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Emotional Self-Awareness Strategies Public Sector Managers Use to Reduce Voluntary Employee Turnover

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, Argosy University, 2009

BA, Georgia State University, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

Retaining experienced and knowledgeable employees is a challenge for public sector managers. Voluntary employee turnover is problematic for leaders in the public sector because their organizations incur increased costs of recruiting and training new employees who replace those who leave. Grounded in Goleman's theory of emotional self-awareness, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to identify and explore public sector middle managers' strategies for using emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Participants were five public sector middle managers with a minimum of 3 years of experience in their current position who used emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and by reviewing the organization's documents on employee turnover. A thematic analysis process resulted in four themes that reflect the key components of managers' self-awareness strategies: efficient communication, leadership style adjustment, supportive management, and conflict management. A key recommendation for managers is to leverage their emotional self-awareness in developing and maintaining effective relationships with their employees. The implications for positive social change include the potential to provide public sector managers with effective strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover, stabilize economic growth by reducing the amount of taxpayer dollars spent on recruiting and training new employees, and improve the service quality customers receive.

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Dedication

The Doctoral process was challenging, and I would not have been successful without putting God first. I dedicate this Doctoral research study to my parents, Mr. John Mason, Sr. and Mrs. Maeola Mason, who taught me to never give up on my goals. You taught me that I could be anything I wanted to be and inspire others to do the same. You always showed me unconditional love and never stopped believing in me. Words cannot express how much you mean to me and how much I appreciate everything you have done. I love you.

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"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," Philippians 4:13

First and foremost, I thank God for blessing me to reach this prodigious accomplishment. I endured many obstacles on this Doctoral journey, but my faith in God and encouragement and support from family, friends, peers, and others I met along this journey helped me overcome those obstacles to accomplish this goal. I want to thank my parents for their never-ending inspiration, encouragement, and support. I want to thank Jacqueline Harris, Bridget Thomas, Arthur Hamilton, Jessica Green, and Charlene Krueger for uplifting and motivating me when I was not sure that I could or wanted to complete this journey. I want to thank Javonah Buffins, who began this journey with me as a classmate and became a good friend. We genuinely listened to each other, encouraged each other, uplifted each other, and made each other laugh during tough times. I cannot thank you all enough for your invaluable support.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee turnover is a critical issue in public sector organizations that negatively affects the organization's overall expenditures and ability to deliver needed minimum services (Dutta & Khatri, 2017; Sun & Wang, 2016). Because of the high cost associated with voluntary employee turnover, researchers and practitioners have dedicated attention since the early 1900s to understand why public sector employees leave their jobs (Kim & Fernandez, 2017; Lee, 2018; Sun & Wang, 2016). However, public sector managers struggle to retain experienced employees (Lee, 2018; Singh, 2019). To retain employees, managers may consider the application and influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on organizational commitment. EI is highly associated with organizational commitment (Amjad, 2018; Rechberg, 2019). Emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to remain committed to their organizations compared to individuals with low EI (Amjad, 2018). Individuals can use EI to control their feelings and emotions in the workplace (Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017; Narayan & Narashiman, 2015). EI includes emotional self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, empathy, and social awareness. Based on the current challenges that public sector managers face in retaining experienced employees, additional research on effective retention strategies could aid managers in reducing voluntary employee turnover.

Background of the Problem

Organizational success depends on retaining a productive and effective workforce. However, little attention has been paid to employee retention strategies (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017), and even less attention has been paid to employee retention

strategies in public sector organizations. Researchers found that voluntary employee turnover negatively impacts a company's sustainability because the loss of essential employees results in loss of productivity (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017) and knowledgeable employees (Chiat & Panatik, 2019; Sun & Wang, 2016), and increased costs from recruiting and training new employees (Purba et al., 2016). Managers must develop effective retention strategies to remain competitive and provide quality services to customers.

Incorporating EI, specifically emotional self-awareness, into employee retention strategies helps managers in retaining valued employees. EI is an individual's ability to manage their own emotions and feelings and recognize and respond to other's emotions and feelings (Shooshtarian et al., 2013). EI can aid public sector managers in reducing employee turnover by effectively handling continuous customer interactions (Guy & Lee, 2015), stressful work demands (O'Connor et al., 2017), organizational challenges (Ugoani, 2015), and bureaucracy (Vasilieva & Rubtcova, 2017). I explored how public sector managers use emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Problem Statement

Retaining employees is critical for managers in public sector organizations (Sun & Wang, 2016). Intrinsic to this concern is an understanding that emotional self-awareness decreases voluntary turnover among employees (Hosain, 2019; Lee, 2017). In 2018, the annual turnover of public sector employees in the United States totaled 1.3 million (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). The general business problem is that high employee turnover increases an organization's costs of recruiting and training new

employees and decreases the number of knowledgeable employees and employee morale. The specific business problem is that some public sector middle managers lack emotional self-awareness strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to identify and explore public sector middle managers' strategies for using emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The targeted population consisted of five public sector middle managers from one agency throughout the state of Georgia, with a minimum of 3 years in their managerial role who, using emotional self-awareness strategies, have reduced voluntary employee turnover. This study could improve the quality of services, public goods, and governmental services such as housing and food assistance while reducing the amount of taxpayer dollars spent on recruiting and training new employees.

Nature of the Study

The three types of research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). I chose the qualitative method to gather essential information by asking questions during face-to-face interviews. Researchers use qualitative research methods to explore the use of strategies through integrated, evidence-based interventions (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). Quantitative researchers describe a specific population and attempt to examine variable characteristics and relationships (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Mixed- method researchers combine qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a thorough assessment of the participants' responses and a deep understanding of statistical

relationships (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). I chose not to use a quantitative or mixed-method because I did not seek to characterize variables or examine relationships among variables.

I ruled out phenomenological, ethnographic, and narrative designs in favor of the case study design. The phenomenological research design focuses on the personal meanings of participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). I did not explore the personal meanings of specific lived experiences, so a phenomenological design was not appropriate. Using an ethnographic design mandates the researcher to observe groups' culture(s) while being immersed in the participants' culture(s) over a prolonged period (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I ruled out the ethnographic design because I was not exploring a specific group's culture. Using a narrative research design requires the researcher to ask participants to provide stories about their lives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I ruled out the narrative research design because I did not seek to study stories about the participants' lives. The case study research design allows researchers to use multiple data sources and conduct semistructured interviews using open-ended questions to obtain information (Yin, 2014). The single case study approach is used when studying a specific phenomenon that arises from a specific entity (Heale & Twycross, 2018). The multiple case study approach is used when a study includes more than one case (Yin, 2014). I explored how the participants at multiple locations of a public sector organization use emotional self-awareness to reduce employee turnover so a single case study research design was most appropriate for this study.

Qualitative Research Question

This qualitative case study addressed the following research question:

What emotional self-awareness strategies do public sector middle managers use to reduce voluntary employee turnover?

Interview Questions

I provided each participant with a simple definition of emotional self-awareness at the beginning of each interview.

1. What are the specific work experiences in your current position that helped develop your knowledge of emotional self-awareness?

2. How do you use emotional self-awareness to resolve workplace conflict?

3. What emotional self-awareness strategies have you implemented to decrease voluntary employee turnover?

4. How do you use the concepts of emotional self-awareness when developing and implementing strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover?

5. How do your employees respond to your emotional awareness-based employee retention strategies?

6. What additional information would you like to share about how you use emotional self-awareness strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover?

Conceptual Framework

In EI theory, Goleman (1998) emphasized that there is a relationship between emotional competence and workplace success. Goleman indicated that managers with high EI are essential to an organization's success because they learn or improve skills in a

sequence of emotional competencies that leads to workplace success. Those emotional competencies include emotional self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social skills, empathy, and managing one's emotions in relation to others (Goleman, 2013). Emotional self-awareness is a vital cornerstone of EI because it is about individuals knowing their own emotions, strengths and limitations, and having a strong sense of self-worth (Goleman, 1998).

The emotional self-awareness component of EI is critical in the workplace. When managers understand their own emotions, they may be more aware of how their emotions and actions affect voluntary employee turnover (Huang et al., 2010; Lee, 2017), and influence their performance (Goleman, 2017). Managers with high emotional self-awareness understand how others view them, are more decisive when setting a course of action during organizational change, and are more likely to create a positive organizational culture (Goleman, 2017). Managers with high EI outperform managers with high intellectual and technical knowledge but have low emotional intelligence (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Decker & Cangemi, 2018). Various researchers successfully tested Goleman's (1998) theory of EI and confirmed that emotional self-awareness improved managers' work performance, conflict management skills, ability to deliver feedback, interpersonal relationships, ability to handle stress, self-perception, and organizational culture (Bar-On, 2006; Goleman, 2001; Goleman et al., 2013; Sowmya & Panchanatham, 2016; Ugoani, 2015). I used Goleman's (1998) theory of EI to explore and understand public sector managers' strategies for using emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Operational Definitions

Emotional intelligence (EI): EI is defined as an individual's ability to manage their and possibly other people's emotions and feelings and use that information to influence their thinking and actions (Shooshtarian et al., 2013).

Emotional self-awareness: Emotional self-awareness is defined as the ability to recognize one's emotions and the emotions of others and how their emotions affect their thoughts and behaviors (Goleman, 1995).

Middle manager: A middle manager is a departmental, divisional, sectional, or other executive officer, positioned between senior management and employees, who oversee various departments within an organization (Clements, 2015).

Voluntary turnover: Voluntary turnover is defined as turnover that occurs when employees voluntarily leave their position (Grissom et al., 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts, statements, and ideas that researchers take for granted (Nedevska et al., 2016). Assumptions are considered to be true but are not verified (Aastrup & Halldorsson, 2013). The researcher's assumptions shape their research by providing a framework and perspective that impacts how data are interpreted and analyzed (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). Because the researchers' assumptions are not verified, they carry risk and should be treated as such.

The results of this study addressed public sector middle managers' strategies for using emotional self-awareness concepts and practices to reduce voluntary employee

turnover while understanding inform practice. I assumed that public sector middle managers were involved in developing and implementing employee retention strategies. I understand that not all managers will share the same experiences or use the same employee retention strategies. I assumed that participants would have a clear understanding of emotional self-awareness and honestly and openly answer interview questions. I assumed that the findings of this study might be generalized to similar populations of public sector managers. Another assumption is that the results of this study could provide information about emotional self-emotional awareness strategies.

Based on pre-interview questions, the participants' responses, and data analysis, I found my assumptions to be true. The participants were all involved in developing and implementing employee retention strategies; however, some of their experiences and retention strategies differed. I contacted participants before their interviews to ensure that they had a clear understanding of emotional self-awareness. The findings from this research study provide insight into how the participants used emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Limitations

Limitations are elements of a research study that the researcher cannot control, such as observations, participant biases, research results, and inconsistencies (Guyatt et al., 2008). The context of a research study includes inherent limitations and researchers describe additional limitations as a framework for the study (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). A description of potential limitations allows readers to assess research quality by identifying the researcher's procedures, intentions, and lens of the study (Shipman,

2014). Identifying limitations in research allows researchers to understand previous literature and how previous findings might be beneficial for future studies (Shipman, 2014).

This study might not be generalizable to all managers in public sector organizations in the state of Georgia. One limitation is that managers may be fearful of answering questions that may reveal problems within their organization. Participants may not have provided honest answers because they thought I did not want to hear the truth. If participants were not honest, the results of this research study are inaccurate and misleading. In addition, participants might not remember details of their employee retention strategies.

I cannot prevent how participants respond to interview questions. Because people are not equally perceptive and comprehend things differently, some participants may not have completely understood the questions, which could result in misleading results. In addition, when conducting interviews for this study, my presence might have prompted biased responses because participants might have said what they thought I wanted to hear. Another limitation is that participants might have misunderstood or been unfamiliar with emotional self-awareness. I addressed limitations in this research study by providing a simple definition of emotional self-awareness to participants before each interview.

Delimitations

Delimitations are aspects of the study that the researcher can control. Delimitations help researchers identify boundaries or restrictions in a research study (Childers, 2014). This study was delimited to the public sector. Another delimitation is

this study was limited to middle managers. I interviewed permanent full-time middle managers with a public sector organization in Georgia, who supervised frontline employees and had at least 3 years of management experience in their current position. The selected managers were responsible for frontline employees who provide case management services and resources to individuals in a certain age group.

Significance of the Study

A study exploring how public sector managers use emotional self-awareness strategies to reduce employee turnover could improve organizational performance and positively influence social change. Public sector managers are critical to their organizations because they directly influence employees and indirectly affect organizational strategies, policies and procedures, change processes, and performance (Cregard & Corin, 2019). Managers influence employees' emotional well-being, job satisfaction, and behaviors; by default, they potentially influence employee turnover (Bhalerao & Kumar, 2016; Koodamara et al., 2020).

Contribution to Business Practice

This study is significant to business practice in that its findings might provide managers with a better understanding of the potential benefits of using emotional self-awareness strategies to reduce voluntary turnover. The information provided in this study could provide topics for training programs on how to use emotional self-awareness when developing strategies that reduce employee turnover. Managers could use this study's findings to foster a culture where emotional self-awareness practices are integrated into feedback and communication processes for public employee retention.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change are the possible benefits for the employees, organization, and community. High employee turnover strains the economy through increased unemployment and stress on social safety nets such as supplemental food and housing services and unemployment benefits (Kuminoff et al., 2015). High employee turnover also increases the number of taxpayer dollars spent on recruiting and training new employees. Furthermore, retaining public sector employees correlates to the quality of services that customers receive (Zhan, 2015).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative single case research study is to identify and explore public sector middle managers' strategies for using emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The objective of this literature review is to provide a judicious and comprehensive evaluation of preceding research pertinent to this study. This literature review will provide significant historical and contemporary research on EI, public sector management, voluntary employee turnover, and employee retention strategies. This literature review will provide a conceptual framework for the study.

I searched multiple databases to find literature for this study including (a) Academic Search Complete, (b) Business Source Complete, (c) Business Source Premier Complete, (d) Google Scholars, and (e) ProQuest Central. I used the following keywords to find literature related to this study: *emotional intelligence, emotional self-awareness, employee retention, employee retention strategies, management, turnover, public sector, public sector management, voluntary employee turnover,* and *voluntary turnover.* This

study consists of 447 references, 85% of which are from peer-reviewed journals, and 49% were published between 2017 and 2021. The literature review consists of 171 references of which 160 (94%) were from peer-reviewed journals. Seventy-one percent of the references in the literature review were published between 2017 and 2021. Although there is an extensive body of literature on EI and voluntary employee turnover, I concluded that there is a gap in the literature on how public sector managers incorporate emotional self-awareness when developing employee retention strategies.

The literature begins with a historical overview and conceptual framework of EI, followed by alternate theories that I considered examining for this study. Analysis of research on EI, public sector managerial implications, voluntary employee turnover, and employee retention strategies follow the conceptual framework and alternate theories. The topics in the literature review were organized based on the central conceptual framework of the study, EI and its relationship with employee performance, workplace outcomes, and voluntary employee turnover.

Historical Overview of Emotional Intelligence

In 1990, Salovey and Mayer introduced EI as a representation of an individual's ability to deal with their emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990); however, the meaning of EI has evolved since being introduced. Salovey and Mayer (1990) initially defined EI as an individual's ability to monitor their own and others' feelings and emotions, differentiate between them, and utilize this information to guide their thinking and actions. Salovey and Mayer considered EI a skill or ability and incorporated emotion and intelligence and a non-ability disposition in the original theory. In 1997, Mayer and Salovey introduced a

four-branched model of EI. The branches include the ability to perceive emotions in oneself and others accurately; the use of emotions to facilitate thinking; the ability to understand emotions, emotion language, and the signals conveyed by emotions; and the ability to manage emotions to facilitate goal achievement (Lee, 2013).

Goleman (1995) expanded Mayer and Salovey's definition of EI and later defined EI as a trait, rather than ability. Goleman's (1995) *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter More than IQ* popularized the concept of EI. Goleman (1995) indicated that EI involves self-awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, empathy, and social awareness. Goleman (1995) focused on applying EI to the workplace, education, and other aspects of life. Goleman (2001) further emphasized the benefits of incorporating EI into the workplace and other aspects of life, which resulted in public and private organizations and the public incorporating EI into their personal and professional lives. Goleman (1998) reported that emotional self-awareness improved managers' work performance, ability to deliver feedback, interpersonal relationships, and self-perception. Goleman (2001) described the key aspects of public service in the social awareness dimension of EI. Managers' social awareness in the public sector is explained through their ability to understand customer needs and match them with products or services (Goleman, 2001). However, social awareness begins with self-awareness. As related to this study, utilizing Goleman's (1998) concept of emotional self-awareness may enable participants to develop and implement employee retention strategies effectively.

Conceptual Framework of Emotional Intelligence

I will be using the lens of EI as my conceptual framework to explore my research question. The EI model developed by Goleman (1998) is widely used to understand the EI of employees in organizations. Goleman (1998) organized the EI model into four dimensions that represent the recognition and regulation of emotions in oneself and others. The dimensions are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and self-motivation. Each dimension of EI is comprised of a set of competencies that people must possess to fulfill that dimension (Narayan & Narashiman, 2015). EI competencies play a key role in helping individuals control and manage their moods and impulses in the workplace (Narayan & Narashiman, 2015). EI begins with emotional self-awareness. The ability to recognize feelings and emotions as they occur and tune oneself to different situations requires emotional competency, emotional maturity, and emotional sensitivity (Gorski & Ranf, 2019; Keller et al., 2020; Narayan & Narashiman, 2015). I opted to focus on the emotional self-awareness dimension of EI for this study because individuals cannot be emotionally intelligent if they are not emotionally self-aware.

