is used by HR professionals to enhance employee satisfaction and to boost employee retention. Employee satisfaction and how it works to reduce turnover are both a part of the organizational strategy (Woods, Johanson, & Sciarini, 2012). These two will give insight on strategies needed to improve the hiring process.

### **Onboarding**

An important component of the recruiting/onboarding process is engaging candidates to the organizational structure. Most organizations have constraints to their fiscal budget and planning. A successful branding of an organization attracts candidates. The recruiting process shows candidates the cultural values of the organization. The recruiting process includes the job descriptions, interviews and staff development classes. Employee turnover and succession are directly impacted by the candidate selection process.

As an organization succession plans, they have to ensure compliances with all legal and ethical laws. Oftentimes, compliance with the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Civil Rights Act, and Anti-Discrimination laws causes an uneasiness amongst some leaders. Effective SP begins with onboarding and staff development. An organization that truly develops their employees provides a pool of good quality candidates for future advancement. HR departments must provide effective oversight for developing job descriptions, interviewing, developing employees and managing

performance. A crucial part of the hiring process is interviewing and fully understanding what can and cannot be asked (Dwoskin et al., 2013). Leaders must be trained effectively to ensure compliance with all laws and on the importance of screening candidates with qualities for the job. When interviewing candidates, it should provide a view into the organization and its vision for the future. Providing this view into the organization will increase the likelihood that a candidate will draw on that experience when advancement opportunities present themselves.

Employee turnover rate decreased, causing productivity and profitability to increase, when organizations possessed comprehensive recruitment, selection, training and development (Armstrong, Flood, Guthrie, Liu, MacCurtain & Mkamwa, 2010). When organizations identify the need to fill a vacant position, they must ensure there is an adequate job description in place (Dwoskin et al., 2013). An adequate job description provides elements that are essential to the job and focus to the screening process. When a job description is thorough and precise, it makes the candidate selection easy because there is understanding of what skills they should possess. Similarly, when a job description is clear, candidates are more likely to remain with the organization for a longer period.

The reliability and validity of the candidate selection process is vital to the success of the organization (Woods et al., 2012). The consistency of qualified employees relies on the reliability of the selection process and the validity of selection tools. The selecting and screening of qualified candidates is the first step in succession planning. Organizations must develop strategies for retaining quality employees. Sims (2014)

mentioned the importance of building a strong internal bench of quality employees; it reinforces employees to remain invested and loyal to the organization. A talented internal bench increases the likelihood of top talent employees remaining with the organization. Gray (2014) discovered the employee engagement and career advancement are major components of organizational succession. When employees know there is plan for them to be continuously successful, it reduces employee turnover. When the right leadership or management is in place, it shapes the outlook of the organization, and it impacts employee turnover. Long and Perumal (2014) documented how human resource managers anticipate the turnover intentions of employees, and how to overcome it with human capital. There is a strong partnership that must be in place between the hiring managers and HR professionals. Their partnership should be in alignment with organizational strategy.

### **Work-Life Balance**

Work-life balance plays an integral role in employee retention and satisfaction (Jain, 2013). Employees experienced satisfaction with their jobs when they feel they are a valued part of the organization versus those who are not acknowledged as such (Scanlan, Meredith, & Poulsen, 2013). Jain found that employees are more inspired and empowered when they work in an environment that is energized. An energized workplace reduces employee absences and turnover (Aisha & Hardjomidjojo, 2013).

The support of leadership of a work-life balance to achieving a work-life balance plays an essential part in employee retention (Malik, Butt, & Choi, 2015). Employee productivity and motivation positively impacted employee independence (Mas-Machuca,

Berbegal-Mirabent, & Alegre (2016). Mas-Machuca et al. further discussed when employee autonomy increased, work-life conflict decreased substantially, the work-life balance improved. Employees can choose their work processes, and it improved the balance between work and life. Work-life balance that is supported by management produces work-life synergy. Results from trials showed when synergy was present, employees were more comfortable in their positions, and showed organizational pride (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016). Flexible work hours, management support, and employee autonomy are essential parts of productive work-life balances.

Flexible work practices are a part of ensuring a productive work-life balance. Flex career, flex time, flex leave, flex place, and job sharing are considered flexible work practices (Idris, 2014). Although these are essential practices, they do not provide enough aid for work-life balances (Wichert & Steele, 2013). Idris stated HR managers do not understand flexible practices.

When employees feel appreciated by management, it reduces stressors, and consider the work environment as positive one (Markey et al., 2015). Employees that feel trusted, equal and respected are more likely to remain with an organization for a longer period (Harrison & Gordon, 2014). Hammond, Cleveland, O'Neill, Stawski, and Jones (2014) concluded that the support of management of work-family balance is reflected in enrichment, and it reduces work-family conflict.

### **Succession Planning**

The culture of the organization, along with employee retention and branding, are key components of succession planning (SP). Organizational culture is cultivated through

SP initiatives. Those initiatives, which includes recruiting, training, developing, performance management, and retention, are critical to the success of the organization (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). For companies to successfully manage human capital, they must establish performance management tools. These tools must be in alignment with the organizational strategy. Green and Roberts (2012) defined human capital as a combination of skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual. Shen (2011) discovered the reasons for employee turnover are related to organizational culture. This culture includes communication, lack of accountability, and definition of employee roles and responsibilities. Leaders play a role in the cultural context in the workplace (Renihan, 2012). Renihan discussed the five succession-related practices for PepsiCo, including: (a) identification; (b) development; (c) promotion; (d) movement; and (e) retention. Employees are more willing to invest in an organizational culture that is employee focused. Employee behavior and improved performance are linked to being satisfied with the workplace environment.

An organization that has devoted employees is more like to accept change easier. Employees have to trust their leader to produce a greater quality of work. Organization citizenship behaviors (OCB) are those behaviors that goes beyond work requirements and impact work performance (Tillman, Lawrence, & Daspit, 2014). OCB is broken down into five dimensions: (a) altruism; (b) conscientiousness; (c) sportsmanship; (d) courtesy; and (e) civic virtue (Zehir, Muceldili, Altindag, Şehitoglu, & Zehir, 2014). Employee that engage in helping behaviors simultaneously increases their loyalty to the organization (Tillman, Lawrence, & Daspit, 2014). Tillman, et al. determined an employee that is

willing and possesses the ability to embrace variations from normal activities, improves working performance. Zehir et al. determined the relationship between leadership, OCB, and the ethical climate shows how today's organizational climate ranges from ethical to unethical.

A talent rich organization should be the main purpose of SP (Gray, 2014). The marketing of an organization is key to the onboarding process. Organizations must appeal to people across multiple generations by branding the organization. Organizational branding influences how a product is viewed based on social and economic status and identity. Organizations must ensure their brand and marketing are relevant and appeal to as many customers as possible (Kotler, 2012). The success of a business is predicated on having the right people doing the right things (Alter, 2013). Branding will differ from organization to organization. When the organization culture shows the willingness of a company to groom internally, it increases employee retention.

Employee retention is critical to the success of any organization (Mishra, 2010). Companies that have employee retention strategies in place will improve employee loyalty (Croteau & Wolk, 2010). As society becomes more electronic based, it does pose legal and ethical implications in the employee screening and selection process. Perez, Silva, Harvey, and Bosco (2013) makes references to the potential for a claim of discrimination is what employers face that use the internet searches to screen applicants. Most companies are searching internally which is improving employee retention. Organizations must adhere to anti-discrimination laws when screening and selecting

candidates electronically. By doing such, it ensures the organizational strategy is in alignment with being an equal opportunity employer.

To remain competitive, organizations must appeal to an age-diverse population (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011). Organizations are having to develop strategies to expand diversity to include age. Diversity should be visible in all levels, including executives (Munyon, Summers, Buckley, Ranft, & Ferris, 2010). Organizations should show a level of transparency to their employees by displaying their organizational succession plan. Corporate continuity is maintained when organizational leadership is transparent with its succession plan. Corporate continuity is impacted with high rates of employee turnover. Outsider succession, follower succession, and contender succession are three distinct types of turnover (Barron, Chulkov, & Waddell, 2011). Organizations can benefit greatly if there is a willingness to develop additional transparent SP. Alignment of strategy and diversity can be shown if an organization is willing to share the succession plan with an employee, affecting employee retention.

### **Transition**

Section 1 included an overview of the doctoral study. Section 1 included the purpose statement, nature of the study, research question, and interview questions. Other areas that were discussed were the conceptual framework, operational definitions and the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The significance of the study and an overview of potential themes and phenomena related to my study was included.

The objective of Section 2 of my study is to describe my familiarization with strategies managers use to mitigate turnover. I describe how bias is eliminated and ensure



ethical practices. These practices will be ensured when interviewing and documenting results, and when collecting, organizing, analyzing and reporting data. Section 2 will be concluded when I discuss reliability and validity.

The findings of my research will be detailed in Section 3. I will compare themes that developed when producing my findings. A comparison will also be made with the results of other peer reviewed studies. I will show the benefits of social change from my findings and establish recommendations for future research. Finally, I will conclude by reflecting on my experience with the doctoral study process.

## Section 2: The Project

The target group for this study included managers in the human services special needs industry. These managers can influence and establish effective strategies to mitigate turnover. I conducted interviews with eight current and former managers in South Carolina who have experience with strategies to reduce turnover and retain employees. This section includes the research method and design, data collection instruments and techniques, data organization techniques, ethical procedures, and reliability and validity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that successful managers in the special needs human services industry use to mitigate employee turnover. The targeted population consisted of eight current and former managers and executive leaders of the human services industry who have successfully implemented strategies to mitigate employee turnover. The geographical location of the study was the southeastern region of the United States, specifically South Carolina. The implications for positive social change include the potential to retain employees in the human services field and decreasing the turnover rate. The benefit of retaining these employees would be keeping qualified employees working versus searching for other jobs. The community would benefit from the diverse population of people in the community and the resources being in place to integrate the special needs residents into the community.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In this study, I gathered and analyzed data from the study participants. As a residential director, I serve with or know participants in the area of the research. The participants were current and former managers in the human services (special needs) industry, who do not have a reporting relationship influencing their participation. No one currently employed by the agency I currently work for will participate in this study, due to the potential conflict of interest.