Alternate Theories

Transformational Leadership Theory

Burns introduced the concept of leadership in 1978, and Bass expanded the concept in 1985 (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). The transformational leadership approach improves motivation, performance, and morale by leaders identifying needed changes, creating a vision, and guiding the change (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders are behavior-oriented and focus on connecting and building strong leader-follower bonds (R.

Cote, 2017). According to Burns (1978), transformational leaders inspire and motivate

subordinates to exceed organizational objectives and achieve a higher performance target

and level of morale and motivation. Transformational leaders strive to change the status

quo by communicating problems in the current system and conveying a compelling

vision of what a new organization could be (Lussier & Achua, 2018). Researchers use the

transformational leadership theory to explore leaders' behavior and how leaders'

behavior affects employee performance and organizational outcomes (Schmidt et al.,

2018), strategies, public performance, and organizational change (Sun & Henderson,

2017).

Researchers use the transformational leadership theory to explore organizational

phenomena such as employee retention, job satisfaction, and turnover intention

(Gyensare et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2019). Lim et al. (2017) surveyed

100 employees at a finance company to determine the impact of transformational

leadership on turnover intention, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment and

determined that transformational leadership had a substantial direct impact on employees'

turnover intentions. Transformational leadership indirectly influenced employees'

turnover intention through job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Lim et al.,

2017). Gyensare et al. (2016) suggested that middle managers and top-level managers use

transformational leadership to create an atmosphere of loyalty, admiration, trust, and

respect for their employees and found that transformational leaders increased their

employees' affective commitment reducing employee turnover. By exploring how

transformational leaders impact employee engagement, affective commitment, and

voluntary turnover intention in the public sector, Gyensare et al.'s (2017) research

revealed that transformational leaders increased employee engagement and affective

commitment, which leads to a reduction in employee turnover intention.

Transformational leadership was proven to reduce employee turnover effectively;

however, I was not studying leadership styles at the time of this study.

Public Sector Motivation (PSM) Theory

The concept of public service motivation (PSM) was initiated by Buchanan

(1975) and Rainey's (1982) article "Reward Preferences among Public and Private

Managers: In Search of the Service Ethic" shed more light on the concept. PSM was

officially defined by Perry and Wise in 1990 as an individual's propensity to react to

motives grounded in public situations and organizations (Perry & Wise, 1990). Since

1990, PSM has gained international prominence from various scholars and researchers

(Schott et al., 2018). PSM is centered on public sector employees' selfless behaviors and

feelings about serving the public interest (Kim, 2018). PSM is regarded as a vital element

in the public sector because it emphasizes the meaning and purpose of employees' jobs,

enhancing selflessness and prosocial behavior (Perry et al., 2010; Tran, Nguyen, et al.,

2020; van Witteloostuijn et al., 2017). Individuals with high levels of PSM are drawn to

organizations that offer opportunities for meaningful public service (Bright, 2020;

Desmidt & Prinzie, 2019). Perry et al. (2010) and Perry and Wise (1990) indicated that

PSM impacts public employees' personalities, attitudes, and behaviors.

Scholars use the PSM theory to explore organizational phenomena, including job

satisfaction (de Juana-Espinosa & Rakowska, 2018) and employee turnover and turnover

intention (Kim, 2018; Tran, Nguyen, et al., 2020). PSM enhances job satisfaction, helps

employees reduce stress and burnout (Keaveney & Nelson, 2017; Kim, 2018), and

strengthens organization-employee relationships (Im et al., 2016; Plimmer et al., 2021).

Scott and Pandey (2005) concluded that PSM encouraged public employees to

concentrate on completing public missions instead of advancing through their

organizations' hierarchical structure. Job satisfaction, stress and burnout, and negative

organization-employee relationships increase employee turnover (Day et al., 2017;

Keaveney & Nelson, 2017; Zysberg et al., 2017). Public employees with high PSM

typically remain committed to public organizations because their jobs satisfy their

intrinsic motivational needs (Scott & Pandey, 2005). Researchers use the PSM theory to

explore the impact of leaders' behaviors and attitudes on voluntary employee turnover. I

did not focus on behavior and attitudes in this research study. I am focusing on emotional

self-awareness and strategies, not what motivates public sector employees.

Mobley's (1977) Turnover Decision-Making Process

Mobley introduced the first process model to be used as a template to help

determine the process by which dissatisfied employees reach the decision to leave or stay

at their organizations (Hom et al., 1984; Mobley, 1977). Mobley (1977) recommended 10

steps to describe the employee decision-making process. Mobley's steps are (a)

evaluation of existing jobs, (b) experienced job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, (c) thinking

of quitting, (d) evaluation of expected utility of search and cost of quitting, (e) intention

to search for alternatives, (f) search for alternatives, (g) evaluation of alternatives, (h)

comparison of alternatives vs. present job, (i) intention to quit or stay, and (j) quit or stay.

The first component of the model, evaluation of the existing job, results from job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Hom et al., 1984; Mobley, 1977). Job dissatisfaction creates thoughts of quitting, which leads employees to evaluate the expected utility of search and costs of quitting. If a dissatisfied employee finds an acceptable alternative and feels that the costs of quitting are not prohibitive, the employee then decides to seek other employment (Hom et al., 1984; Mobley, 1977). Employees with the intention to search for alternative employment have increased quitting intentions. If the employees' job search is successful, they evaluate available employment alternatives and compare them to their current job (Hom et al., 1984; Mobley, 1977). When job comparisons favor alternative employment, the employee decides to leave or stay in their current position. Employees who determine that alternative jobs are not beneficial remain in their current position. Mobley's turnover decision-making process does not help researchers understand how managers can use their resources to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Emotional Intelligence

EI can be applied to all aspects of life, including social relations, family and intimate relationships, the workplace, and mental and physical well-being (Brackett et al., 2011; Kong et al., 2019; Sarrionandia et al., 2018). EI is based on three premises: emotions are important in daily life; people differ in their ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage their emotions; and these differences impact how individuals adapt to various contexts (Drigas & Papoutsi, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2019). Goel and Hussein (2015) indicated that EI is an individuals' ability to resolve personal, social, and business problems and the potential to recognize, feel, learn, remember, and understand

emotions. Individuals analyze themselves and others and use that analyzed information to add synergies to activities in their personal life and the workplace through EI. EI plays a significant role in determining success or failure in a person's career and personal life (Goel & Hussein, 2015). Individuals can use EI to improve their personal and professional lives.

EI positively impacts organizations in multiple ways. Researchers have proven that EI is significant in improving organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction (Gopinath & Chitra, 2020; Miao et al., 2017), performance (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021; O'Connor et al., 2019), and organizational commitment (Amjad, 2018). Researchers have contended that EI reduces turnover and turnover intentions (Akhtar, Shabir, et al., 2017), workplace conflict (Ghanbari et al., 2020; Lee & Wong, 2017), burnout (Choi et al., 2019), and stress (Sarrionandia et al., 2018; Valosek et al., 2018). Scholars have also indicated that EI aids managers in decision-making (Zaki et al., 2018), handling continuous organizational change, and handling negative employee and customer interactions (Bedi & Bedi, 2017; Narayan & Narashiman, 2015). Managers and employees with high EI have better social relationships in the workplace and higher empathy and feelings of warmth and support than managers and employees with low EI (Maamari & Majdalani, 2017). EI is beneficial to managers, employees, and organizations as a whole.

EI aids employees and managers in making conscious decisions before acting in the workplace. Deshwal (2015) indicated that EI is that feeling of internal balance that allows individuals to keep their composure and maintain effective emotion management

even in stressful times. EI can be described as an interconnection between thinking and feelings (Njoroge & Yazdanifard, 2014) that aids individuals in managing negative emotions, such as anger, that may hinder employees from achieving organizational goals. EI gives individuals the ability to turn their negative thoughts and emotions into positive thoughts (Mir, 2018), thus making positive decisions in the workplace.

Emotions are at the center of EI and are relevant in every workplace (Carminati, 2021; Cho et al., 2017). Emotions are powerful feelings that command attention and are prone to influence behavior and cognitive processes (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Emotions influence behavior and cognitive processes when the information provided is attended to, interpreted, integrated into thinking and behavior, and managed successfully (Brackett et al., 2011). Emotions communicate information regarding other people's behavior, thoughts, and intentions. A few examples of emotions are shame, happiness, fear, anger, love, surprise, and disgust. Even after emotions lose their intensity, they are likely to remain as a negative or positive mood, which can influence leadership behavior (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). EI is one of the attributes that seem to be critical for managers and employees and organizational success.

Organizations must incorporate EI to achieve organizational success. Traditionally, emotion was perceived as inappropriate for organizational life, and therefore emotion has received little attention as an area of research within organizations (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). However, researchers concluded that emotion could not be detached from everyday life (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Lee, 2013). According to Dixit and Singh (2019), emotions play a significant role in organizational settings by

helping build social relationships that foster employee commitment and productivity. EI

is a significant ingredient of an individual's personal and professional life (Tokpam et al.,

2015) and it may help form social transactions and add to the culture and structure of the

organization (Lee, 2013). Emotions are an intrinsic component of the workplace

(Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017); however, very few studies focused on emotions in the

workplace.

      Studies on emotions in the workplace (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Diener et al.,

2020; Njoroge & Yazdanifard, 2014) support the notion that EI has a positive outcome on

workplace life. Palmer et al. (2009) defined EI in the workplace as the ability to perceive,

reason with, express, and manage their own and others' emotions. Recent research in

managerial literature has unequivocally proven that emotions exist in the workplace and

positively influence manager effectiveness (Eldor, 2018; Robinson et al., 2013).

Managers who are aware of their emotions can carefully manage their emotions in the

workplace (Johnson & Hackman, 2018; Njoroge & Yazdanifard, 2014), and drive

loyalty, commitment, and trust to improve innovation, productivity, and success in the

individual, team, and organizational realm (Bedi & Bedi, 2017; Drigas & Papoutsi, 2018;

Usprech & Lam, 2020). A study on emotions in public sector management might

improve managers' understanding of emotions in the workplace.

      Managers who use EI to improve organizational culture promote an emotional

culture. Organizational culture is a set of fundamental assumptions, values, and beliefs

the organization's employees develop and pass down to handle external adaption and

internal integration problems (Limaj & Bernroider, 2019; Schein, 1992). O'Neill and

Rothbard (2017) defined an emotional culture as the behavioral norms, artifacts, and underlying values and assumptions that guide the expression or suppression of specific emotions within a social unit. An emotional culture plays an essential role in understanding the impact of organizational culture on employee behavior (Men & Yue, 2019; O'Neill & Rothbard, 2017). It fosters teamwork (Hartmann et al., 2021), employee performance (Adler et al., 2021), compassion and empathy (O'Neill, 2018; O'Neill & Rothbard, 2017), pride, gratitude, and understanding (Men & Robinson, 2018; Men & Yue, 2019). Leadership and communication cultivate a positive emotional culture (Men & Yue, 2019). Men and Yue's (2019) research revealed that a positive emotional culture positively impacted employee organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) and employee advocacy among public sector leaders and employees. Ghorbanzadeh et al. (2020) concluded that a positive emotional culture enhanced the quality of employee-organizational relationships, communication, and employee advocacy among frontline employees. A positive emotional culture increases organizational effectiveness. Managers can use EI to aid them in improving organizational outcomes. Suifan et al. (2015) empirically examined the effect of manager's EI on employee's work outcomes such as job satisfaction, customer service behavior, and organizational commitment. Suifan et al. collected data from 193 employees in the public sector insurance industry and concluded that all dimensions of EI positively and significantly affected employee's work outcomes. Suifan et al. also concluded that EI overall positively and significantly affected employee's work outcomes. The results of Suifan et al.'s research supported Webb's (2014) findings, which concluded that employees appear to display above-

average positive attitudes and work ethics when their manager has high EI. Employees

with high EI are more likely to achieve projected organizational outcomes compared to

employees with low EI.

Emotional Intelligence Competencies

Individuals have different needs, wants, personalities, and ways of expressing

their emotions. Navigating through individual differences requires tact and discernment,

especially if one expects to succeed in life (Serrat, 2017). The emotional competencies of

EI help identify and manage one's emotions and identify and understand the emotions of

others (Cunningham et al., 2020; Serrat, 2017). Those competencies are self-awareness,

self-regulation, self-motivation, and social awareness.

EI competencies are valuable to employees in all organizations. Tokpam et al.

(2015) surveyed 200 employees from government and non-government organizations on

three dimensions of EI to determine their level of EI. The EI competencies were

emotional sensitivity, emotional maturity, and emotional competency. The emotional

sensitivity competency includes emotional arousal, empathy, interpersonal relations, and

communication (Sharma et al., 2014). The components of emotional maturity are self-

awareness, developing others, delaying gratification, and adaptability and flexibility

(Sharma et al., 2014). Individuals with emotional competency can handle emotional

distress, tactfully respond to emotional stimuli, and handle egoism and they possess high

self-esteem (Sharma et al., 2014). EI competencies aid individuals in handling various

situations in the workplace.

Researchers contended that EI competencies aid managers in resolving numerous organizational challenges (Panimalar, 2020; Sowmya & Panchanatham, 2016), improving organizational culture (Rasooli et al., 2019; Sabie et al., 2020), effectively managing workplace interactions (Narayan & Narashiman, 2015), handling conflict and stressful situations (Aqqad et al., 2019; Younas et al.'s (2021), and reducing employee turnover. According to Matjie (2018), many public sector managers possess insufficient EI competencies to control emotional outbursts and achieve effective leadership. Public sector managers with high EI competencies could improve the quality of service delivery (Matjie, 2018) and reduce voluntary employee turnover. However, few research studies focused on EI in public sector management (Carmona et al., 2020; Guy & Lee, 2015; Vigoda-Gadot & Meisler, 2010). Even fewer research studies focused on how public sector managers use emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Research studies that focused on EI in the public sector directly related EI and public service performance measures, while other studies centered on EI's complicated and overt moderating role in other outcome-related measures (Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). There is a considerable gap in the literature about managers' experiences of the different EI competencies (Halim et al., 2015). There is limited research on the overall construct of EI and emotional self-awareness (Halim et al., 2015) in public sector organizations. This research study will address the gap in the literature regarding the self-awareness dimension of EI in public sector management.

Emotional Self-Awareness: A Critical Component of Emotional Intelligence

Self-awareness is the first dimension of EI. Variances in peoples' self-awareness explain the differences in their perceptions of how different situations, other people, events, and other stimuli generate emotions (Suifan et al., 2015). Therefore, self-awareness is defined as the ability to recognize one's own emotions and how those emotions influence others and guide decisions (Suifan et al., 2015). Emotional self-awareness is an understanding of one's moods and emotions, how they evolve and change over time, and the implications for task performance and interpersonal relationships (Cunningham et al., 2020; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). EI begins at the individual level of analysis and self-awareness is typically referred to as a starting point for EI discovery (Goleman, 1995; Igbinovia, 2016). Sunindijo and Hadikusumo (2014) indicated that the concept of self-awareness is so vital that it is considered as the prerequisite of the other dimensions of EI. Self-awareness is the dimension of EI that initiates all relationships, resilience, engagement, effective decision-making, and conflict management (Kay, 2018; Sunindijo & Hadikusumo, 2014) and is the foundation on which emotionally intelligent behaviors develop (Hartung, 2020; Igbinovia, 2016). Self-awareness initiates manager-employee relationships and ultimately helps managers understand their employees' needs. Using emotional self-awareness might help managers develop effective retention strategies.

The three aspects of self-awareness are emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence. Individuals with high emotional self-awareness recognize their emotions and how those emotions affect them (Serrat, 2017) and their job

performance (Goleman et al., 2013). An accurate self-assessment allows individuals to learn their strengths and limitations and display humor about themselves (Goleman et al., 2013). Individuals who have self-confidence are sure about their self-worth and abilities (Serrat, 2017). Managers with high emotional self-awareness are more likely to facilitate lower turnover rates than managers who lack self-awareness (Serrat, 2017). Managers who are emotionally aware are self-confident and aware of their own behaviors and how those behaviors impact their employees.

Emotional self-awareness enhances leadership effectiveness. Effective leadership is a crucial characteristic of high-performing organizations that allows managers to perform better and survive turbulent and competitive work environments (Tanui et al., 2018). Leadership has a critical effect on employee job satisfaction and performance (Eliyana et al., 2019; Kammerhoff et al., 2019), motivation, organizational culture, and organizational commitment (Suong et al., 2019; Thanh et al., 2020; Yang & Kim, 2018). Knowing one's leadership strengths and weaknesses, understanding emotions, and achieving future professional goals increase leadership effectiveness, enhancing organizational success (Eurich, 2018; Rubens et al., 2018). Tanui et al. (2018) surveyed 3,190 public sector employees and found a strong, positive and significant relationship between emotional self-awareness and effective leadership. Tanui et al.'s findings indicated that an increase in emotional self-awareness increased effective leadership. Carmona et al. (2020) explored the impact of EI in public sector management. Carmona et al.'s research revealed that emotionally self-aware managers effectively encouraged their employees to achieve higher performance levels and transform into better leaders.

Emotionally self-aware leaders are more effective and efficient managers than leaders who lack emotional self-awareness (Kay, 2018). However, there are limited studies on emotional self-awareness and leadership (Carmona et al., 2020; Tanui et al., 2018).