Advancing the understanding of social problems is one of the purposes of qualitative research. Cooley (2013) stated a purpose of qualitative research is to improve social circumstance. Xu and Storr (2012) concluded that research data can be provided through skilled observation and interviews. I conducted one-on-one interviews with participants and used Walden-approved disclosures and interview protocols outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were management staff within the human services (special needs) field. According to Darvis and Zahra Najafi (2014), qualitative research is a collaboration between researcher and participants provides the results of findings. The criteria for participating in the study were: (a) persons who are managers in the human services industry, (b) persons who oversee the hiring process within the human services industry, (c) persons who have been successful in minimizing high turnover, (d) or management staff working with the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs.

## **Research Method and Design**

Retention of employees in the human services special needs field is partly dependent upon how employees are engaged within the organization. In order to promote a better working environment, it is key to understanding the underlying causes for employee turnover (Saunders, et al., 2015). Investigating a contemporary phenomenon in real-world context is one of the reasons to conduct case study research (Yin, 2018). I considered multiple research methods and designs but selected the qualitative case study.

### **Research Method**

I considered multiple methods of research: quantitative, mixed methods and qualitative. Using a quantitative method would only have allowed me to look at the different relationships between different aspects of the turnover rate, whereas qualitative research provides the opportunity to explore and understand the social world (Alexander, 2014). Quantitative methods focus more on numerical data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Using a mixed method approach was the initial choice, but I decided against it because of the desire to develop strategies to reduce the alarming turnover rate. Using a qualitative study would allow me to present research results and different strategies used to achieve these results. The purpose would be to convey studies that show different ways for the retention rates to decrease. With the purpose of this study being to gain an understanding of the strategies managers use to keep employees motivated and satisfied in order to eliminate turnover, it was more appropriate to use the qualitative study method. Utilizing the qualitative methodology gave me more freedom to explore different ideas to promote a better working environment (see Saunders et al., 2015).

## **Research Design**

The research design is key to any doctoral study. However, for this doctoral study, I chose to use the case study design. Case study researchers use it to help provide understanding this real-world case of the turnover rate in the human services field. Yin (2014) discussed using case study research to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in real-world context, to present boundaries between phenomenon and context and to use different data collection features. This research design is useful when determining whether the theories and models work in the real-world. Using the case study design allowed me to focus on the specific theory.

## **Population and Sampling**

A sample size of six to 10 participants is adequate depending on the methodology chosen. However, Yin (2014) emphasized that saturation is more important than the sample size and determined that interviews should continue until there is no new information being collected. Qualitative researchers provide justification of samples on the data quality; information gathering may be stopped dependent on redundancy or data saturation (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014).

## **Ethical Research**

Ethical research is key to a study, but it includes more than committee approval (Jackson, 2013). Qualitative research ethics are related to the ethical parameters of research (Jackson, 2013). Therefore, I developed a consent form related to the aspects of the study. In the study, participation was voluntary and confidential. Those who participated in the study could withdraw at any time via phone per disclosure. Informed

consent, confidentiality, and respondent validation are data gathering instruments according to the ethical standards protocols (Brewis, 2014). There are many strategies to protect personal information, including secure data storage methods, removal of identifier components, and use of pseudonyms (Sandjari et al., 2014). For example, I identified participants with numbers to safeguard their identity. Protecting all participants in a study is a responsibility of researchers. Researchers should protect participants from consequences that may affect them as a result of participating in the study. Data for this study were stored on a secure system and will be kept for a period of no more than 5 years. The Walden IRB approval number for this study was 03-03-20-0671515.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Choosing instruments to be used during data collection varies depending on the type of research methodology. Conklin (2015) discussed how data collection can occur through various instruments: observations, narrative reports, interviews and reviewing of relevant documents. I am also an instrument of data collection. Researchers are to take advantage of unexpected opportunities and display appropriate actions against bias procedures (Marshall, et al., 2013). For this study, I collected the data myself using an interview protocol (see Appendix A) and an electronic device to capture interview content to transcribe. The semistructured interview protocol I followed included a set of open-ended questions (see Appendix B) about the research topic to gather data (see Bromley et al., 2015).

In the data collection stage, the researcher is responsible for defining a concept to design, interview, transcribe, analyze, verify and report any themes. A qualitative

researcher is also responsible for demonstrating that the results are valid. Lub (2015) defined validity as the degree the indicators or variables to research are measured and represented accurately; being characterized as authentic, adequate, plausible, and neutral.

Before collecting data, I met with each organizations' Human Resources departments. I obtained HR documents pertaining to interviewing to ensure compliance of their policies. The documents reviewed were obtained from the organizations where interviews were allowed, and from the SCDDSN. The documents included employee turnover data, employee satisfaction surveys and other related documents presented in Board and Commission meetings.

Triangulation, member checking, and transcription connects purpose to paradigm (Lub, 2015). Yin (2014) defined four types of triangulation: data source, analyst, theory, and method, and stated validity of a case study is strengthened by data triangulation. I conducted face-to-face interviews and recorded each interview. After each interview, I reviewed notes and transcripts in order to determine themes to achieve method triangulation in the study.