Emotional self-awareness enhances information literacy competence and task performance in the workplace, which ultimately reduces employee turnover. Igbinovia (2016) studied the impact of emotional self-awareness on task performance among 163 staff members in various academic libraries. Igbinovia concluded that emotionally self-aware employees had high literacy competence. Igbinovia determined that employees performed their tasks at a higher level when they were emotionally self-aware. Dierdorff et al.'s (2018) findings supported Igbinovia's findings. Dierdorff et al. concluded that emotional self-awareness positively correlated with task performance. Igbinovia reported that recognizing one's emotional component, which begins with the awareness and discernment of one's emotions, will allow individuals to develop their information literacy competence and enhance their task performance. Emotional self-awareness helps employees increase their task performance, job fulfillment and satisfaction, and reduces employee turnover. Effective managers use emotional self-awareness to manage their emotions to achieve their objectives, manage friendly relationships, build trust (Johnson & Hackman, 2018) and recognize how their reactions and behaviors affect their employees.

Self-regulation is the second dimension of EI. Self-regulation includes self-control, transparency, adaptability, and innovativeness (Goleman et al., 2013). Individuals with emotional self-control learn techniques to manage their disruptive

emotions and impulses (Serrat, 2017) and channel them in useful ways (Goleman et al., 2013). Individuals who regulate their emotions promote positive work experiences and contributions while encouraging employee performance and growth (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; Quinn & Cameron, 2019). Transparent individuals are open to others about their feelings, beliefs, and actions and they live by their values, which allow integrity (Goleman et al., 2013; Serrat, 2017). Adaptable individuals can manage multiple tasks without losing focus or energy and are comfortable with ambiguities of organizational life (Goleman et al., 2013). Individuals with high self-regulation take responsibility for their personal performance and are comfortable with new ideas and information (Goleman, 2017; Serrat, 2017). Managers with high self-regulation are comfortable with themselves, change, and their employee's perception of themselves and the organization. Managers who are comfortable with themselves and change are open to employee feedback (Eurich, 2018; Gnepp et al., 2020), allowing employees to feel like they are valued members of the organization.

Self-motivation is the third aspect of EI. Self-motivated individuals strive to improve or meet a standard of excellence (Serrat, 2017). They are passionate about their work for reasons beyond money and status, such as joy in what they are doing or curiosity in learning. Self-motivated individuals are aligned with the group or the organization's goals (Serrat, 2017) and seize or create opportunities (Goleman et al., 2013). Serrat (2017) indicated that highly motivated individuals persistently pursue goals despite obstacles and setbacks. Self-motivated individuals can use their passion, persistence, and standard of excellence to achieve organizational outcomes.

Social awareness is the final dimension of EI. Social awareness includes empathy, organizational awareness, leveraging diversity, and service orientation (Serrat, 2017). Individuals with empathy can adjust to various emotional signals (Goleman et al., 2013), sense others' feelings and perspectives, and take an active interest in their concerns (Rahman, 2017b; Serrat, 2017). Goleman et al. (2013) indicated that individuals with high social awareness could be politically astute and capable of reading a group's significant power relationships. Socially aware individuals encourage a positive emotional climate by anticipating, recognizing, and meeting their needs. Social awareness is a critical component of leveraging EI in an organizational setting where managers must navigate a complex social environment.

Emotional Capability at the Organizational Level

EI is not limited to individuals; it extends to the overall organization. Managers should expand their individual EI to an organizational level to establish a positive organizational culture (Huy, 1999) and reduce voluntary employee turnover. At the individual level, EI is defined as one's ability to monitor their own and others' emotions and feelings, differentiate between them, and use that information to guides one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). At the organizational level, emotional capability refers to the organization's capacity to acknowledge, recognize, monitor, discriminate, and attend to its members' emotions (Schein, 1992). The organization's emotional capabilities are manifested in the organization's norms (Schein, 1992). The organization's norms are incorporated into the organization's mission and values and should extend to the organization's employees.

There are multiple areas of individual and organizational EI. Huy (1999) indicated three areas of individual and organizational EI: receptivity, mobilization, and learning. At the individual level, receptivity represents a person's willingness to consider change (Huy, 1999). At the organizational level, receptivity signifies the organizations' employees' willingness to consider individually and collectively recommended changes and to motivate each other toward a selected redefinition of organizational reality (Huy, 1999). Some degree of organizational EI is necessary for managers to be receptive to change. Managers who are receptive to change reduce their employees' resistance to change.

EI at the individual level, mobilization denotes the concrete actions taken by an individual in the direction of change (Huy, 1999). Analogously, the organizational level of mobilization refers to assembling and propelling various segments of the organization to undertake joint action and to recognize common change goals (Huy, 1999). The ability to mobilize centers on the accessibility of adequate resources, support structures, systems, and most importantly, commitment and skillsets to cooperate during the change process (Huy, 1999). Mobilization includes organization-wide collaboration and active collaboration among team members that goes beyond simple agreement or compliance (Huy, 1999). At the organizational level, managers with high EI collaborate with employees to action and develop goals aimed at reducing employee turnover.

Learning is the third area of individual and organizational EI. Individuals and organizations can learn from the outcomes of implemented changes (Hartung, 2020; Huy, 1999). Learning provides a feedback loop from outcomes back to receptivity (Huy,

1999). Individuals learn by thinking, acting, and using the outcomes of their actions to adjust their belief systems (Huy, 1999; Kim, 2004). Emotions arouse dissatisfaction and provide the primary feedback mechanism that tells individuals that their goals are not being achieved (Huy, 1999). At the organizational level, a continuous process corresponds with the organizational goal-action-outcome-learning feedback (Huy, 1999). Organizational learning occurs when successful individual learning is transferred to the organization's shared belief system (Huy, 1999). Learning from feedback improves an individual's personal and organizational belief system.

Managerial Implications of EI

EI is significant for managers in all types of organizations. Public and private managers are responsible for management development and learning that consists of three important elements: (a) the skills and abilities they practice daily; (b) knowledge, expertise, and experience in decision-making; and (c) the personal qualities, values, and attitudes they espouse (Demeter & Tapardel, 2013). These three elements promote managerial competencies that could be used to define how managers should act based on knowledge and what attitude they adopt when making decisions and implementing policy (Demeter & Tapardel, 2013). Amjad (2018) indicated that EI impacted managers' attitudes, behaviors, and work outcomes. EI supports the entire organizational system, from the managers' performance to organizational performance (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021). EI influences what and how managers think, make decisions, and behave in various situations in the workplace.

Middle managers play a vital role in organizational success. Middle managers are uniquely positioned between their superiors and employees (Rezvani, 2017) and between strategic and operational interfaces (Heyden et al., 2018). They are required to direct employees, enhance employee involvement, and implement change while instantaneously helping employees realize that the changes were initiated by senior management (Lleo et al., 2017; Rezvani, 2017). Heyden et al. (2018) indicated that middle managers are sometimes enmeshed between conflicting expectations of senior management and their employees. Being caught between senior management and employees causes middle managers to experience higher levels of anxiety, stress, depression, heart disease, hypertension, and interruptions in cognitive performance and focus (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017), which lead to emotional and physiological tolls on managers' well-being and poor performance (Heyden et al., 2018). Managers who perform poorly are counterproductive to their organizations, and that diminishes organizational process (Pyc et al., 2017) and organizational productivity. Organizations are more successful when their managers are effective.

EI is important to managers in any organization. In essence, management is an emotional process in which managers show their emotions and attempt to understand the emotions of their employees (Zivkovic & Veljkovic, 2016). The role of management can be a source of distress, anger, embarrassment, frustration, and a source of excitement, fulfillment, belongingness, and pride (Kaplan et al., 2014; Tran, Tran, et al., 2020). These emotions derive from work-related interactions and events and employees' non-work feelings in the workplace (Kaplan et al., 2014). Emotion management is pivotal because

how managers handle their emotions influences the individual group's well-being and organizational performance (Bedi & Bedi, 2017; Kaplan et al., 2014). Managers who cannot handle emotions in the workplace are more likely to have a negative impact on their employees and the organization as a whole.

Managers must be able to recognize their own feelings and emotions to manage them. Many managers are unable to recognize their own feelings and emotions and are prepositioned to deny them (Sharma et al., 2014). Narayan and Narashiman (2015) stated that managers' lack of EI competencies is one of the reasons that there are communication gaps between top management and lower management within organizations. The relationship between senior managers and lower-level managers and managers and their employees were significantly correlated with productivity (Narayan & Narashiman, 2015). Udod et al.'s (2020) findings determined that middle managers with high EI were approachable, visible, encouraging, established an environment of trust, and engaged in face-to-face communication, which aided in achieving organizational outcomes and reducing voluntary employee turnover. EI aids managers in leveraging emotional self-awareness in the workplace, which facilitates high levels of collaboration and productivity (Johnson & Hackman, 2018; Mason, 2021; Sharma et al., 2014). However, few studies that focused on EI in public sector management have empirically examined the self-awareness dimension of EI (Lee, 2017; Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). Managers with low emotional self-awareness are less likely to facilitate employee collaboration and productivity compared to managers with high emotional self-awareness.

EI aids employees and managers in working effectively. Halim et al. (2015) empirically investigated the different EI competencies in public sector petroleum companies in Egypt by administering questionnaires to 60 employees. Halim et al. found a significant difference in how managers and employees perceived relationship management. Some managers were not self-aware, or their employees were not able to assess themselves accurately. Managers and employees had similar levels of self-control, persistence in obtaining goals when obstacles occurred, discerning perspectives and feelings and managing their concerns, and organizational awareness (Halim et al., 2015). Halim et al. concluded that there was a significant difference between managers' and employees' perspectives of the employees' ability to influence or effectively persuade others. Halim et al. indicated that most of the public sector employees lacked many of the critical competencies needed to effectively work because they had low EI. Managers and employees with low emotional self-awareness might inaccurately perceive and process information in their surroundings, negatively impacting their thoughts and actions (Faltas, 2016). Employees and managers with emotional self-awareness can control their emotions, persistently pursue their goals, and be aware of organizational concerns.

EI includes numerous interconnected component skills such as self-awareness, empathy, self-regulation, motivation, and other social skills. Self-aware managers know how they feel and how their emotions and actions affect those around them. Being self-aware in management means clearly understanding one's strengths and weaknesses and being humble (Batool, 2013; Younas et al., 2021). Kaplan et al. (2014) developed a comprehensive, theoretically derived model of manager emotion management based on a

meta-analysis of the literature on EI. Kaplan et al. concluded that managers who lack self-awareness would find it difficult to manage their own emotions and the emotions of others. Managers' ability to recognize their employees' emotions is essential to reducing voluntary employee turnover (Cho et al., 2017). Managers who cannot manage their emotions and the emotions of others could negatively impact workplace outcomes and their employee's level of job satisfaction, ultimately leading to an increase in voluntary employee turnover.

Managers with high emotional self-awareness can recognize and understand their own emotions, thought patterns, strengths, weaknesses, values, desires, drives, goals, and their influence on others (Frisina, 2014; Igbinovia, 2016; Younas et al., 2021). Managers can use this understanding or awareness of self to guide decisions made using their gut feeling (Igbinovia, 2016) and become more cognizant of their employees' feelings and struggles (Younas et al., 2021). Being emotionally self-aware means being cognizant of and connecting with one's personal feelings, thoughts, and actions and initiating measures to bring desired improvements, being aligned with one's values, and being able to maintain business and personal relationships for greater fulfillment (Kay, 2018; Rasheed et al., 2019; Younas et al., 2021). Emotional self-awareness helps managers develop a clearer perception of their job satisfaction (Steffens et al., 2021), job performance (Igbinovia, 2016), and organizational culture. Once managers recognize their own feelings and emotions, they can control those feelings and emotions. Managers who understand their emotions, who they are, and what drives them lead more effectively than managers with low emotional self-awareness.

Managers with high EI empathize with their employees. Empathy is essential to managing an organization or team (Batool, 2013; Fianko et al., 2020) because it encourages pro-social behaviors and prevents aggressive behavior towards others (Luberto et al., 2018), which is an essential aspect of public service work. Managers with empathy can relate to someone else's situation as if they experienced the situation themselves (Batool, 2013; Zenger & Folkman, 2019). Self-aware managers are empathic and compassionate (Frisina, 2014). Managers with empathy support team development, listen to individuals when needed, provide constructive feedback, are approachable, and oppose others who act unreasonably (Batool, 2013; Fianko et al., 2020). Empathic managers understand the customers' needs and match their needs with products or services (Serrat, 2017). Emotionally self-aware managers are empathic towards their employees and customers.

Managers who engage their employees facilitate high employee retention rates. When employees are engaged, they are given an opportunity to learn and grow (Jin & McDonald, 2017). Palmer and Gignac (2012) surveyed 440 employees in the IT and entertainment industries regarding their manager's level of EI and found that emotionally intelligent managers engaged their employees. Managers with high EI are more likely to have higher engagement to disengagement ratios than managers with low EI (Palmer & Gignac, 2012; Udod et al., 2020). Palmer and Gignac indicated that improving the EI of managers might have a positive influence on employee engagement, organizational performance, employment brand, and managers' capacity to retain employees. Mujanah's (2020) research revealed that workability and emotional self-awareness significantly

influenced employee engagement, ultimately increasing employee performance. Managers who engage their employees can improve organizational performance and reduce employee turnover.

Managers can use EI to resolve workplace conflict. A managers' EI is an important indicator of their ability to resolve conflict (Ghanbari et al., 2020; Taboli et al., 2016). Being aware of emotions when they occur helps managers quickly decipher the emotion and refrain from reacting negatively (Keller et al., 2020). Managers who effectively manage workplace conflict create a peaceful environment, promote cooperative learning and critical thinking, reduce discrimination, and achieve higher performance results (Gupta, 2020; Rammata, 2019; Taboli et al., 2016). Emotionally intelligent managers examine the differences of all parties involved in a conflict to reach a mutually acceptable solution (Chen et al., 2019; Hopkins & Yonker, 2015). Perceptions of incompatibility can create emotions that encourage the conflict process. Hopkins and Yonker (2015) surveyed 126 participants to determine if EI is an effective tool for conflict management. Hopkins and Yonker found that emotionally self-aware managers who recognized and resolved problems in conflict situations would eventually manage overall conflict effectively. Taboli et al. (2016) surveyed 108 managers of an oil refining company and found a direct and significant correlation between EI and conflict management. Taboli et al.'s research revealed that managers with high EI are more successful when managing conflict than managers with low EI. Keller et al. (2020) indicated that managers who are equipped to leverage an emotion would be more

successful at facilitating cognitive problem-solving. Employees are more likely to remain with organizations when managers effectively manage conflict.

EI improves managers' decision-making skills. EI is a necessary tool for leadership because the manager is responsible for making result-oriented decisions and turning those decisions into successful organizational strategies (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021; Eurich, 2018). Emotionally intelligent managers are expected to control their emotions to make difficult but necessary decisions (Mikolajczak et al., 2012). Mikolajczak et al. (2012) surveyed 201 participants, 67 of which were managers, and concluded that managers with high EI had higher team efficiency, greater managerial competencies, and less stressed employees. Mikolajczak et al. indicated that managers with high EI are more likely to control their emotions in difficult situations compared to managers with average or low EI. Alzoubi and Aziz (2021) concluded that there was a positive relationship between managers' EI and decision making, which supported Mikolajczak et al.'s findings. Alzoubi and Aziz indicated that managers who control their emotions could make strategic decisions based on relevant information. Leadership power can be attained by the strength of decision-making, which is directly dependent on the manager's EI (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021). Good decision-making and greater team efficiency increase organizational performance and less stress increases job satisfaction and decreases burnout turnover.

EI can reduce work-related stress and voluntary employee turnover. Employees have an aversion to work-related stress; therefore, they will try to avoid it by psychologically withdrawing or leaving the organization (Bedi & Bedi, 2017; Goswami

& Talukdar, 2013). Goswami and Talukdar (2013) studied managers' EI and EI's influence on job stress among 30 managers in a public sector organization. Goswami and Talukdar's research revealed that EI had an essential impact on occupational stress among managers. Goswami and Talukdar stated that individual differences and communication skills played a pivotal role in dealing with stressful situations. Bedi and Bedi (2017) concluded that EI enhances interpersonal communication and the ability to manage conflict. Raeissi et al. (2019) surveyed 253 nurses and found a strong significant relationship between the four dimensions of EI and communication skills. Raeissi et al.'s (2019) research findings were consistent with Goswami and Talukdar's (2013) findings that EI aids individuals in enhancing their communication skills. Managers with low EI have poor communication skills, which will lead to additional problems in the workplace and, ultimately, stress (Goswami & Talukdar, 2013). Individuals with high EI tend to have lower stress levels than individuals with low EI (Goswami & Talukdar, 2013). Employees are more satisfied and effective when they are less stressed.

EI aids managers in decreasing negative OCB. Managers play a more influential role in employee behaviors than other sources within the organization (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2017). OCB is a tool that helps identify the behavior of employees who want to contribute beyond the requirements of their job roles (Hapsari & Riyanto, 2020; Nabilla & Riyanto, 2020). Nabilla and Riyanto's (2020) research revealed that OCB significantly correlated with job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, and organizational climate. According to Al Ghazo et al. (2018) and Miao et al. (2020), EI encourages OCB and almost diminishes counterproductive work behavior across cultures.

Managers with high EI lead by example and improve OCB (Olcer et al., 2014; Prufeta, 2017; Rechberg, 2019). Olcer et al. (2014) studied the effects of leadership and managers' EI on employees' OCB by administering survey questionnaires to 120 participants in the manufacturing industry. Olcer et al. concluded that employees with emotionally intelligent managers were willing to assist others, exhibit civic virtue, and follow the rules more than other employees. Managers with high EI were able to monitor their behavior and comprehend their employee's behavior, which improved the additional role behavior of the organizational members (Olcer et al., 2014). Olcer et al. indicated that individuals with high EI could recognize their sensations and perception of their influence, a more appropriate understanding of personal values and abilities, and identification of themselves, strengths, and weaknesses.