Member checking uses feedback from participants, data collected, categories, interpretations and conclusions of the study (Lub, 2015). Data were gathered by conducting face-to-face or telephonic interviews. Interviews were transcribed, and their specific contributions were provided by me. I reviewed each interview and make corrections. All corrections were sent to each participant via email. Achieving member checking can only be accomplished by having the participant verify my understanding of the interview. Following up with each participant through member checking to efficiently

code and organize data is my responsibility. Data saturation will be achieved when there is sufficient information and no new information or themes are attained. All interviews followed the same interview protocol (Appendix A).

### **Data Collection Technique**

The most common form of data collection in a qualitative research is interviewing. Interviewing provides the opportunity for me to collect data (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) showed the ability to extract relevant information from interviewing participants under conditions of data saturation is representation. The research objection is accomplished by getting the right amount of data from the interviews (Marshall et al., 2013). I used the individual interviews, and audio recording to capture the interviewees' input.

Xu and Storr (2012) stated in qualitative research, an advantage of data collection is the flexible treatment of protocol forms that are approved by ethics boards. Not understanding saturation is a potential disadvantage to data collection. Saturation is a term that resulted from grounded theory; however, it was adopted by qualitative researchers without a data collection method (Cleary et al., 2014). Adequate data collection can be determined by identifying themes across and between groups (Cleary et al.). If data saturation is not met, I will use snowball sampling. Fusch and Ness (2015) defined snowball sampling as the selection of additional candidates from the targeted population with the assistance of those selected participants. Yin (2013) defines four types of triangulation: data source, analyst, theory, and method. Yin further states triangulation exists, and greater confidence can be placed in the findings when the



method design collects overlapping data. Data source and method strengthen the validity of a study (Yin). Methodological triangulation was used in this study.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Research can be protected by several strategies (Sanjari, et al., 2014). I will use Microsoft Word and Excel to document my doctoral study research. Sinkovics and Alfodi (2012) expounded upon using Word to document interview transcripts, reports, and other documentation, and it will be used to develop a project file. I recorded interviews in person and telephonically. I also collected notes and safeguarded all documentation. Physical data will be stored in a locked cabinet until the study is completed. Upon completion, all digital documents will be transferred from my laptop, which is password-protected, to an electronic storage device and stored in the locked cabinet. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) explained that the qualitative research journey will provide opportunities for science to be further developed. All collected data will be stored on an external hard drive that will be secured in a locked cabinet and retained for a period of 5 years.

### **Data Analysis**

In a doctoral study, it is essential to analyze data and capture its results (Lub, 2015). According to Yin (2018), a case study should have a sample size of at least six to 10, however, the data saturation is more important than the sample size. Qualitative researchers must justify samples of data quality and be attentive to data saturation (Cleary et al., 2014). Sinkovics and Alfodi (2012) discussed the challenge of data complexity and trustworthiness with qualitative studies as it relates to qualitative data analysis. As a

researcher, it is important to eliminate biases within documentation and data analysis (Cooley, 2013).

As the researcher, it is important to remember that both the participants and researchers will have biased views that will present in all social research (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The bias was addressed through data collection and data saturation. According to Fusch and Ness, a direct link exists between data triangulation and data saturation. Data saturation is only reached when enough information is present to replicate the study, and the ability to obtain additional information is attained with no further coding is feasible (Fusch & Ness).

Telephonic and/or face-to-face interviews were recorded, transcribed, and data for themes coded. Method triangulation was used with interviews, audio recordings, and transcripts. Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) presented several kinds of software to aid in coding data analysis and presented ways for me to evaluate research design by keeping notes, developing thematic coding schemes, and building a casebook. I coded and analyzed the data using Microsoft Office. I used Excel as the tool to sort the data into thematic categories. These categories provided support to the central research question for this study of strategies human services managers may take to mitigate employee turnover. The strategies were identified under the title *Mitigation Strategies*.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are used to establish trust or confidence in qualitative research (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

**Reliability**

Reliability and objectivity of qualitative research have been increasingly criticized and has resulted in increased interest in methodological standards (Lub, 2015). Reliability of the study was ensured by preparing detailed notes of each interview. Lub stated that consistent and complete documentation in qualitative research ensures the reliability of the study.

The consistency of the study process over some time develops dependability (Laintz, 2015). Thomas and Magilvy (2011) suggested having an audit trail that will contribute to research dependability. The audit trail described the purpose of the study, discuss how and why the participant was selected, identification of the data collection methods, explanation of data analysis, presentation of research findings, and description of techniques used. In this study, I conducted interviews, and shared the purpose of the research and how the participants were selected. I transcribed audio recordings, conducted data analysis, and documented themes and findings.

**Validity**

The degree to which indicators of a concept are measurable is known as validity (Lub, 2014). There are several methods for obtaining validity in a study. Selecting participants from different organizations will ensure validity. Laintz (2015) stated transcribing data and comparing the recorded audio, before finalizing the study, is a form of validity.

Credibility is established when I reviewed the transcripts and identify the themes across the participants (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Credibility allows others to recognize

the experiences through the participant's understanding (Thomas & Magilvy). I reviewed all transcripts and notes to identify data saturation or triangulation. Data saturation is reached when data is gathered and nothing new is added (Marshall et al., 2013). Saturation occurs when no further information is collected from new data, and the interview process will be concluded at this point (Cleary, et al., 2014). Saturation was determined by using the interview questions and the participants' answers and comparing the data from each. The snowball sampling was used to ensure data saturation. Additional participant's referrals were requested by the existing participants.

Findings that relate and can be transferred to other contexts by researchers; this process is known as transferability (Laintz, 2015). Transferability can be established by describing the population that is being studied using demographics and geographical boundaries (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). I chose to interview managers from two different organizations within the human services special needs industry. Thomas and Magilvy discussed a term confirmability and stated it is determined when credibility, transferability, and dependability have occurred. Confirmability was accomplished using the Walden interview protocol, data collection and transcribing, conducting thematic analysis, and documenting results within the study.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 included my familiarity with organizational strategies to mitigate turnover. My ethical practices were detailed for the interviewing process and reporting of research results. The collecting, organizing, and analyzing of the data was explained. Finally, I gave an overview of how I would establish reliability and validity.

Section 3 will include a presentation of my research findings. All emerging themes from my findings will be compared to themes developed in other studies to either confirm or dispute the results. The results will be from literature on sound business practices. This section will include implications of social change, and how my study will benefit it. I will also identify recommendations for future research. Finally, I will reflect on my experience with the Walden DBA doctoral study process, and a conclusion statement.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that human services special needs managers used to mitigate turnover. I selected human services special needs managers from two organizations in South Carolina who had firsthand knowledge of employee turnover and ways their organizations reduced it. The central research question guiding the study was: What strategies do human service managers use to mitigate turnover? I reviewed organization HR documents, including employee turnover data, employee satisfaction surveys, and other related documents presented in board and commission meetings. I conducted in-depth semistructured interviews with managers who had spent at least 1 year in a managerial position at the human services special needs organizations. Eight interview questions were used to gain an understanding of effective strategies used to mitigate employee turnover. Each participant received and reviewed consent forms before the interviews, and provided their consent, indicating their willingness to participate by responding to the invitation e-mail. I was able to determine three themes from the semistructured interviews. After analyzing the data, the results indicated a requirement of sustainability and productivity for the organization is retention strategies. The contents of the literature review and the conceptual framework of this study are aligned with my analysis of the responses.

#### **Presentation of Findings**

During the interviews, to build a trusting relationship with the participants, I openly discussed the doctoral study and my expectations. The participants were given the

opportunity to ask questions, and answers were provided to ensure participants understood their role in the research process. The interview protocol was followed as outlined (see Appendix A). The interview protocol provided opportunities for greetings, introductions, description of the interview and member checking, and how confidentiality and participants' privacy would be upheld.

A semistructured interview was the best method for the participants to share their experiences related to employee turnover, the impact it had on the organization, and the strategies used to mitigate turnover. The participants were able to discuss how they contributed to the reduction of employee turnover. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. I then sent the transcriptions to the participants, as a part of member checking technique, to ensure accuracy. Member checking is used to engage participants during the data analysis phase of research (Alexander, 2014). Member checking was used to eliminate any possible misinterpretation. The three themes that transpired from the data analysis were: (a) employee compensation, (b) employee job satisfaction, and (c) positive working environment.

### **Participants**

The eight participants in this study were management staff within the human services (special needs) field. The criteria for participating in the study were (a) persons who are managers in the human services industry, (b) persons who oversee the hiring process within the human services industry, (c) persons who have been successful in minimizing high turnover, or (d) management staff working with the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs. Participant P1 had 3 years of management experience and

had worked in the industry for 12 years. P2 had worked in the industry for 17 years, and was a manager for 9 years. P3 had 24 years of experience in the human services special needs industry, and had been employed in management for 13 years. P4 had 2 years of management experience and had worked in the industry for 3 years. P5 worked in the human services special needs industry for 14 years, with 5 of those years being in management. P6 had 2 years of management experience but had worked in various positions in the industry for 6 years. P7 had 3 years of experience in a management role and had worked in the industry for 7 years. P8 worked in the industry for a total of 10 years, with 3 years in management.

### **Themes and Subthemes**

The semistructured, in-depth, interviews were conducted over an 8-day period. The participants were able to discuss how they contributed to the reduction of employee turnover. The following themes emerged during the interview process: employee compensation, employee job satisfaction, and positive work environment. The theme of employee compensation included the subthemes of performance bonuses and longevity raises. The theme of employee job satisfaction included the subthemes of employee input and commitment. The theme of positive work environment included the subthemes of open-door policy, leadership, and motivating and encouraging employees. The first theme of employee compensation emerged after all of the participants discussed their difficulty maintaining quality staff due to the low pay for the direct care positions, compared to organizations within the same community. All but one of the participants discussed how direct care staff felt undervalued by leadership, hence the second theme,



employee job satisfaction. All of the participants conveyed how difficult it is to maintain employee morale when they are poorly paid and not feeling valued. The participants expressed that providing a positive working environment is difficult, and the work environment has an ultimate impact it has on the clients.