Public Sector Implications of EI

Emotional self-awareness is critical in the public sector. Public sector managers and employees experience continuous organizational change and service interactions, and public sector jobs can be intense and stressful (Carter et al., 2019; Lings et al., 2014). Emotional skills are necessary for service workers, specifically when emotional intensity is high. A reduction in job satisfaction leads to turnover and absenteeism in public service (Asriani & Riyanto, 2020; Lee, 2013). Asriani and Riyanto's (2020) research revealed that turnover intentions were higher among public sector employees with low levels of job satisfaction. Seyal and Afzaal's (2013) research concluded that emotional self-awareness was positively correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Emotional self-awareness can aid managers and employees during intense and stressful interactions while decreasing the risk of burnout and job dissatisfaction.

Some employees cannot manage their emotions, especially during stressful situations. It is important to train and direct public service workers on how to manage their own emotions, including understanding the emotional state of others (Lee, 2013). Training public workers on EI will help public workers handle their emotions during social interactions with customers (Kotsou et al., 2019), increase self-awareness, and strategic and relational skills (Hackworth et al., 2018), and decrease emotional labor and exhaustion (Raman et al., 2016). Emotionally intelligent employees can better comprehend, express, and regulate their emotions (Carminati, 2021). EI training could improve employees' ability to understand and control their emotions.

Managers with high EI can recognize the right employees for organizations. Public sector managers with a high level of EI are more likely to hire employees who better serve their customers and take pride in their job (Siegel-Itzkovich, 2016). Organizations should hire emotionally intelligent managers and employees and encourage them to develop emotionally intelligent behaviors, which facilitate the development of rapport, satisfaction, and loyalty (Hartung, 2020; Tanui et al., 2018). Goel and Hussein (2015) suggested that public sector managers adjust to administering EI test as a part of the job application process to ensure that the right individual is hired. Tanui et al. (2018) suggested that organizations formulate or revise recruitment policies to ensure that an individual's emotional self-awareness is considered during the recruiting process. Organizations should also conduct an emotional self-awareness evaluation

during the hiring process (Tanui et al., 2018). Hiring emotionally aware managers and employees could reduce voluntary employee turnover. Employees who are satisfied with their job provide better quality services to customers and are more committed to their organizations compared to dissatisfied employees.

Public service employees may falsify their emotions to appear they have high EI. Emotional labor is defined as modifying or regulating one's emotions to conform to expectations of emotional display (Thwaites, 2017). Individuals also use emotional labor as a coping mechanism to hide unpleasant or negative emotions (Lee & Chelladurai, 2018). Jeung et al. (2018) indicated that emotional exhaustion, psychometric complaints, psychological distress, burnout, and depersonalization are some of the negative consequences of emotional labor. Service workers with low EI tend to falsify their emotions more often compared to workers with high EI (Lee, 2013; van Dijk et al., 2017). Lings et al. (2014) surveyed 129 employees and managers at an allied health service and concluded that employees with low EI are more likely to experience burnout, emotional exhaustion, and increased stress. Choi et al. (2019) found that emotional labor, job stress, and burnout increased turnover intentions among public sector nurses with low EI. Kwon and Kim (2016) surveyed 200 nurses to determine if their level of EI impacted emotional labor and burnout. Kwon and Kim indicated that burnout negatively correlated with EI and positively and significantly correlated with emotional labor among psychological nurses. Employees with high EI are less likely to leave their positions because of emotional labor, stress, and burnout.

Some public sector employees view emotional labor as a requirement to successfully meet job requirements. Raman et al. (2016) surveyed 519 frontline government employees in Malaysia and found that EI had a positive relationship with emotional labor and positive affectivity. Positive affectivity refers to positive emotional experiences such as interest in the job, joy, and alertness (Raman et al., 2016). Raman et al.'s research revealed that government workers used emotional labor to align their displayed emotions with organizationally accepted emotions. Employees who hide their emotions and feelings, create additional stress and are more likely to leave the organization, which makes EI more critical in public sector organizations.

Emotional Intelligence With Organizations and Organizational Behavior

An employee's on-the-job behavior is determined by multiple factors such as their emotional intelligence, personality, technical knowledge, perceived equality, and perceived organizational support (Giao et al., 2020; Kaur, 2014; Maan et al., 2020). However, researchers theorize that of these five factors, EI plays the most important role in determining an employee's on-the-job behaviors (Kaur, 2014). Kaur (2014) and Supratman et al. (2021) indicated that organizational environments have become highly unstable, resulting in challenges that lead to negative organizational behaviors and poor job performance. Raman et al. (2016) and Samanta and Kallou (2020) indicated that when employees exhibit counterproductive work behaviors, it could result in massive economic and social costs for public sector organizations. One of those challenges is to acquire, train, retain, and maintain an efficient workforce. Miao et al. (2017) recommended that public sector organizations increase OCB and counterproductive work

behavior by recruiting employees with high EI and training employees on emotional competencies. In the public sector, an employee's overall performance is measured by how effectively they can handle their interactions with their colleagues and customers (Kaur, 2014). Employees who cannot handle service interactions tend to exhibit negative on-the-job behaviors.

Employees with high EI can manage their impulses, manage change, effectively communicate with others, solve problems, and use humor to build rapport in tense situations (Joe-Akunne et al., 2015; Szczygiel & Mikolajczak, 2018). EI provides clarity in thinking and composure in stressful and chaotic conditions in the workplace (Joe-Akunne et al., 2015). EI is essential in managing counterproductive work behaviors. Anwar et al. (2017) surveyed 293 commercial bank employees and concluded that EI played a pivotal role in enhancing citizenship behaviors. Anwar et al. indicated that the use of emotion, others emotion appraisal, and emotion regulation had the most significant effect on the employee's OCB. Employees with high EI can manage their behavior in the workplace.

EI reduces negligent workplace behaviors that can lead to poor work performance and voluntary turnover. Robinson et al. (2019) found that employees with high EI were less likely to engage in interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance such as harassment, sabotage, theft, and violence in the workplace. Olonade et al. (2021) concluded that EI improved work outcomes such as job satisfaction and work and performance and decreased deviant work behavior among public sector employees. Joe-Akunne et al. (2015) surveyed 237 workers from Awka South, Nigeria local government

to determine the impact of EI on job boredom proneness on counterproductive work behavior. Joe-Akunne et al. revealed that local government workers with high self-awareness, self-control, and self-motivation were not likely to participate in counterproductive work behavior such as lateness and gossiping. Dixit and Singh (2019) explored the influence of EI on OCB and counterproductive work behavior and their findings indicated that the higher an employee's EI, the more employees indulge and OCB. Dixit and Singh's concluded that the more employees indulge in OCB, the less likely they are to engage in counterproductive work behavior. Samanta and Kallou (2020) supported Dixit and Singh's findings. Samanta and Kallou concluded that EI had a low tendency to participate in counterproductive work behaviors. Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) surveyed 380 managers and employees from various departments within two municipalities to challenge employees' systematic, rational thinking. Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler concluded that healthy emotional constructs and the EI of public workers enhanced job satisfaction and performance and reduced burnout, turnover intentions, and negligent workplace behaviors. EI was substantially and positively correlated with organizational behaviors, conscientiousness, courtesy, job satisfaction and work performance.

EI improves employees' interpersonal behavior in the workplace. Kaur (2014) surveyed 311 employed from the service sector and determined that employees with high EI exhibited less negative on-the-job behaviors such as indulging in gossip and rumors and disrupting others at work. Balogun (2017) empirically investigated the relationship between EI, organizational injustice, and organizational deviance by surveying 200

public sector employees. Balogun revealed that public sector employees with high EI

have a different perception of organizational injustice compared to employees with low

EI. Public sector employees with low EI are more likely to perceive their managers' and

co-workers' actions as distributive, interpersonal, and procedural injustice (Balogun,

2017). Employees with low EI are more likely to engage in organizationally deviant

behaviors.

Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Job Satisfaction

Managers can use EI to enhance their own and their employees' level of job

satisfaction and job performance. Employee satisfaction leads to organizational

commitment, reducing turnover, and inclining employee retention (Shaikh & Zahid,

2017; Zhen, 2020). Employees' organizational commitment and job performance play a

critical role in organizations' sustainable growth and development (Goswami & Mahanta,

2021; Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). Amjad (2018) and Bozionelos and Singh (2017) found

that EI enhances organizational commitment and job performance. Gopinath and Chitra

(2020) randomly sampled 217 employees and found a significant and positive correlation

between EI and job satisfaction. Emotionally intelligent employees perform better and or

more committed to their organizations compared to employees with low EI.

Managers must use their emotional abilities effectively when interacting with

employees. The interactions between managers and employees' actions and emotions in

the workplace can affect how they do business, job satisfaction, and job performance

(Alnidawy, 2015). EI is essential for achieving service sector outcomes. Emotionally

intelligent employees use EI during customer interactions to increase job satisfaction. EI

plays an important role in key organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction and job performance, especially when the emphasis is on human interaction (Malik et al., 2019; Othman & Muhsin, 2020). Job satisfaction is an indispensable aspect of all organizations (Hafsa, 2015). Job satisfaction is an optimistic emotional situation that occurs when an employee's work appears to accomplish fundamental occupational values (Hafsa, 2015). Researchers reported that employees with high EI are more satisfied with their jobs compared to employees with low EI (Hafsa, 2015; Trivellas et al., 2013). Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to leave their organizations.

Effective communication improves job satisfaction. Vermeir et al. (2018) explored communication and job satisfaction among critical care nurses and found that communication increased job satisfaction and decreased burnout and intention to leave. Mohammadi and Yekta (2018) surveyed 74 nurses from various departments and determined that EI improved communication, ultimately increasing job satisfaction. Vratskikh et al. (2016) sampled 354 public university employees and concluded that EI significantly influenced their job performance and satisfaction. Vratskikh et al. indicated that employees with high EI communicated better and were more open than employees with low EI. Vrakikh et al.'s research revealed that organizational success depended on the employees' job performance, which EI and job satisfaction influenced. Vratskikh et al. indicated that EI could be beneficial for self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Therefore, public sector employees should be emotionally self-aware to improve their job satisfaction and job performance levels.

Employees' EI helps them adapt to various work-related situations, which increases job satisfaction and ultimately reduces voluntary employee turnover. Employees with high EI are more likely to adapt to work tasks and changes in the workplace (Sony & Mekoth, 2016). Lee et al. (2020) indicated that public sector employees are subjected to more emotional distress than private sector employees due to their proximity to customers; therefore, handling their emotions is critical to their success. An employee's adaptability influences job satisfaction and job performance (Gale et al., 2017; Kuntz et al., 2017). An adaptable employee improves organizational performance and customer satisfaction (Kuntz et al., 2017; Plimmer et al., 2017). EI has been propounded as an influential factor for the performance of employees and it contributes to positive behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013). Rechberg (2019) concluded that EI enabled knowledge creation through emotional self-awareness and promoted employee citizenship behaviors such as organizational commitment and adaptability. Employees who can adapt to customers and various work-related situations are less likely to leave their positions.

Sony and Mekoth (2016) conducted a cross-sectional study with 517 employees from a power company. Sony and Mekoth examined if there was a relationship between EI, frontline employee adaptability, job satisfaction, and job performance in a public service organization. Sony and Mekoth's research findings revealed that EI had a positive influence on the employees' adaptability. The employees' adaptability mediated the relationship between EI and job satisfaction and job performance. Sony and Mekoth indicated that there was a positive relationship between the employees' adaptability, job

satisfaction, and job performance. An employees' adaptability enhances their job satisfaction and performance.

Employees in the healthcare industry handle emotional events such as accidents, births, deaths, and illnesses, which makes it imperative for them to perceive and regulate their emotions and perform effectively (Tagoe & Quarshie, 2016). Tagoe and Quarshie (2016) indicated that healthcare providers play a critical role in delivering quality healthcare; thus, it is crucial to understand what motivates them and the level to which the organization and other related variables satisfy them. Tagoe and Quarshie surveyed 120 registered nurses in three public hospitals to determine if there was a relationship between EI and job satisfaction. Tagoe and Quarshie's research revealed a positive correlation between EI and job satisfaction. Tagoe and Quarshie indicated that nurses who deploy a considerable amount of EI in their job performance were also likely to report higher job satisfaction levels than nurses with low EI. Employees who use EI to improve their job performance are more likely to remain with their organization.

Alnidawy (2015) surveyed 300 managers and employees in the Jordanian public telecommunication sector to determine if EI impacted their job satisfaction. Alnidawy determined that EI positively and significantly influenced job satisfaction. Alnidawy indicated that the participant's well-being, self-control, and emotionality also positively and significantly influenced their level of job satisfaction. Alnidawy's findings supported Taboli (2013) and Shooshtarian et al.'s (2013) research findings, which indicated that EI influences job satisfaction. Supramaniam and Singaravelloo (2020) found that EI directly affected public sector employees' level of job satisfaction, increasing organizational

performance. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs increase organizational performance by committing to tasks, being more creative and committed to overcoming work-related challenges, and creating an organizational culture that fosters teamwork (Limaj & Bernroider, 2019; Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2020). Employees with self-control, positive well-being, and emotionality are more likely to be satisfied with their job.

Job performance is a pivotal aspect of organizational research and practice because it plays a key role in most personnel decisions, such as promotion and retention of employees and merit-based compensation (Park et al., 2019; Ronen & Zuroff, 2017). EI contributes to job performance by allowing individuals to control their emotions, manage stress, and maintain good job performance while under pressure to adapt to organizational change, which is an important ability in the service sector (Dhani & Sharma, 2017). Managers who accurately use EI, intelligently use their emotions, especially in choosing an appropriate management style to increase job performance (Supratman et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2018). Managers with poor job performance negatively affect organizational performance and outcomes.

Managers and employees could use EI to further develop their skills in the workplace. Development of the performance of managers and employees is a significant concern for employees, organizations, and society as a whole (Chokkalingam et al., 2015). Failure to develop EI among managers and employees could lead to negative influences on task accomplishment (Akhtar, Ghufran, et al., 2017; Bozionelos & Singh, 2017), which decreases the growth and success of the individual and the organization.

Shooshtarian et al. (2013) conducted a study to determine the effect of laborers'
EI on their job satisfaction, job performance, and commitment. The study was conducted
in a Fars Province of Iran using a sample size of 289 employees. Shooshtarian et al.'s
research revealed a significant relationship between EI and job satisfaction. Employees
with high EI sought jobs that required high EI (Shooshtarian et al., 2013). Shooshtarian et
al.'s research concluded that there was not a significant relationship between EI and
commitment as a whole because employees with high EI have more job opportunities.
Shooshtarian et al. indicated that there is a significant relationship between EI and job
performance. Employees with high EI are more likely to perform better compared to
employees with low EI.

Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Voluntary Employee Turnover

EI is effective in reducing voluntary employee turnover. EI has attracted interest
from various fields because of its critical role in the workplace (Trivellas et al., 2013).
Researchers contended that EI is a crucial antecedent of work-related outcomes such as
intention to leave, actual turnover, job performance (Gong et al., 2019) and job
satisfaction (Sarangi et al., 2017). Scholars argued that one's intention to leave their
organization results from factors such as organizational commitment, lack of
organizational, management, and co-worker support, job satisfaction (Corin et al., 2016;
Kularathne & Senevirathne, 2020; Maan et al., 2020), and workplace and customer
conflict, including spared threats and violent behavior (Anastasiou, 2020; Corin et al.,
2016). Researchers found evidence that EI is negatively related to turnover and turnover
intention (Suifan et al., 2015; Trivellas et al., 2013; Vratskikh et al., 2016). EI can aid

managers in reducing voluntary employee turnover because they cannot only manage their emotions but also influence employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

EI increases an employee's organizational commitment and reduces voluntary employee turnover. Employees who feel supported by their managers and the organization are more committed to their organizations and perform better than employees who do not feel supported (Frear et al., 2017). Akhtar, Shabir, et al. (2017) surveyed 348 employees in different branches of the telecom industry and found that EI had a negative impact on employees' turnover intention. Akhtar, Shabir, et al. found that EI positively impacted the employees' commitment to the organization. Employees with high EI were more committed to the organization and had fewer turnover intentions compared to employees with low EI. Akhtar, Shabir, et al. concluded that when employees with high EI perceived high organizational support, their level of organizational commitment was high. Based on the results of their study, Akhtar, Shabir, et al. suggested that managers are trained on EI to recognize, regulate, and use their own emotions and the emotions of others. Akhtar et al.'s research supported the results of Akhtar, Shabir, et al.'s research study that suggested including EI in employee retention strategies because of its impact on employee turnover.

EI significantly impacts managers' and employees' levels of engagement and well-being in the workplace. Managers who engage their employees encourage them to meet organizational goals and decrease voluntary employee turnover (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Lee et al., 2018). Akhtar, Ghufran, et al. (2017) surveyed 395 employees from different banks and found that their level of EI affected their level of

engagement and well-being in the workplace. The employees' level of engagement and well-being influenced their intention to leave their jobs. Akhtar, Ghufran, et al. concluded that the employees' perception of organizational support had interactional effects on the relationship between EI, employee engagement, and employee well-being. The researchers concluded that EI must be included in organizational retention strategies because of EI's impact on employees' turnover intentions. Akhtar, Ghufran, et al. indicated that managers with high EI require high organizational support to maintain a high level of job satisfaction. Akhtar, Ghufran, et al. concluded that when emotionally intelligent managers have high organizational support from senior management, their intentions to leave their jobs decrease. Focusing on managers and employee well-being helps organizations increase employee satisfaction, which in turn increases organizational success and competitiveness.