### **Employee Compensation**

After I had interviewed all eight participants, the theme of employee compensation emerged. Employee compensation consists of salary wages and incentives. All of the participants discussed how if employees were better compensated, they would be more susceptible to continue working in the human services special needs industry. P3 suggested that if employees received better pay, they would easily comply with tasks given for them to complete, and they would be more content with the work they do. P1, P3, P4, and P5 all agreed that giving proper compensation shows appreciation for the employees. This is not congruent with Herzberg's theory of motivation, and he did consider compensation a motivating factor. P5 stated,

The organization implemented benefits and reward high performing staff.

Promotions are given based on evaluations and performance. Staff are sent to various trainings in other cities to improve their working knowledge. Employees receive compensation when someone they refer is hired, and completes their initial 90-days. As employees are properly compensated, they deliver high value services to the individuals that receive the services they provide.

Employee compensation coincides with job satisfaction. All participants agreed that, although compensation is not the only reason for employee turnover, it is one of the

top three reasons. P5 was the only participant to refer to compensation as more than hourly pay, describing it as including paid annual, holiday and sick leave. Employee compensation is in accordance with the conceptual framework.

P4 discussed how it was not fair for employees to be tasked with high demand jobs but not feel the level of appreciation from those in the executive management team, especially some of the managers. P4 stated:

I think that everybody does a specific job. So, I think that the raises given should be given across the board. This should be done because you have direct support staff making as much as some supervisors. That is not fair to the supervisors.

P5 stated that recruitment benefits were implemented within the organization, along with a plan to reward high performing staff. P5 further stated,

Employees received promotions based on evaluations and performance. They also offer all types of training opportunities for staff and faculty to help improve their performance. The recruitment benefits and promotions based on evaluation and performance have provided a great incentive for employees to stay onboard.

P1 discussed how staff would complain about the salary received and wondered why employees could not receive salary increases or bonuses for their superior performance. P5 discussed how the organization used to provide bonuses to staff based on their Employee Performance Management System (EPMS). The EPMS is an employee evaluation, and if they received an excellent or superior rating, the employee would receive a bonus. There is often a tendency to take specific pieces of provided

feedback, good or bad, and translate them to being how the employee typically work. P5 stated that their organization stopped providing the bonuses due to budgetary issues.

Employee job satisfaction increases through recognition and advancement. Herzberg's motivation factors are important to the job satisfaction and retention. There was consensus among the participants that compensation is the top reason direct support professionals are not remaining with human services special needs organizations. The strategies discussed by P2, P6, P7, and P8 are in accordance with Herzberg's two-factor theory. P3 and P4 suggested that organizations are not doing enough to retain quality staff members. All of the participants expressed concerns with leadership not ensuring compensation was competitive with surrounding companies.

### **Employee Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction was another theme that emerged from the participants' interviews. All eight participants expressed concerns with staff feeling satisfied in their jobs. P1 expressed that staff were dissatisfied with their jobs due to the pay and felt unappreciated by management. P5 explained how the relationships between staff and their managers are integral to employees being satisfied with the work they performed. P7 stated the importance of employees expressing their concerns to management, and not being penalized.

Providing employees with the tools needed in order to be successful in their roles is important. Employees are more satisfied when they know their managers and organizations care. P5 explained,

My organization provides staff with counseling services to help with emotional and psychological issues. They also offer work-life balance programs that help with childcare and elderly care resources and referrals. They provide parenting resources, tips and tools for balancing work and family, post-employment assistance for six months after separation from job, and they also have a program called Take the High Road, which is a transportation reimbursement program. They offer health and wellness programs, which consist of referrals from personal trainers, nutrition, diabetic nutritionists, smoking referrals, and substance abuse program referrals.

Several participants stated that one strategy used to reduce employee turnover involved including employees in the decision-making process and linking this process to job performance.

Job performance is critical to understanding the level of employee commitment, and what motivates employees to quit an organization (Wnuk, 2017). P6 discussed how ensuring staff are working together contributed to job satisfaction with staff. As staff need a break while working, P7 discussed stepping in to complete some of the work responsibilities. P7 desired to create a team working environment among staff and management.

Job satisfaction is related to employee turnover. In research, people working in human services positions have expressed their satisfaction by committing to the organization and lower turnover intention related to stress-related issues (Berlanda, et al., 2017). Wnuk (2017) elaborated on how supervisors are an integral link with their

subordinates. Supervisors are responsible for creating a high-performance atmosphere, relationship development, performance monitorship, employee motivation and evaluate job performance.

### **Positive Working Environment**

After interviewing all eight participants, a positive working environment was a theme that emerged. The participants emphasized employees thrived in a positive working environment. Managers should create and maintain a positive working environment. A positive working environment reduces turnover and improves employees' perception of the organization. P5 and P7 mentioned the importance of creating a positive work environment between leaders and employees. Creating a positive environment, can determine an effective strategy used to reduce employee turnover. A positive work environment promotes dignity, inclusion, respect, and trust. The environment is one that establishes relationships that works towards a common goal between both leaders and employees (Sarwar, 2017).

P7 explained the importance of having an open-door policy for employees. The policy creates a welcoming environment and improves teamwork. P4 explained to lay a foundation of a favorable environment, managers must be willing to listening to concerns. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory is in alignment with maintaining a positive working environment. Herzberg et al. (1959) explained the importance of creating work conditions where employees feel respected. Positive benefits for the organization are the result of the positive working environment. P2 expressed how leaders have the ability to create a positive culture for new and seasoned employees.

Leadership contributes to the creation of a positive working environment. P2, P3, P4, P5 and P8 expressed how a positive working environment includes leadership engagement. P6 explained the importance of creating a positive working environment but is not limited to job satisfaction. A positive working environment has an effective level of communication and understanding employee issues. The organizational cultures should identify with those of employees and support a positive work-life balance (Jnaneswar, 2016).

Several participants identified motivating and encouraging employees as a strategy to reduce employee turnover. Managers have a responsibility to create a positive working environment and develop personal strategies that allows for that environment to be established. P5, discussing how creating that environment starts with the hiring process and hiring the right people for the job, stated,

We (as managers) must have a better understanding of people's lives outside of the work environment. Employees must be praised. A job well done goes very far. The presence of training and enrichment in order to keep employees in the know, is a plus. When an employee knows their job, it makes them want to be better at it, and learn more.

All eight participants emphasized the importance of supportive leadership, and how it influences a positive working environment, ultimately reducing turnover. Higher levels of performance, increased employee personal growth and leveraging their strengths and talents are all factors that create a positive working environment. P5 expressed the

importance of hiring the right people, and have the right perspective presented to all employees.

The hiring process is the first place where potential employees learn about the organization. In this stage, it is important to convey expectations of the employee upon being hired and ensure the candidate can fulfill all of the job requirements. Autonomy and positive work environments are created when employees are empowered by the organization. Spivack and Milosevic (2018) expressed a positive work environment increases the probability to encourage a state of meaning, employee capability, autonomy, and motivation to fulfill job performance because they enjoy doing the job.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The findings of my study apply to human services special needs managers by identifying effective strategies to mitigate employee turnover. The specific business problem is that some human services special needs industry managers lack strategies to mitigate employee turnover. Managers should possess certain characteristics in order to develop competent employees. These characteristics are important for the human services special needs industry, and possibly for other industries. The themes found in this study pertain to practices managers develop to minimize employee turnover and retain quality employees. Results of this study support strategies to reduce turnover and improve employee retention due to compensation, job satisfaction and working environment.

A result of the findings showed compensation, job satisfaction and working environment are critical to mitigating employee turnover. These strategies might aid human services special needs managers in developing or enhancing organizational

strategies to reduce employee turnover and improving employee retention. Practices must be implemented by transformative leaders to make their employees feel valued and engaged, which comes from listening to the employees (Boyas, Wind, & Ruiz, 2015).

Leaders must be aware and understand how turnover impacts the organization. Business leaders must understand there are actions they can take to positively impact retention by implementing bonuses or salary increases, increasing opportunities to receive employee input and to encourage employee commitment, and motivating employees. Acknowledging successful retention strategies will benefit the organization by saving valuable time and finances it would ultimately take to replace team members. The information obtained from the participants is not only valuable to leaders, but also to the employees. The goal of this research findings was to provide greater insight into the need to retain direct support professionals in the human services special needs industry, especially as it continues to expand. Understanding the results of my study will provide tools and strategies managers can use to reduce turnover in the profession.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The findings of this research have several implications for social change, potentially benefiting the employees, businesses, and the surrounding communities. By implementing the strategies identified in this study, organizations may precipitate social change within the organizations by implementing changes to organizational policies and procedures. These changes may contribute to positive social change by retaining valuable employees, which will reduce unemployment rates and compensation. As the organization maintains employment and increases in size and productivity, additional



employees may be needed, positively impacting the local employment rate. By reducing unemployment, the opportunity for increased funding in other areas of need such as improved roads, schools, parks, and services in the community may be provided in the form of additional taxes received by the local and state governments. The stable workforce within the organizations may enable opportunities for employees to perform community services projects in the surrounding area, such as beautification projects, community clean-up, and various drives to provide for needs of the local population.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Strategies to mitigate employee turnover are vital for organizational leadership who have the desire to improve employee retention which improves the productivity, work quality and performance, and improve profitability. Based on this study's findings, I present tangible strategies to reduce employee turnover in an effort to improve client satisfaction, work environment and organizational performance. I recommend human services special needs managers consider strategies to retain quality employees that can mitigate employee turnover and improve performance outcomes. The participants of this study shared personal information on practical strategies to reduce employee turnover including (a) employee compensation, (b) employee job satisfaction, and (c) positive working environment.

My first recommendation would be for human services special needs industry leaders to improve employee compensation. All eight participants noted employee compensation as a cause to employee turnover in their organization. P1 discussed how staff would complain about the salary received, and wondered why employees could not

receive salary increases or bonuses for their superior performance. P5 discussed how the organization used to provide bonuses to staff based on their EPMS. This is a common practice, and these organizations should determine ways to return to rewarding staff with monetary gifts for good and improved work performances.