EI builds trust among managers and employees. Employee perceptions of trust are essential for the long-term stability of organizations and their employees' well-being (Kularathne & Senevirathne, 2020; Nienaber et al., 2015) and employee empowerment and motivation, ultimately leading to improved organizational performance (Hardina et al., 2007; Vito, 2020). Employees who trust their managers are more likely to remain with their organizations compared to employees who lack trust in their managers (Afsar et al., 2018). Research studies conducted in corporate, education, manufacturing, and public health settings confirmed that EI and trust are positively correlated (Knight et al., 2015; Ugoani, 2015). Knight et al. (2015) indicated that EI and trust might also be factors that reduce voluntary turnover and predict organizational performance. Knight et al.

conducted a non-randomized cross-sectional study with 19 public health managers and 98 public health employees to determine the impact of EI on conditions of trust. Knight et al.'s research revealed a significant correlation between the managers' stress management and the aggregate measures of loyalty, trust, integrity, promise fulfillment, receptivity, and availability. Managers with high or average EI capacity could manage stress (Knight et al., 2015). Knight et al. indicated that turnover rates might be higher among public managers with a low capacity to manage stress, which might influence the employee's ability to trust their manager. Managers who can manage stress facilitate trust among their employees, enhance their employees' perception of their loyalty, and reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Voluntary Employee Turnover

Voluntary employee turnover has increasingly gained attention because it negatively affects organizations. Managers can use their EI to increase their employees' organizational commitment and reduce voluntary employee turnover. Rubenstein et al. (2017) define voluntary turnover as turnover that occurs when employees voluntarily leave their position. Voluntary turnover includes employee resignations for higher salaries and benefits, alternative career opportunities, job satisfaction, management behavior, and further education (Kularathne & Senevirathne, 2020; Zivkovic et al., 2020), and employee retirement (Newman et al., 2014). Researchers contend that voluntary employee turnover is severe and costly for organizations because it increases recruiting and hiring costs and decreases organizational performance (Dutta & Khatri, 2017; Singh,

2019; Sun & Wang, 2016). Therefore, organizations have placed more focus on voluntary employee turnover.

Employee turnover negatively affects all organizations. High employee turnover adversely affects an organizations' direct and indirect costs (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017). Direct costs include recruitment expenses, orientation, and training. Indirect costs include collapsing social capital, education expenses, and stress endured by current employees. Employee turnover causes organizations to spend additional money on recruiting and training new employees and increases the work and responsibilities of existing employees. Experienced employees often train new employees, leaving them less time to focus on their job responsibilities, which increases stress (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017). Voluntary turnover severely impacts the efficiency of the remaining employees (Dutta & Khatri, 2017), thus increasing the risk of not achieving organizational goals and decreasing productivity and profitability.

Employees leave their organizations for many reasons. Literature on voluntary employee turnover indicated that poor salaries and benefits, unrewarding work (Bake, 2019), lack of advancement opportunities and training (Jannat et al., 2020; Van der Voet & Vermeeren, 2017), job satisfaction (Shaikh & Zahid, 2017), work environment and person-job-fit (Hayes & Stazyk, 2019; Steen & Schott, 2018) contribute to voluntary employee turnover. Al Mamun and Hasan (2017) stated that poor interpersonal relationships contribute to employee turnover. Al Mamun and Hasan and Bake (2019) reported that ineffective management contributes to voluntary employee turnover. Managers who address determinants and challenges to employee turnover through

retention strategies are more likely to reduce employee turnover within their
organizations.

Managers face challenges with employee retention that retention strategies might
not prevent. Individuals sometimes leave their position regardless of being happy and
satisfied (Shaikh & Zahid, 2017). Managers must compete with other organizations for
experienced employees (Singh, 2019). Competing organizations that offer higher salaries
and better benefits are more attractive to experienced employees. Globalization
contributes to voluntary turnover because employees migrate from one country to another
for better opportunities and rewards (Singh, 2019). Dutta and Khatri (2017) indicated that
globalization is a persistent problem that plagues every organization at every level.
Managers cannot predict future employee job requirements; thus, they cannot take
corrective action (Singh, 2019). Although managers cannot prevent all employees from
voluntarily leaving their positions, they should address problematic areas in their
employee retention strategies to improve overall employee retention.

Researchers indicated that human resources (HR) practices and employee job
dissatisfaction are key reasons employees leave their positions (Al Mamun & Hasan,
2017; Azeez, 2017). HR practices include overseeing leadership, compensation and
rewards, job security, support, training and development, organizational culture, and
organization justice (Azeez, 2017). If HR practices are well managed and organized in
addressing employees' needs and demands, it will lead to job satisfaction and reduce
employee turnover. Employees who are happy with their jobs are less likely to leave their
organizations compared to unhappy employees (Lee et al., 2018; Rose & Raja, 2016).

Rose and Raja (2016) surveyed 180 employees of selected IT companies and found employee satisfaction played a significant role in the employees' commitment to their organizations. Rose and Raja's research revealed that good HR practices impacted organizational commitment. HR must attract, develop, and retain the right employees to achieve high-performance levels and increase business outcomes (Rose & Raja, 2016). Good HR practices and employee job satisfaction increase organizational commitment and, in turn, decrease voluntary employee turnover.

Intricate interpersonal relationships across varying departments significantly impact employee turnover because varying departments create multiple sections or groups (Zhang, 2016). Various sections or groups can complicate how employees deal with coworkers and manager relationships or force employees to spend a lot of energy on interpersonal relationships within their departments, which increases the likelihood that they will leave the organization (Zhang, 2016). Sound employee retention plans that address interpersonal relationships reduce individual employee isolation and strengthens their sense of connection to peers and belongingness to their organizations (Sun & Wang, 2016). Sound employee retention strategies motivate employees to remain with the organization (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017) and promote healthy interpersonal relationships. Managers must build sound employee retention plans and promote positive relationships between managers and employees within the organization to aid in reducing voluntary employee turnover.

Training and learning opportunities substantially affect employee turnover because employees are more likely to leave the organization when they cannot enhance

their skills and abilities (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017; Jannat et al., 2020; Wei et al., 2020). However, increased employee turnover makes it difficult for managers to implement effective training programs because employee turnover is unpredictable (Ahmed et al., 2015). Al Mamun and Hasan (2017) indicated that employees are less likely to achieve self-realization if there are limited opportunities to grow within the organization. Wei et al. (2020) noted that employees with opportunities to grow and develop are less likely to burn out compared to employees with limited opportunities. Burnout leads to low job satisfaction and ultimately higher employee turnover (Day et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2020). Employees are more likely to leave an organization if there is little opportunity for growth.

Organizational culture affects employee turnover. Organizational culture influences employee job satisfaction, wellbeing, work performance, and organizational commitment (Limaj & Bernroider, 2019; Vito, 2020). Sun and Wang (2016) reported that organizations must try to generate a desirable organizational culture. Employee recognition and performance appraisal are essential components of organizational culture because it is linked to staff retention (Sharma & Sharma, 2017; Vito, 2020). Employees are more likely to remain with an organization if managers show appreciation for their employees, treat them with respect, and compensate them for their work and dedication (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017; Chenevert et al., 2021; Vito, 2020). Koodamara et al. (2020) and Sharma and Sharma (2017) indicated that managers who praise their employees' work performance increased their employees' perception of fairness and job satisfaction. A lack of employee recognition contributes to employee turnover; therefore, managers

must genuinely appreciate and recognize their employees' work. Managers must

acknowledge their employees' efforts and direct them towards their growth in their career

paths with their respective organizations (Mathimaran & Kumar, 2017; Shaikh & Zahid,

2017). When employees are recognized for their efforts and shown respect, it promotes a

positive organizational culture while possibly reducing voluntary employee turnover.

A supportive organizational culture can reduce employee turnover (Arici, 2018;

Kossivi et al., 2016; Sarhan et al., 2020). Sarhan et al. (2020) collected data from 248

hotel employees and concluded that employees who worked in a bureaucratic and

supportive environment were more committed to their organization than employees in an

unsupportive environment. Employees with low levels of support and recognition from

management are more likely to leave their positions compared to employees whose

managers do not acknowledge their efforts (Koo et al., 2019; Vito, 2020). Riyanto and

Panggabean (2020) found that organizational culture positively and significantly

influenced employee job satisfaction. Voluntary employee turnover can negatively affect

all organizations; however, not all organizations endure the same challenges as public

sector organizations.

Voluntary Turnover: Public Sector-Specific Issues

Decreasing voluntary employee turnover is a vital task for public sector managers.

Many public sector organizations are challenged with high employee turnover and a

severe lack of qualified employees (Ludviga et al., 2016). Public sector organizations

experience situations such as hiring freezing and employee retirement. Public sector

government and some other public sector organizations are subject to hiring freezes

(Piatak, 2018). During a hiring freeze, separation results in a short-term loss of a position that can turn into a long-term loss (Piatak, 2018). Bright (2013) indicated that within the next 10 to 15 years, all levels of government will be significantly affected by the vastly large amount of retiring public sector employees. Public sector managers might have little discretion over employee compensation, promotions, and benefits, which negatively affects employees' job satisfaction (Iqbal et al., 2020; Sun & Wang, 2016). The high rate of voluntary turnover in the public sector makes voluntary employee turnover an important area of research.

When public sector organizations experience high employee turnover, it negatively affects the organization and customers or community. High employee turnover is detrimental to organizational performance because it creates additional costs to replace employees, disrupts service delivery, and decreases productivity in public sector organizations (Knies et al., 2018; Sun & Wang, 2016). Organizations with high employee turnover could pay more unemployment taxes through a payroll tax than organizations with low employee turnover. High voluntary employee turnover decreases employee morale, productivity, and service quality and increases tasks for the remaining employees (Al Habil et al., 2017; Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Low employee turnover increases productivity, employee incentives, and helps maintain high service delivery (Fahim, 2018). Sun and Wang's (2016) research revealed that recruiting and retaining a sustainable number of employees is critical when dealing with inadequate organizational performance. Organizations must diligently select, recruit, and place the suitable candidates in the right positions (Abolade, 2018). Placing suitable candidates in the right

positions could reduce employee turnover (Abolade, 2018) and, in turn, allow public

sector organizations to reduce the number of taxpayer dollars spent on recruiting and

training new employees.

Job dissatisfaction is one of the main reasons that employees intend to or actually

leave their positions. Sun and Wang (2016) indicated that job dissatisfaction is the most

important push-to-leave among public sector employees. However, the literature on job

dissatisfaction among public and private sector employees has produced mixed results

(Zeffane & Melhem, 2017). Some researchers concluded that public sector employees

tend to be more satisfied with their jobs and have lower turnover intentions and lower

actual turnover (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017; Zeffane & Melhem, 2017). Other researchers

indicated that private-sector employees tend to have higher job satisfaction compared to

public sector employees (Burke & Singh, 2016). The difference in research studies on

employee job satisfaction in public and private sector organizations appears to be

contextual and, in some cases, country-specific (Zeffane & Melhem, 2017). Researchers

concur that job dissatisfaction leads to higher turnover intentions and increases the

likelihood that employees will leave their positions in both sectors (Mundia, 2019;

Zeffane & Melhem, 2017). Employees are likely to leave their organizations if they are

dissatisfied with the job.

Voluntary turnover has a financial and economic impact on public sector

organizations and the citizens they serve. Voluntary turnover negatively influences the

organization's profitability (De Winne et al., 2019). High turnover could result in the

community receiving compromised goods and services. Taxpayers incur the costs

associated with low retention rates in public sector organizations (; Izard-Carroll, 2016). These costs could create negative publicity and exacerbate citizen's often unfavorable view of the public sector (Cregard et al., 2017). Managers who reduce voluntary employee turnover rates could decrease the number of taxpayer dollars spent to fund business operations.

Voluntary turnover can be detrimental to organizations because it is expensive, results in the loss of experienced employees, and adversely affects organizational performance (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Organizations lose valuable expertise and institutional knowledge and incur more costs when employees leave. Goodman et al. (2015) and Ncoyini and Cilliers (2020) indicated that public sector organizations employ more knowledgeable employees compared to the private sector. Critical shortages of qualified employees often challenge public sector organizations (Fahim, 2018; Sun & Wang, 2016). Turnover decreases organizational performance because experienced employees must divide their attention between core service tasks and the socialization of new employees. In contrast, new employees spend time learning work tasks and gaining experience (Purba et al., 2016). The demand for public sector employees with the required knowledge and skills exceeds the number of available employees, which creates a substantial imbalance in the labor market (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2008). Public sector organizations need highly knowledgeable employees who are committed and engaged to stay productive and competitive (Gyensare et al., 2017). Public sector organizations with an adequate number of experienced employees are more likely to remain competitive compared to organizations with high employee turnover.

Recruiting and training new employees can be costly for an organization (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017). Previous research in the private sector estimated that the cost of turnover is 50% - 200% of the employee's annual salary (Newman et al., 2014). Valzania (2017) indicated that replacing the right employee could cost an estimated 30% to 400% of an employee's annual salary, with the average rate being 150%. The cost to replace an employee is conditioned by the individual's skill set, experience, performance, and network (Valzania, 2017). It is less expensive for organizations to train current employees compared to recruiting and training new employees.

The public sector managers' role is a multifaceted assignment that can enhance the rate of voluntary turnover (Cregard & Corin, 2019), organizational conflicts, and negative social relationships (Terason, 2018). Managers in public sector organizations are challenged with competing demands and interests, and ethical dilemmas (Cregard et al., 2017; Franken et al., 2020) while often working under a government budget that is usually threatened by budget cuts and reforms (Cregard et al., 2017). Public sector managers are challenged with delivering public services efficiently and legally (Cregard et al., 2017; Steen & Schott, 2018) and aligning the organization with a continuously changing environment. Parke and Seo (2016) indicated that public sector managers are responsible for motivating their employees to establish a positive atmosphere and delivering good customer service. Managers are responsible for their employees' job performance, the development of public organizations (Cregard et al., 2017), and aiding in reducing voluntary employee turnover.

Public sector managers often face challenging working conditions while tasks with reducing voluntary employee turnover. Public sector managers' working conditions are typically characterized by high job demands, combined with limited job resources such as support and control (Plimmer et al., 2021). Researchers suggested that demands and resources such as a lack of job control (Cregard et al., 2017) and team climate and organizational culture (Bedi & Bedi, 2017; Nikpour, 2017) influenced actual managerial turnover in the public sector. Corin et al. (2016) studied the role of psychological working conditions on manager turnover and turnover intentions in multiple public sector organizations by surveying over 700 managers from all levels. Corin et al.'s research revealed that managers with scarce job resources experienced high levels of workplace and customer conflict and lacked support from employees displayed the highest number of turnover intentions. Managers can use EI to cope with high employee turnover, high job demands, and the lack of resources, support, and control.

In addition to voluntary employee turnover, public sector organizations are also challenged by voluntary turnover among managers. Corin et al. (2016) indicated that four out of 10 public sector managers are expected to retire within the next 10 years. Public sector organizations are also at risk of losing additional managers because of voluntary turnover (Corin et al., 2016). In the public sector, high managerial turnover can increase organizational costs and decrease the quality and stability of the services provided to customers. Retaining experienced managers could reduce voluntary employee turnover (Corin et al., 2016). Managers with low EI are more likely to leave their position when they have negative developmental job experiences (Feyerabend et al., 2018). Managers

with low EI are more likely to leave their position due to job complexities compared to managers with high EI (Parke & Seo, 2016). However, the empirical literature on managerial turnover and turnover intentions in the public sector is limited (Corin et al., 2016; Cregard et al., 2017). A study on managerial turnover and turnover intentions in the public sector could provide insight into why managers leave their positions.

Strategies to Reduce Voluntary Employee Turnover

Employee turnover is inevitable; however, managers can reduce voluntary turnover by developing effective employee retention strategies. Employee retention strategies begin with the organization (Dibble, 1999; Nasir & Mahmood, 2018). Employee retention strategies are a critical part of an organization's vision, values, mission, and policies (Cloutier et al., 2015). Employees accept the organization's vision, values, mission, and policies through effective communication from management at all levels (Cloutier et al., 2015; Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). Unhealthy communication within organizations leads to a poor working environment, which leads to voluntary employee turnover (Chahal, 2017). Organizations without effective employee retention strategies will have higher voluntary employee turnover compared to organizations with effective strategies.

A strategic employee retention plan includes various factors that mitigate voluntary employee turnover. Cloutier et al. (2015) found that organizations must address factors that contribute to employee turnover and develop a strategic retention plan to achieve organizational and economic goals. A strategic employee retention plan must demonstrate the organization's need to commit to employee retention beginning with the

organization's vision, values, mission, and policies (Cloutier et al., 2015). A strategic

retention plan encourages diversity and transparency. The plan must center on recruiting

the right employees and an assessment to determine if potential employees are a good fit

for the organization. Hayes and Stazyk's (2019) research findings determined that

employees who perceive themselves as compatible with their organizations are more

likely to remain with the organization than employees who do not feel compatible. A

strategic retention plan supports the notion that organizations should provide employee

training and development opportunities (Cloutier et al., 2015). A sound strategic retention

plan that includes every aspect of the organization's principles and operations facilitates

organizational and economic goals.

Developing retention strategies aimed at retaining experienced and talented

employees is vital to organizational success. Managers must develop appropriate

strategies for retaining valued employees (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017). Implementing

effective training development plans improves retention rates and employee

organizational commitment among top performers (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017).

Retaining the best employees provides organizations with a competitive advantage (Al

Mamun & Hasan, 2017). Managers must develop appropriate strategies for retaining

valued employees.