Second, I would recommend leaders focus on improving employee job satisfaction as a practical strategy to reduce employee turnover. All eight participants expressed concerns with staff feeling satisfied in their jobs. P1 expressed staff dissatisfaction with their jobs due to the pay, and feeling unappreciated by management. P5 explained how the relationships between staff and their managers are integral to employees being satisfied with the work they performed. P7 stated the importance of employees expressing their concerns to management, and not being penalized. It is determined manager and employee relationships play an integral role in job performance. Although other reasons were mentioned, the relationship between management and employee was most common amongst all participants. Managers should be more intentional with building relationships with their team. Managers can discuss with HR to develop relationship building strategies. Executive leaders are recommended to hold managers accountable for strengthening their relationships with those they supervise.

Finally, I recommend managers apply a positive working environment as a viable strategy to mitigate employee turnover. Creating a positive working environment where employees are comfortable and feel appreciated will increase the desire for season employees to remain with the organization. All eight participants expressed how staff often feel unappreciated by upper management, which causes friction in the workplace.

All participants stated when the work environment is tense, staff are more likely to call out and/or resign from their positions. Therefore, executive leadership and middle-level managers must assess the working environment for improvements. Based on the study's findings, leaders must improve work-life balance, reduce stress, improve compensation, improve staffing, celebrate employees, and allow employees to speak freely about concerns. As previously stated, leaders should work with HR to develop a plan to effectively address staffing concerns. Working environments may be improved by implementing employee recognition and appreciation programs.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies human services special needs industry managers used to mitigate employee turnover. The information was gathered after conducting interviews with eight participants. These participants were managers within the human services special needs industry with a variety of years of experience. As the researcher, I relied completely on their working knowledge and experience with reducing employee turnover in their organizations. Future researchers could expand the number of participants, and the number of organizations the participants were employed. By increasing the number of participants and organizations would provide a more rounded outcome of strategies managers can use to reduce employee turnover and retain quality employees.

I based my study in South Carolina, and only requested participants from two organizations. Future research could be conducted in a different state or geographical region. There are possibilities that differences in culture may have a significant impact on

the findings. Conducting research in a different area may present different knowledge pertaining to an organization's willingness, or capabilities, to retain quality employees. Most human services special needs organizations receive funding from state and federal governments. Funding differences among states might contribute to differences in findings related to compensation.

### **Reflection**

The doctorate journey with Walden University, specifically the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) route, was challenging and rewarding. Over the course of this journey, I have moved two times and worked two different roles. Although I am well past my original completion date, this experience has increased my capacity and level of resilience with achieving personal goals. As I embarked in the human services special needs industry, my passion for understanding various strategies used to mitigate employee turnover increased as a result of the importance of the work these employees perform daily. As a manager, employees would often come to complain about compensation and not feeling appreciated for the work they did day to day. The results from this study mirrored those concerns and gave other areas employers should pay more attention to in an effort to reduce turnover. After conducting this study, I have a greater understanding of reasons employees remain with certain organizations for a number of years, and why some leave after such a short period of time. As a result, I will incorporate some of the strategies revealed by the managers that participated in this study to assist in mitigating employee turnover within my organization.

## **Conclusion**

A reduction in employee turnover is critical for the human services special needs industry. It is important for managers to retain quality employees as it will improve the quality of care received by the clients they serve. Organizations that have a lack of strategies will have a more difficult time maintaining quality employees, improving employee morale, and reducing poor job performance. The participants of this study shared personal information on practical strategies to reduce employee turnover including employee compensation, employee job satisfaction, and positive working environment.

Human services special needs leaders are encouraged to put appropriate measures in place to satisfy their employees. One organization examined in this study attempted to enhance employee satisfaction in various ways, although it appeared the other reduced measures. Employees who are poorly compensated are more likely to actively search for a better salary, than those that are appropriately compensated. Although compensation is an integral part of employees being satisfied with their jobs, there are other factors that were discovered. The relationships between staff and their managers are integral to employees being satisfied with the work they performed. It is also important for employees to have the freedom to express their concerns to management, and not being penalized. When employees feel appreciated and are compensated appropriately, it improves the work environment.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

### **Interview:** Strategies to Mitigate Employee Turnover in the Human Services Special Needs Industry

- A. The face-to-face interview will begin with introductions and an overview of the research topic.
- B. I will thank the participant for participating in the study, and I will ensure them that I am respectful of their time.
- C. The participant will be reminded of the recorded interview, and the conversation we are going to have will remain confidential.
- D. Before the interview begins, the recorder will be turned on, and the participant's identifying code, along with the date and time of the interview will be announced.
- E. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes to obtain responses to nine interview questions.
- F. The concept of member checking will be explained by me to ensure each question is thoroughly explained, and confirmation of the participant's answer that is recorded as intended by contacting participants via email with transcribed data, and verification will be requested for accuracy of the information collected within five business days.
- G. Once recorded answers are confirmed to the participant's satisfaction, the interview will conclude with a genuine thank you for their participation in the study.

## Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Questions

1. What is your current job title and how long have you worked for this organization?
2. What do you know about the turnover rate of your organization?
3. How has your organization evaluated the causes of employee turnover?
4. What strategies are you using to mitigate employee turnover?
5. What changes have your organization made to mitigate employee turnover?
6. Of the changes you just stated, which have proven to be the most successful?
7. How has your organization supported the successful strategies for mitigating human services special needs employees' turnover rates?
8. What additional information can you provide on your organizations efforts to mitigate employee turnover?