For long-term retention, organizations must develop an inclusive motivational

process that focuses on compensation and nurturing organizational commitment among

employees (Sarmad et al., 2016). Ramson et al. (2016) indicated that retention strategies

for public sector organizations must offer financial and non-financial incentives that

allow employees to maintain a long and productive organizational commitment. Financial incentives aimed at employee retention might include bursaries, loan repayment programs, and service-linked scholarships (Ramson et al., 2016); however, few studies have shown the effectiveness and outcome of financial incentives (Landry et al., 2017; Montani et al., 2017). Retention strategies that offer non-financial incentives include continuous professional development (Ramson et al., 2016). Sarmad et al. (2016) surveyed 112 public sector oil and gas employees and concluded that motivation significantly affected employee retention. Sarmad et al. concluded that employee compensation also impacted employee retention. Organizations should conduct periodic reviews of their employees' compensation and take pragmatic steps to revise compensation policies while considering increases in their employees' cost of living (Sarmad et al., 2016). Sarmad et al.'s research revealed that employees must be financially comfortable to remain with an organization. Montani et al. (2017) concluded that managers who use employee recognition strategies enhanced their employees' level of involvement and work performance. Organizations would benefit from developing retention strategies that help motivate employees through compensation. Retention strategies that include financial and non-financial incentives promote organizational commitment and reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Transition

Section 1 of this study encompassed the background of the study, the problem and purpose statements, and the nature of this single qualitative case study. In addition, Section 1 included the interview questions, operational definitions, and conceptual

framework of the study. The last two components of Section 1 are the significance of the study and a review of the professional and academic literature. The literature review includes theories that shaped the conceptual framework for this study and exhaustive synthesis of current research relevant to EI, emotional self-awareness, and employee turnover. I found that voluntary employee turnover is detrimental to public sector organizations. Incorporating emotional self-awareness in employee retention strategies could aid managers in reducing voluntary employee turnover in public sector organizations.

Section 2 of this study details the processes and procedures involved in this single case study. Section 2 of this study includes the research method and design for this study. The role of the researcher, participants, population and sampling, and the significance of conducting ethical research are outlined in Section 2. Other components in this section explain the data collection, organization, and analysis processes, in addition to how I ensured reliability and validity in qualitative research and this research study. Using a single case study research design, I explored how managers use emotional self-awareness strategies to reduce employee turnover. I collected data from participants through semistructured interviews and by reviewing official documents. I analyzed the data using Yin's (2015) five-step data analysis process.

In Section 3, I present the research findings, discuss the applications for business improvement, and the implications for social change. I include reflections from my research and provide a concluding statement to finalize Section 3. Section 3 provides

recommendations for future research on emotional self-awareness and strategies to

reduce voluntary employee turnover in the public sector.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case research study was to identify and explore public sector middle managers' strategies for using emotional self-awareness strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The targeted population consisted of five middle managers with one agency throughout Georgia, with a minimum of 3 years in their managerial role who, using emotional self-awareness strategies, have reduced employee turnover. The positive social impact of this study could improve the quality of services, public goods, and governmental services such as housing and food assistance while reducing the number of taxpayer dollars spent on recruiting and training new employees.

Role of the Researcher

I was the research instrument for this study. The researcher is a pivotal aspect of qualitative research because the researcher is the data collection instrument (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The role of the researcher includes data collection, data analysis (Schoenherr et al., 2015), safeguarding the participants' and organizations' identifiable information (Gajewski, 2013), and protecting the rights of human participants (Mitchell & Wellings, 2013). When conducting research, scholars must report all data and separate their personal perceptions, morals, values, and beliefs from the study (Cairney & St. Denny, 2015). As the researcher, I collected and analyzed data, safeguarded identifiable information, protected the participant's rights, and ensured that the study's findings are the perspectives of the participants and not my own.

My management experiences in the public sector inspired my interest in emotional self-awareness and employee turnover in public sector organizations. Researchers typically select a research topic based on their interest and thorough literature reviews (Bhatti et al., 2014). I did not have a professional or personal relationship with the participants of this study.

As the researcher in this study, I facilitated semistructured interviews, analyzed data, conducted a member checking process, and synthesized collected data to answer my research question. Researchers use an interview protocol to promote consistency during interviews and educate participants on what to expect during the interview process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I used an interview protocol for each participant interview (Appendix A) to ensure consistency. Before conducting interviews, I disclosed all relevant information about the research study to all participants and ensured that they understood the purpose of the study and their role as the participant. I asked open-ended questions during the interviews, which enabled the participants to share their experiences openly.

One of the roles of the researcher is to minimize or eliminate opportunities for bias within the research study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). There is a participant and researcher bias or worldview in all social research, intentionally and unintentionally (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Therefore, researchers cannot separate themselves from the research. The interpretations of emotional self-awareness and voluntary employee turnover must represent the participant, not the interviewer. I bracketed my personal experiences with the phenomenon being investigated. Bracketing personal experiences

allows the research process to be rooted solely on the research topic and questions (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing my personal experiences with self-awareness and turnover in public sector management allowed me to recognize when to separate personal insights from research data, to perceive the topic from the participants' perspective, and thus to reduce biased interpretations (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I bracketed my personal experiences of using emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover by maintaining a reflective journal. Maintaining a reflective journal can increase researchers' ability to bracket their personals experiences by sustaining a reflective stance (Cengiz et al., 2014).

The Belmont Report (1979) summarized ethical principles and guidelines that scholars must abide by when conducting research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The ethical principles are (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Respect for persons refers to the researcher's responsibility to treat people as autonomous beings and ensure that vulnerable individuals receive additional protection (Miracle, 2016). The principle of beneficence refers to the researcher's obligation to protect participants from harm (Miracle, 2016). The principle of justice refers to the researcher's responsibility to treat participants fairly and equally (Miracle, 2016, (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).). I abided by the Belmont Report's ethical principles by

respecting the participants, protecting the participants from harm by maintaining

confidentiality, and treating all participants fairly and equally.

Participants

Middle managers who successfully use emotional self-awareness to develop

employee retention strategies participated in this study. Researchers must ensure that

participants have sufficient experience to provide information about the phenomenon

being studied (Hoyland et al., 2015). I selected participants for this case study using

purposeful criterion-based sampling. The targeted population for this study included five

public sector middle managers with one agency in the state of Georgia with a minimum

of 3 years of experience in their managerial role who used emotional self-awareness

strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The selected managers were

responsible for frontline case managers who provide case management services and

resources to individuals in a specific age group. The agency consisted of numerous

regions throughout the state of Georgia and all regions offer case management services.

The number of managers in each region varied and there are over 100 middle managers

throughout the state. According to the agency's policy and training manual, employees

should have the skill sets to establish and sustain interpersonal relationships with

customers, use problem-solving skills and techniques, and assist hostile and angry

customers, all of which coincide with EI competencies.

I interviewed middle managers for this study. Middle managers are departmental,

divisional, or sectional and other executive officers who are attached to and oversee

various departments within an organization (Clements, 2015; Niles, 1949). Middle

managers are positioned in the middle of organizations between the highest-level managers and the employees; therefore, their position is crucial to their organization (Lleo et al., 2017; Rezvani, 2017). Middle managers are liaisons between high-level and supervisory managements (Clements, 2015; Niles, 1949); thus, they are often referred to as the organization's adhesive or glue (Hawrysz & Hys, 2014). Middle managers influence organizational strategy by experimenting with novel practices and initiatives (Glaser et al., 2016; Heyden et al., 2018). I selected middle managers for this study because they translate and implement strategies into operational goals and have more direct interactions with employees than senior management.

Researchers utilize several strategies to obtain permission to interview participants. Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) suggested that scholars visit businesses in person, call the organization and speak with organizational leaders, or email the human resources department to obtain permission to collect data from the institutions. I followed the agency's chain of command to acquire authorization to interview participants. Gandy (2015) recommended visiting prospective organizations and contacting them by e-mail are effective strategies for securing consent because it allows researchers the opportunity to provide significant information about the research study to make a decision. I contacted the agency's president to request permission to interview managers within the agency. I then emailed the directors in each region and informed them of the study's purpose, how confidentially would be maintained, the interview process, and the risks of participating in the study. The directors granted permission to interview middle managers and included the names of potential participants in their email responses.

Before conducting interviews, I contacted each participant to discuss employee retention and emotional self-awareness to ensure they were knowledgeable about the topic. The research quality depends on the researcher's ability to recruit participants with extensive knowledge of the research phenomena (Moscovitch et al., 2015). According to Barry et al. (2014), failure to select suitable participants affects the reliability and validity of research studies. I spoke with each participant and confirmed that their knowledge aligned with my overarching research question. I established a working relationship with participants by engaging them as soon as I obtained permission from Walden's institutional review board (IRB), being transparent about the study, providing an opportunity to withdraw from the study before or during their interviews, and following the Belmont Report's (1979) ethical principles and guidelines for conducting research.

Research Method and Design

For this research study, I used the qualitative research method with a single case study design. Researchers can choose from three traditional research methods, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method. Methodology refers to the philosophy and framework fundamentally connected to the entire research process (Opoku et al., 2016). A case study is an in-depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey (Giesbers et al., 2016). Researchers use the case study design to explore the experiences of a specific person, situation, group, or organization over a period to gain a holistic understanding of the factors that contributed to the problem (Keenan et al., 2005). I chose a case study design because I studied a specific phenomenon in a specific entity.

Research Method

I selected a qualitative research method for this study. Researchers use qualitative research methods to develop and implement their interpersonal and subjectivity skills into their exploratory research practices (Alase, 2017). Qualitative research methods are well-established, vital methods of inquiry for the social sciences and applied fields, such as management, community development, and social work (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative research methods involve multiple interactive and humanistic methods to explore a particular topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). When using qualitative research methods, researchers use words and images to understand social constructs and interpret the meanings and explanations of people's behavior (Opoku et al., 2016). A key advantage of using a qualitative method is the ability to create rich, in-depth data (Opoku et al., 2016). Compared to quantitative research methods, qualitative research methods are better for obtaining critical preliminary insights about the phenomenon being studied (Opoku et al., 2016). Qualitative research aids management when exploring strategies, especially troubling issues that are essential to the main research questions of a research inquiry (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Therefore, the qualitative research method was more appropriate for this research inquiry.

A quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study. Quantitative research methods explore measurements or relationships between and among variables (Opoku et al., 2016). Quantitative researchers usually collect data through structured interviews or surveys, not in-depth investigations about a phenomenon (Rahman, 2017a). However, data for this study was collected through open-ended interview questions.

Quantitative research methods focus on aspects of social behavior that can be quantified and patterned instead of identifying and interpreting the meanings and explanations of people's behavior (Rahman, 2017a). One advantage of using quantitative research methods is that the research study results can be generalized to a broader population (Brockington, 2014). Quantitative research methods can also be used to test theories or hypotheses (Opoku et al., 2016). Although quantitative research methods have considerable advantages, some phenomena are easier to understand using a qualitative research method (Yilmaz, 2013). I did not examine relationships between variables or conduct surveys; therefore, a quantitative methodology was not appropriate for this study.

A mixed-method research methodology was not appropriate for this study either. Mixed-method research combines qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed-method research answers a broader range of research questions and enhances the researcher's ability to generalize the research findings (Opoku et al., 2016). Using mixed-method research allows researchers to use the strength of one method to overpower the weakness of another method (Opoku et al., 2016). Mix method research requires researchers to develop new skills and data collection is time-consuming (Opoku et al., 2016). A mixed-method approach was not appropriate for this study because I did not integrate qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The advantage of using a qualitative research approach for this study was that I gained new insight and detailed descriptions of the managers' turnover reduction experiences and their emotional self-awareness strategies. The qualitative research approach allowed me to gather essential information by asking questions during face-to-

face interviews that a close-ended survey cannot adequately answer (McCusker &
Gunaydin, 2015; Szolnoki & Hoffman, 2013), monitor nonverbal cues, and clarify
ambiguous responses (Maxwell, 2013). An online or close-ended survey limits the
researcher's understanding of the participant's answers (Szolnoki & Hoffman, 2013).
Conducting virtual face-to-face interviews with participants allowed me to ask in-depth
questions about my research question.

There are disadvantages to using a qualitative research method (Rahman, 2017a).
Qualitative researchers occasionally neglect contextual sensitivities and concentrate more
on experiences and meanings (Rahman, 2017a). A small sample size increases the
concern of generalizability to the whole research population (Harry & Lipsky, 2014;
Rahman, 2017a). Qualitative research is sometimes given low creditability or not
accepted by policymakers (Rahman, 2017a). Although there are disadvantages in using
qualitative research methods, the qualitative research method was appropriate for this
study.

Using a qualitative research method in research studies can result in inaccurate
data outcomes and negatively affect the validity of the study (Zohrabi, 2013). The
qualitative research method can be time-consuming because there is no time restraint
when gathering data (Zohrabi, 2013). The possibility that the researcher will overlook
crucial information increases because the participants have more control. For this study, I
was the key instrument for collecting data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Qualitative data are
hard to predict; therefore, people in powerful positions might question the credibility of
the data (Rahman, 2017a).

Research Design

I used a case study design for this research study. Researchers must choose the right research method and design for their study because the design influences the researcher's conclusions about a phenomenon (Alase, 2017). A research design is the foundation of a study that aids researchers in answering the research questions (Miles et al., 2014). The five main qualitative research designs are case study, ethnographic, narrative, phenomenology, and grounded theory (Yin, 2015). While ethnographic, narrative research, and phenomenological designs offer advantages, the case study design was chosen because it is aligned with my research question.

The case study method allowed me to answer the research question and address what I explored in the problem statement. Case studies can be used to analyze and solve business problems and for building and investigating business theories (Dul & Hak, 2008; Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). A case study is bound by time and activity, relies on cases rather than a sample or population, and requires the researcher to collect data using a variety of resources (Yin, 2014). The case study design is based on flexibility, which allowed more freedom to explore the essence of the participants' experiences during interviews (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). The case study design allowed me to perform an in-depth analysis of the participant's expressions and behavioral patterns when asked about the topic of this research study.

The single case study design was more aligned with the intentions of this research study. Case studies help researchers understand complex social phenomena and real-life events such as managerial processes (Yin, 2014). Researchers use a multiple case study

design when conducting an in-depth investigation of multiple cases (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Researchers use a single case study design when exploring a specific phenomenon that arises from a specific entity (Heale & Twycross, 2018). I studied voluntary employee turnover in one agency throughout the state of Georgia.

I considered using several qualitative research designs for this study. Those designs included the ethnographic, phenomenology, and narrative research designs; however, they were ruled out because the structure of the designs were not aligned with what I intended to study. The ethnographic design mandates the researcher to observe the phenomena while being immersed in the participants' culture over a prolonged period, which requires an extensive time commitment in the field (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014). The narrative research design requires that the researcher study the participants' lives, asks one or more participants to provide stories about their lives, and is appropriate in situations that reoccur over a long period of time (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers use the phenomenological design to explore, describe, and analyze a phenomenon based on the participant's lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Sambhava et al., 2016). I intended to study the participant's beliefs or organizational culture, their stories about a phenomenon, or their lived experiences; therefore, a case study design was more appropriate for this study. I intended to use a case design to explore emotional self-awareness strategies used by managers to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Qualitative researchers must achieve data saturation (Colombo et al., 2016). Data saturation occurs when researchers repetitively see or hear the same information,

patterns, or themes when additional data is collected and newly collected data does not result in new information, coding, or themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Fusch and Ness (2015) indicated that failure to achieve data saturation affects the content validity of the research study. I achieved data saturation by interviewing participants until no new information, patterns, or themes emerged from their interviews. If data saturation was not achieved during interviews with five participants, I would have interviewed additional participants until data saturation was achieved.

Population and Sampling

Population

The participants for this study were five public sector middle managers with the official title of manager, who adhered to the same statewide policies and procedures, work with the same population. A research population is generally a large group of individuals or objects with similar characteristics that researchers intend to study (Emmel, 2015; Yin, 2014). Colombo et al. (2016) recommended that scholars align their chosen population with their central research question. To align the population with my central research study, I collected data from public sector managers throughout the state of Georgia who met the criteria for this study.

Guy and Lee (2015) and Hsieh (2014) indicated that law enforcement, government, public education, protective services for adults and children, social work, public safety, and victim services have jobs that contain emotionally intense work demands. The participants for this study were responsible for ensuring that customers received home and community services; therefore, they are likely to work in an

emotionally driven workplace. Managers could use EI, specifically emotional self-awareness, to manage their employees and address the organizational and individual factors that could lead to employees' decisions to leave their organizations. I emailed potential participants and asked questions to ensure that they qualified to participate in the study.

Sample Size

The sample size for the research study was five middle managers within a public sector agency. In qualitative research, the adequacy of the sample size pertains to the appropriateness of the sample composition and size (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Sample sizes in qualitative research are typically small to support the depth of case-oriented analysis (Vasileiou et al., 2018). When planning sample sizes, the goal of qualitative researchers is not to determine how large the sample is but to collect reliable data to gain a thorough understanding of the research problem (Colombo et al., 2016). The goal of qualitative research is to describe, explain, and interpret a phenomenon, not generalize the study results to an entire population (Maxwell, 2013). Small sample sizes can be used when conducting a case study if the researcher collects data from at least two independent sources (Morse, 2015b). Boddy (2016) indicated that a single case study involving as few as one research participant could be significant, highly informative, and generate valuable insight if the researcher justifies the sample size. A sample size of five was appropriate for this study.

The usefulness of the data for this study depended on the participants' knowledge and skills. Case study researchers must choose participants with adequate knowledge and

experience relevant to the research topic (Heywood et al., 2015). Participants with significant experience and expertise in the research topic provide new insight to help answer the research question (Heywood et al., 2015). Knowledgeable participants help create a fuller and more in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon (Hoyland et al., 2015). I interviewed five public sector managers with at least 3 years of experience in their current position, who successfully used emotional self-awareness strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Participants for this study were chosen using purposeful criterion-based sampling based on self-reports. Sampling refers to the process of selecting a portion of a population to represent the entire population (Naderifar et al., 2017). Researchers must plan a sampling process (Naderifar et al., 2017). Purposeful sampling is generally used in qualitative research to identify and select exceptionally information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling involved identifying and selecting individuals who are especially knowledgeable about using emotional self-awareness strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. In addition to knowledge and experience, participants needed to be available and willing to participate and express, articulate, and reflect on their opinions and experiences (Bernard, 2002). Researchers use purposeful criterion-based sampling to identify and select participants who meet predetermined criteria for participation in their research study (Palinkas et al., 2015). I screened potential participants to ensure that they had knowledge of the phenomena being studied and met my criteria were participating in the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). I applied purposeful criterion-based sampling to this research inquiry because middle

managers with the agency work in an emotionally driven workplace. I used the

purposeful criterion-based sampling technique to locate five middle managers with a

minimum of 3 years in their managerial role who reduced voluntary employee turnover

using emotional self-awareness strategies. The directors included the names of potential

participants [managers] in their email. I selected participants from a list of employees

provided by the directors. After selecting potential participants, I contacted them and

asked questions to ensure they qualified to participate in the study.

     Researchers must gain an adequate level of information for their research study

through data saturation (Colombo et al., 2016). Data saturation refers to the point at

which researchers gain an adequate level of depth and breadth of information (Fusch &

Ness, 2015). Researchers accomplish data saturation when newly collected data does not

result in new information, coding, or themes (Fusch & Ness). Failure to achieve data

saturation affects the content validity of the research study (Fusch & Ness, 2015);

therefore, the researcher must determine the appropriate sample size for data saturation

(Yin, 2014). Scholars can enhance the reliability and validity of a qualitative research

study through data saturation (Morse, 2015a). I achieved data saturation by asking middle

managers six specific, open-ended interview questions and comparing their responses

until no new information or themes emerge from participant interviews. If data saturation

was not achieved during interviews with five participants, I would have interviewed

additional participants until data saturation was achieved.

Interview Setting

I interviewed the participants separately and privately in a location chosen by

each participant to increase their level of comfort and privacy. If participants could not

meet in person, I conducted each interview separately and privately via Zoom, a web

video conference application. Qualitative interviews are an essential research method

because they are viewed as one of the best ways to understand another person's

perspective (Patton, 2002). Choosing an interview setting is an essential phase in the

research planning process because the environment and logistics could influence the

participant's comfort level and how they respond to interview questions (Marshall &

Rossman, 2016). Researchers must choose an interview setting that allows participants to

comfortably share information without concerns for their privacy (Robinson, 2014). The

best sites for conducting participant interviews are where the researcher may obtain entry

and where participants can easily access the site (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Additionally, researchers must select interview sites with minimal risk to the quality and

credibility of the research data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I contacted the participants

before interviews to allow them to select an interview date and time that was conducive

to their schedules.

<div align="center">

Ethical Research

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The data collection process did not begin until I received IRB approval from

Walden University. Scholars must obtain IRB approval before collecting data for a

research study (Fiske & Hauser, 2014). The Walden IRB approval number is 01-20-21-

0738455. In addition to obtaining IRB approval, scholars must request permission from

the prospective organization and provide participants with a consent form (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). Researchers must complete the informed consent process. Informed consent is a process that researchers use to provide potential participants with adequate information about the study, allowing them to make an informed decision about participating in the study (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). Informed consent is a mechanism to protect research participants (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). During the informed consent process, scholars, must allow potential participants to ask questions and sign a voluntary agreement to participate in the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Participation in this study was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw from this study at any time. One of the most important ethical concerns in research is informing the participants that their participation is voluntary, and they have the option to withdraw from the study at any time (Moustakas, 1994). When a participant asks to withdraw from the study, researchers must suspend all interactions or communications with the participant and destroy all data collected from the participant (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). Participants received information about the withdrawal process and the importance of requesting to withdraw from the study before the data analysis process began on the consent form and verbally at the onset of each interview. Participants were able to withdraw from the study before or during interviews by notifying me during the interview or beforehand via telephone call or email.

Once I received approval to conduct research, I contacted potential participants through email and telephone to screen them and allow them to ask questions in advance. It was during this conversation that I ensured that each potential participant understood that the conversation was confidential and the interview would be conducted in private via video conferencing application. The purposeful sampling technique was used until five managers who met the study's criteria agreed to participate in the study.

Researchers can offer participants incentives such as money, gift cards, or items of monetary value; however, scholars must ensure that the value of the incentives does not affect the quality or reliability of the data participants provide (Bouter, 2015). Offering participants incentives can help researchers recruit subjects to improve the reliability and validity of the findings (Mduluza et al., 2013). Though offering incentives is useful and can help researchers achieve data saturation, I reduced bias by not providing participants with monetary rewards for participating in this study.

Ethical issues might surface in conducting research studies involving human participants. I followed the ethical rules of the Belmont Report to protect the participant's well-being by (a) treating them anonymously and keeping their identities confidential, (b) treating participants fairly and equally, (c) providing information to participants so they can decide if they want to participate in the study, and (d) revealing risks and benefits related to the study (Mikesell et al., 2013). Scholars must disclose all information about the research study to participants (Yin, 2015). After receiving IRB approval, participants received information about the study, confidentially, risks, and benefits of participating in the study. I informed all participants that they should be completely subjective and honest

in their responses. I avoided conflicts and potential biases when gathering data by not interviewing participants' I knew.

Researchers must make every effort to protect participants from harmful situations. Researchers can decrease potential harm to participants by obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentially, and protecting the participant's privacy (Wall & Pentz, 2015). Scholars must also create adequate measures to secure data during data collection and analysis, and the data storage process to protect the participant's rights and preserve the participant's privacy (Yin, 2015). When conducting a case study involving human participants, the researcher must keep data and the participant's information private and confidential (Castleberry, 2014). All data collected for this research study will be stored in a locked box in my home office for 5 years to protect the participants confidentially and integrity of the study. In adherence to Walden's IRB requirements, I was the only person who had access to the data. I assigned each participant a unique identification (ID) number to safeguard their identities and interviews took place in a private location. Yin (2015) indicated that shredding documents is a reliable method of destroying research data and media. After 5 years, I will shred all documents about the study and delete all files on my personal, password-protected computer and password protected and encrypted external hard drive pertaining to the study.

Data Collection Instruments

I conducted virtual face-to-face semistructured interviews as the primary data collection method for this qualitative research study. Participants could not meet in person, so I conducted each interview separately and privately via Zoom, a web video

conference application. Semistructured interviews have been used in similar environments to study managerial strategies (Basnyat & Lao, 2019; Hom et al., 2017). The interviews consisted of open-ended interview questions. A face-to-face interview is the preferred data collection method for case study research because researchers have better control over the interview (Ziebland & Hunt, 2014). I chose to conduct face-to-face semistructured interviews because it is the preferred data collection method for case research. Semistructured interviews allow the researcher to be more personal with participants and it will provide an opportunity to ask follow-up questions.

I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. In a qualitative study, the researcher plays the most crucial role because the researcher is the instrument (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher must establish trust and build a rapport with participants because it encourages cooperation and engagement during the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher's participation and engagement are important because there might be changes in the real world and the researcher should be present throughout those changes to document an event before and after changes occur (Patton, 2002). I collected data for this research study through virtual face-to-face semistructured interviews and a review of archival documents until I achieved data saturation. I interviewed participants in their natural work environment. In qualitative studies, findings are produced from real-world settings where the investigated phenomenon unfolds naturally (Patton, 2002). Because inquiry is performed in the participants' natural environment, unstipulated possibilities may occur; therefore, it is imperative to use a human instrument for this study.

I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions for this research study. Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez (2015) indicated that semistructured face-to-face interviews are more effective when researchers use open-ended questions. Open-ended questions provide participants with more flexibility when sharing information. Open-ended questions do not restrict the participant's responses, thus allowing participants to provide a complete description of their personal experiences (Ziebland & Hunt, 2014). I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) to promote consistency and effectiveness during participant interviews. I asked the participants follow-up questions to ensure that the collected data were relevant to the research question. With each participant's permission, I recorded their participant interview using the Zoom recording feature.

In addition to asking participants open-ended questions, I reviewed documents detailing the organization's employee turnover as recommended by Yin (2015). A document review was the secondary data collection source for this study. Yin (2015) indicated that reviewing documents is a valid data collection method when conducting case study research. I requested the agency's official documents on turnover, including departmental turnover statistics from the directors who granted permission to interview their employees. Reviewing the organization's documents on employee turnover gave me new insight into the effectiveness of the manager's current employee turnover strategies and aided in data validation. The participants were interviewed via web video conference application, so I requested that the Directors email documents on departmental turnover to my confidential email address.

I conducted a member checking process after data collection. Member checking is a quality control process used by qualitative scholars to enhance data reliability and validity because multiple interpretations are possible (Harvey, 2015; Moustakas, 1994). Scholars can use member checking to improve the reliability and validity of data obtained during interviews (Harvey, 2015). Researchers provide participants with a summary and interpretations from their interviews during the member checking process to verify the validity and increase credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Each participant had an opportunity to review a summary of their interviews and interpretations for accuracy, which is common practice in qualitative research (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). I followed Morse's (2015b) three steps to member checking, which are: (a) conduct the initial interview, (b) interpret what the participants shared, and (c) share the data interpretations with the participants for validation. Participants received a copy of the data interpretations to validate for accuracy via my confidential e-mail address.

Member checking allows participants to clarify their interview responses and data interpretations. Researchers have participants validate data to confirm that the data accurately reflects the participants' reality, without false interpretations or bias on the researcher's behalf (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Patton (2015) indicated that researchers and participants must actively participate in finding meaning in interviews because both parties may approach the study with contrasting intentions and objectives. Therefore, member checking reduces bias and enhances the credibility of the study.

Qualitative researchers can also increase reliability and validity by using methodological triangulation (Yin, 2015). Methodological triangulation adds depth to

collected data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Methodological triangulation in case study research improves findings from enriched data analysis (Harvey, 2015). Triangulating data across sources validates that data is consistent (Patton, 2015). Member checking and triangulating collected data from semistructured interviews and reviewed documents enhanced the trustworthiness of the research study results.

Data Collection Technique

I collected data through semistructured virtual face-to-face interviews using open-ended questions and review documents on employee turnover from the agency to adequately answer the research question. The primary research question for a study determines which data collection instrument would sufficiently address the question (Moustakas, 1994). In-depth semistructured interviews allowed participants to answer pre-established questions while enabling open and free discussions (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Ziebland and Hunt (2014) recommended that researchers conduct face-to-face interviews to ask follow-up questions and observe verbal and nonverbal expressions. There are four types of interviews, including face-to-face, e-mail, telephone interviews, and focus groups (Clearly et al., 2014). A face-to-face interview is the preferred data collection method for case study research because researchers have better control over the interview (Ziebland & Hunt, 2014). I used semistructured virtual face-to-face interviews as the primary data collection technique for this research study. Semistructured interviews allow researchers to have complete, rich, detailed discussions about employee retention strategies that evoke participants' thoughts, feelings, and emotions (Izard-

Carroll, 2016). I reviewed documents on employee turnover as a secondary data collection technique.

There are advantages and disadvantages when conducting face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews allow researchers to observe and document the participant's nonverbal language and cues and emotions (Oltmann, 2016). Another advantage of face-to-face interviews is that they enable researchers to better control participant interviews (Ziebland & Hunt, 2014). The primary disadvantages of conducting face-to-face interviews are time and financial costs (Oltmann, 2016). Face-to-face interviews can accrue significant time and financial costs if researchers travel to interview participants to increase their comfort levels (Oltmann, 2016). Another disadvantage of conducting face-to-face interviews is that they are typically limited to a local geographical area, limiting sample size (Oltmann, 2016). I conducted semistructured virtual face-to-face interviews as a primary method of data collection.

There are advantages and disadvantages to reviewing documents. Some advantages of reviewing documents are: (a) data collection is inexpensive, (b) researchers have access to detailed data from official documents, and (c) data collection does not depend on the participants' willingness to provide information (Yin, 2015). Researchers must also consider the disadvantages of reviewing documents. Some disadvantages of reviewing documents are: (a) documents can be subjective, (b) reviewing documents can be time-consuming, and (c) reviewing documents can deter leaders from participating in the study out of fear of sharing official documents with researchers from outside the organization (Zhang et al., 2014). I requested permission to review documents on

employee turnover from the agency by email. When conducting a qualitative case study, researchers must collect data from two independent sources, which enhances credibility and enables researchers to reach data saturation (Yin, 2015). I combined data from the participant's interviews with information obtained from review official documents.

I used interview guidelines and an interview protocol (Appendix A) to ensure consistency during the data collection process. When the potential participant agreed to participate in this study, I emailed them a copy of the interview guidelines. I also reviewed interview guidelines with each participant before the beginning of their interview. The interview guidelines included information that asked each participant to be open and honest, reiterate confidentially, and inform me if there was something that they do not understand. I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) for each participant interview to ensure consistency throughout the interview process. The interview protocol included the introduction, member checking procedures, guidelines for discussion, confidentially and anonymization, general instructions for participants, and the interview questionnaire (Appendix B).

I provided a simple definition of emotional self-awareness and concrete examples from empirical research studies via email when asking participants to participate in the study and at the beginning of each participant interview. I contacted each participant individually via telephone to schedule their interview, ask about their level of understanding of emotional self-awareness, and provide an opportunity to ask additional questions. I emailed each participant to confirm the date and time of their interview. If the potential participant did not clearly understand the concept of emotional self-

awareness, I did not allow them to participate in the study. Participants had to understand that emotional self-awareness is about self-awareness and indicate that they are aware of their own emotions and feelings. Participants also had to use emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover. I continued using purposeful sampling until the sample size was reached with qualified participants. I continued the interview process until I reached data saturation.

Prior to conducting semistructured interviews, I provided each participant with a detailed description of the study, including the reason for the study, how their privacy would be protected, and the member checking process. Each participant was provided a Consent Form and Invitation to Participate, and I clearly explained that by signing the consent the participants agreed to the terms of the study. The Informed Consent Form gave each participant a detailed description of the study, including the reason for the study, the significance of the study, what they were asked to do, how their privacy would be protected prior to completing their interview, and that the interviews would be audio recorded. I emailed each participant a debriefing form after their interview was completed.

I asked participants to consent to separate and private, in-depth interviews that would last for approximately 30 to 60 minutes. The interviews lasted 22 to 49 minutes, an average of 38 minutes. Estimating how long the interview will last is critical for time management and is a courtesy to the participants (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The private interviews took place via Zoom, a web video conferencing application. Participants selected interview dates and times that were conducive to their schedules. All participants

chose to join the interview from their private offices. I conducted the interviews from my private office. The in-depth participant interviews were audio-recorded using the Zoom recording feature. Patton (2015) indicated that digital recording devices and notebooks are useful for collecting data. The recorder was set up before each interview and I obtained the participant's permission to record the interviews before recording.

I also took notes during the interviews. Interview notes will be kept in a private notebook and I will be the only one who has access to the notebook. Using a notebook allows researchers to document an accurate audit trail of the interview activities (Houghton et al., 2013). Taking notes allowed me to collect nonauditory data, such as the participant's body language, emotions, and facial expressions. The interviews were conducted via videoconferencing application, so I was able to see their facial expressions. The interview enables researchers to observe what the participants say while observing their behavior (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I collected data from participants who experienced the phenomenon that I investigated. For this research inquiry, I asked open-ended questions.

I conducted a member checking process to allow participants to review a summary of their interviews. Researchers use member checking to enhance the validity and reliability of qualitative research studies (Wang, 2015). Member checking engages participants in developing themes and promotes validation of the researcher's interpretations (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Morse (2015b) suggested a 3-step member checking process that includes: (a) conducting the initial interview, (b) interpreting what the participants shared, and (c) sharing the data interpretations with the

participants for validation. Qualitative researchers prefer member checking over transcript review because member checking provides maximum benefits for validity and reliability (Morse, 2015b). I completed the member checking process by emailing each participant a summary of their interview transcript to validate my interpretations' accuracy. Participants were asked to review their interview summary for accuracy and report any inconsistencies within 7 days of receiving the summaries.

Data Organization Technique

Data organization is vital when conducting research. Researchers develop an effective data organization strategy to locate needed information in an efficient manner (Gajewski, 2013). Reflective journaling can be used to encourage higher-order thinking skills that are critical when conducting research (Cengiz & Karatas, 2015; Jarvis & Baloyi, 2020). A reflective journal is a personal space where researchers record their interactions with participants (Jarvis & Baloyi, 2020). Researchers use reflective journaling to record or take notes relevant to the investigator's activities or situations while collecting data (Cengiz et al., 2014). Reflection through reflective journaling can potentially assist researchers in enhancing their understanding and enriching their lifelong learning (Jarvis & Baloyi, 2020). Reflecting on previous events helps researchers grow personally and professionally and improve their understanding of the research problem (Cengiz et al., 2014).

I used confidential labels to identify the participants' data so that readers cannot identify the individual participants or the organization. Using a labeling system to identify interview transcripts and documents protects the participants' privacy and the

names of companies that participated in the research study (Gajewski, 2013). The ID

numbers are P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6. P is for participants and 1-6 is based on their

interview order. Scholars can retrieve data more efficiently by using an effective data

organization technique (Gajewski, 2013). Researchers can use NVivo 12 to organize and

improve the accessibility of research data through appropriate data management and

storage techniques (Zamawe, 2015). I used reflective journaling, NVivo 12 software, a

personal journal, and a labeling system to develop an effective data organization strategy.

I conducted in-depth participant interviews that were audio-recorded using the

Zoom recording feature. I transcribed each interview by uploading the auto recordings

into Otter.ai. Otter.ai is a text transcription application that generates written

transcriptions from audio recordings. The participants' identifying information was not

included in the audio recordings. I compared the written transcripts to the audio

recordings for accuracy. I transferred the transcripts to a Microsoft Word document and

interpreted the participants' responses to the interview questions. Utilizing my data

interpretations, I developed a summary of each participant's interview. Each participant

was sent a copy of their interview summary via email. The interview data in Otter.ai was

imported to NVivo 12, computer software, which I used to code and categorize the

interview content. NVivo software helps researchers identify themes by grouping data

(Woods et al., 2016). I used NVivo 12 software to organize data by grouping codes from

identified words, phrases, or statements that frequently appeared in the data. Data on my

computer and external flash drive was password protected and encrypted. Digitally

recorded interviews, journal notes, and transcripts from NVivo are also password protected.

Researchers need to implement an effective data storage strategy. Cengiz et al. (2014) indicated that implementing an effective data storage strategy is an essential element of research. Scholars contend that researchers must maintain a copy of audio recordings from participant interviews as a part of the data storage strategy (Bedi et al., 2015; Thissen, 2014). Yin (2015) recommended storing all interview notes as part of the research data. Using a master file list identifies all data and file locations and allows researchers to retrieve the information easily (Gajewski, 2013). Saunders et al. (2014) indicated that digital files are useful when conducting research Gajewski (2013) recommended that researchers store research data in a locked file cabinet for 5 years. After the study concludes, the research data will be locked in a box inside a locked cabinet in my home office for a minimum of 5 years. After 5 years, I will shred all documents and interview notes pertaining to this study. Research data on my personal computer and external hard drive, both password-protected, will be permanently erased from my personal computer using Softpedia DP Wiper, a specialized software designed to government standards. The results of this study will only be used for this study.

The participants were assigned a unique ID number before their interviews, which protected their identity. The participants were asked not to disclose any identifying information while being recorded. I ensured confidentially by not providing the participants' names and assigning them unique ID numbers when presenting the data so that readers cannot identify the individual participants or the organization. However, I

knew the participants' identities. It is best to assign unique ID numbers before data analysis; therefore, if additional information is added to the report, the researcher will not have any problems matching the original and pseudonymous tags to quotations (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Saunders et al. (2014) indicated that it is important for qualitative researchers to use a name convention. I established anonymized coding frames as soon as the participant interviews were transcribed. Each participant received a unique number that was used to identify their interview transcript and any additional documentation pertaining to that individual participant. I numbered the participants based on regions and the interview order. The participants do not know their unique identification numbers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an essential element in qualitative research. Data analysis is a systematic process used by researchers to arrange, condense, evaluate, and summarize all information from the data collection process (U. S. Office of Research Integrity, 2013). Implementing an effective data analysis technique results in better data interpretations and improves the quality of the findings (Stuckey, 2015). The applicable data analysis method for this single case study research design was Yin's (2015) recommended five-step process, which include compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding.

I analyzed data by implementing Yin's (2015) five-step analysis method to identify themes that developed from the managers' interviews. The data analysis process determined if there was a pattern of perceptions and attitudes regarding public sector managers' use of emotional self-awareness to reduce employee turnover. I used NVivo

12 to verify my data analysis based on Yin's 5 step analysis process. NVivo 12 is a validated and reliable computer-assisted qualitative data analysis program (CAQDAP) (Zamawe, 2015) that facilitates the identification of themes and provides annotation for the codes and categories (Gururajan et al., 2016). I transcribed the participants' interviews and emailed the participants a summary and interpretations and their responses.

Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process was performed as recommended by Yin (2015). When conducting qualitative data analysis, Yin (2015) recommended a five-step process that includes compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. An important element of ensuring data integrity is the accurate and appropriate analysis of research findings. An inadequate data analysis misrepresents scientific findings, misleads readers, and may negatively affect the results of the research study (Yin, 2015). This study's basis was in line with the philosophical perspectives of this case study approach, which consists of identifying the phenomenon, structure, strategies, and essence of the participant's experiences through in-depth interviews.

Compiling the Data Process

The data analysis process begins when researchers begin compiling the notes, transcriptions, and other research data (Yin, 2015). I analyzed data from the participants' responses to the six interview questions and recorded all significant statements from each managers' interview. After the interview process, I listened to the audio of the manager's interviews and reviewed interview notes from my journal. I transcribed the data into a

Microsoft Word document to capture the manager's interview responses. I reviewed all

official documents relevant to the study as a secondary data source.

Disassembling the Data

The second step in Yin's (2015) data analysis process is to disassemble the data.

The data should be disassembled into more manageable fragments (Edwards-Jones,

2014). I categorized the data into groups, using keywords to identify the themes. The

researcher identifies keywords before and during data analysis (Yin, 2014).

Reassembling the Data

The reassembling process includes creating codes and clusters (Yin, 2015). After

researchers organize the data and create relevant themes, data interpretations begin (Yin,

2015). I used NVivo 12, a qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program,

to assist with categorizing and labeling the remaining constituents based on their

similarity (Gururajan et al., 2016). These structures helped me identify the strength of the

themes and explore their inter-relationships (Gururajan et al., 2014; Woods et al., 2016). I

determined the primary themes of the managers' experiences from the labels.

Interpreting the Data

The fourth step of Yin's (2015) five-step process is data interpretation. During

this phase, researchers can choose to compile, disassemble, and reassemble the data

again. I created a narrative of the manager's responses to open-ended interview questions

and documents on employee turnover to explain the data. A narrative of the collected

data is a form of reporting used by researchers to prepare for the conclusion of data

results (Harvey, 2015).

Concluding the Data

The final step in the data analysis process requires researchers to make conclusions from the data interpretations developed in stage four (Yin, 2015). To complete the data analysis process, I compiled all the collected data, organized the data into more manageable compilations, and arranged data into clusters and identify themes. I conducted an in-depth analysis of the manager's interviews and reviews of official employee turnover documents to make conclusions from the interpretations.

The thematic analysis process helped me recognize codes, patterns, and themes that emerged from the participant's responses to the interview questions. I completed the thematic analysis process using NVivo 12. NVivo is a validated and reliable computer-assisted qualitative data analysis program (CAQDAP) (Zamawe, 2015) that facilitates the identification of themes and provides annotation for the codes and categories (Gururajan et al., 2016). I uploaded the interview transcripts into NVivo 12 and reviewed each interview transcript to determine what words occurred frequently. Those words became codes. I reviewed the phrases that included the code words and removed phrases that did not belong to the participants or were insignificant to the study. I developed the themes after ensuring that codes and phrases were pertinent to the study. NVivo helped me determine the strength of recurring themes and explore their inter-relationships. I used Yin's (2015) thematic data analysis process to familiarize myself with the data and organize, code, and interpret themes. Yin's five-step (2015) thematic analysis process includes: (a) compiling the data process, (b) disassembling the data, (c) reassembling the data, (d) interpreting the data, and (e) concluding the data. I focused on themes pertinent

to the qualitative research question and the conceptual framework throughout the data analysis process.

Methodological Triangulation

Methodological triangulation is a data analysis tool that requires using two or more sources to validate data (Yin, 2015). Researchers use methodological triangulation to corroborate and strengthen the study's findings using different methods of data collection (Yin, 2015). Methodological triangulation is beneficial to researchers because it improves the study's reliability and validity by using multiple methods of data collection (Morse, 2015a; Yin, 2015). Methodological triangulation in case study research improves findings from enriched data analysis (Harvey, 2015). Using multiple data sources of data collection provides researchers with insight into the research problem and researchers can expand the data analysis process by improving data interpretations. I analyzed data obtained from participant interviews, notes, direct observations, and official documents. The member checking process, triangulating the data from semistructured interviews and reviewing the agency's documents on employee turnover enhanced the credibility of this study's conclusions.

Qualitative Software Analysis Method

I used computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 12, to code and categorize transcripts of the participant's interviews. Coding helps in correlating data from interview questions (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Edwards-Jones (2014) recommended NVivo because the software is versatile and suitable for novice and experienced researchers. Edwards-Jones (2014) indicated that NVivo is an effective tool for coding,

identifying key themes, and mind-mapping data. NVivo generates themes in seconds

while reducing human error during the coding and theme process (Zamawe, 2015).

Marshall and Rossman (2016) indicated that categorizing strings of text into groups of

common themes assists in determining if there is a need for additional data. NVivo also

provided an audit trail of the coding process (Houghton et al., 2013). I maintained an

audit trail using NVivo and a journal to improve the credibility and validity of the study.

NVivo software includes (a) importing and analyzing text-based data, (b)

organizing information using themes and coding, (c) review coding and highlighting, (d)

word frequency, and (e) exporting data analysis and findings (Zamawe, 2015). I used

Microsoft Word to assist in coding activities because it allowed researchers to color code

text. I exported data from Microsoft Word into Microsoft Excel to display the

information in table form to quickly review the findings. The Microsoft Excel table or

spreadsheet will include codes and themes, frequency, and in-text codes.

Case study researchers must select themes during the data analysis process.

Emmel (2015) indicated that selecting themes is a fundamental task for case study

researchers. Emmel (2015) recommended the following steps when choosing themes: (a)

discover commonly used words, (b) narrow down themes to a manageable quantity, (c)

find subthemes, if necessary, (d) create a hierarchy of themes based on importance, and

(e) link themes to the conceptual framework and central research question. An effective

data analysis process results in the themes researchers use to present the participants'

perspectives (Wang, 2015). I used the theme selection process recommended by Emmel

(2015) to enhance theme selection while using NVivo to follow Yin's (2015) five-step data analysis process.

I reviewed the compilation of interview data, notes, and turnover documents and listened to the participant's audio recordings to familiarize myself with the data. I noted reoccurring words and phrases within the participant's responses, such as awareness and communication and began an inductive coding process. I used keywords and phrases to disassemble and reassemble the data into codes and manageable fragments. I reread the interview transcripts and notes and compared them to the initial codes for accuracy. I removed information that was not relevant to the qualitative research question or conceptual framework. After conducting another coding process, I reorganized the coding groups and categorized and labeled relevant information based on similarity. For example, when managers stated that they communicate with their employees, those responses were coded to determine communication patterns. I developed the primary themes and subthemes from the categorized codes and phrases. After developing the primary themes and subthemes, I reviewed interview transcripts and notes one final time to ensure that the primary themes and subthemes accurately reflected the participants' responses to the interview questions. I created a hierarchy of the themes and subthemes based on importance, which I determined by the word frequency. Finally, I linked the themes to the conceptual framework and research question.

Researchers must ensure that the research process remains aligned with the research topic. Yin (2015) indicated that researchers are responsible for remaining focused on the research topic during the research process. Gajewski (2013) suggested that

researchers sign up for search alerts to stay up to date on future publications related to their research topic. Researchers use the search alert tool to receive automatic alerts via email or RSS feed when new articles matching their search criteria are available (Wray, 2016). I signed up for search alerts on ResearchGate and with the Walden Library to receive updates of publications on emotional self-awareness in public sector management, employee retention strategies, and employee retention in the public sector.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Researchers must take steps to improve reliability in research studies. Reliability refers to the level of consistency of the results of qualitative research studies (Noble & Smith, 2015). Grossoehme (2014) defined reliability as the ability to use the same data collection methods and procedures as the original researcher to obtain comparable outcomes. Reliability is vital in qualitative research because researchers seek reliability to ensure data accuracy (Harvey, 2015). Researchers can use increase reliability by discussing the issue of dependability (Harvey, 2015).

Dependability is a strategy researchers use to ensure reliability in qualitative research (Harvey, 2015). Researchers can improve dependability by using member checking to increase reliability in qualitative research (Harvey, 2015). Scholars use member checking to validate interview data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Morse (2015b) recommended a 3-step process: (a) conduct the initial interview, (b) interpret what the participants shared, and (c) share the data interpretations with the participants for

validation. I followed Morse's (2015b) 3-step process of member checking to increase the validity and dependability of this study.

Scholars can also enhance reliability in qualitative research by achieving data saturation (Morse, 2015a; Yin, 2015). I followed Morse's (2015b) three steps for member checking, which are: (a) conduct the initial interview, (b) interpret what the participants shared, and (c) share the data interpretations with the participants for validation. To ensure the accuracy and dependability of data interpretations, I emailed participants a summary of their interview data. Using coding software will enhance dependability by demonstrating multiple examples of a particular theme (Houghton et al., 2013).

When conducting semistructured interviews, the researcher must address reproducibility (Campbell et al., 2013). Campbell et al. (2013) indicated that establishing reliable coding of in-depth semistructured interview transcripts can be challenging. Therefore, coders need to be knowledgeable in the subject matter of the interviews (Campbell et al., 2013). Coding in-depth interview data often involves interpreting what respondents mean in their answers to questions (Campbell et al., 2013). NVivo helps researchers improve accuracy in qualitative studies, ensures effective and efficient coding, facilitates an accurate and transparent data analysis process, and allows the researcher to quickly reshape and recognize coding and nodes structure (Zamawe, 2015). I used NVivo 12 software to organize data by grouping codes from identified words, phrases, or statements that frequently appeared in the data.

Validity

I addressed issues and considerations to establish that this research study was valid and reliable. In qualitative research, validity refers to the suitability of the chosen methodology, design, sample size, data collection techniques and analysis, and the study results related to the main research question (Leung, 2015). Researchers can improve qualitative research quality by ensuring validity (Dwork, et al., 2015). Researchers can use member checking and methodological triangulation to improve the validity of research findings (Gandy, 2015). I addressed concerns with validity by achieving data saturation. I achieved data saturation by interviewing participants until no new information, patterns, or themes emerge from additional interviews.

Articulating a sound research design has been critical in developing qualitative methodologies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument; therefore, the researcher must establish traits that make the researcher credible and ensure that the data is trustworthy (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In a qualitative case study research study, validity and reliability are created through transferability, credibility, and confirmability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I used the member checking process and methodological triangulation to validate interview data and enhance credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

Researchers accomplish data saturation when newly collected data does not result in new information, coding, or themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I addressed concerns with dependability by achieving data saturation. If data saturation was not achieved during

interviews with five participants, I planned to interview additional participants until data saturation was achieved.

Credibility

I established this study's credibility through a member checking process in which I shared data and interpretations with the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Credibility refers to the level of trust readers and other researchers have in the finding of the study (Nyhan, 2015). Scholars can enhance their research findings' credibility by recording participant interviews and maintaining a copy of the recordings (Yin, 2015). I audio recorded all participant interviews and transcribed the data using Otter.ai. After the participant's interviews were transcribed, I conducted the member checking process by asking each participant to review the transcription synopsis of their interview for accuracy, validity, and credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015). Member checking allowed the participants to confirm the absence of any personally identifiable information to protect confidentially. I corrected any inaccuracies that the participants identified through the member checking process. I will also share the study's findings with the participants via email.

Transferability

Transferability refers to ways this study's findings could be useful to others in similar situations, using similar research questions or questions of practice (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers can ensure transferability by providing a detailed description of the research context (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Providing a rich description of the research context helps readers determine whether the findings of a

particular study are transferable to another research study (Yazan, 2015). The results of

this study might be applicable to other public sector managers and employees

experiencing similar turnover experiences. I increased transferability by clearly stating

how I used the conceptual framework to guide the concepts and models of this study

during the data collection and analysis processes (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Shenton

(2004) indicated that the findings in qualitative research studies are specific to a small

number of participants; therefore, it is impossible to establish that the findings and

conclusions apply to other situations and populations.

I enhanced this study's generalizability by triangulating multiple data sources.

Triangulation refers to the act of bringing multiple sources of data to develop a single

point (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I obtained data from multiple managers regarding

their experiences in the public sector and use that data to justify emerging themes. The

themes are the core of the managers' experiences. Triangulation adds to the validity and

strengths of this study if emerging themes are based on the managers' perspectives (Yin,

2015).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to ways a researcher can parallel how traditional objectivity

is viewed (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Confirmability is the degree to which a

qualitative research study's findings are verifiable by other researchers (Houghton et al.,

2013). Member checking is one of qualitative researchers' strategies to enhance

confirmability (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I established confirmability by documenting my

research procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. In

addition, I referenced literature and findings by other researchers throughout this study. Referencing literature and research findings by other authors will confirm my analyses and strengthen the study's confirmability in addition to information and analyses by other people (Brinkmann, 2012). Using the process of reflexibility, I disclosed any biases, experiences, and values in relation to this study.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 explained my role as the researcher, the methodological process for collecting and evaluating data, and the justification for using a qualitative method with a case study design. I conducted semistructured interviews with five middle managers in a public sector agency and reviewed official turnover documents within the participant's organization. Data from participant interviews were analyzed using Yin's 5 step data analysis process. I ensured research validity and reliability through data saturation and a member checking process. In Section 3, I present the research findings, discuss the applications for business improvement, and the implications for social change. I include reflections from my research and provide a concluding statement to finalize Section 3.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case research study was to identify and explore public sector middle managers' strategies for using emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Voluntary employee turnover negatively impacts organizations by increasing recruiting and training costs and reducing productivity (Carter et al., 2019), the number of experienced employees, and employee morale (Bake, 2019). Because of its negative effect, voluntary employee turnover remains one of the most persistent challenges for public sector managers (Lee, 2018; Singh, 2019). Managers must develop effective retention strategies to encourage employees to remain in their positions. Therefore, managers may consider incorporating emotional self-awareness into their employee retention strategies. Emotional self-awareness is an individual's capacity to recognize and understand emotions and understand how one's actions, moods, and others' emotions take effect. Researchers contend that emotional self-awareness decreases voluntary employee turnover (Hosain, 2019; Lee, 2017).

I used a single qualitative case study method and thematic analysis of participants' responses to determine codes and themes. The generated themes are efficient communication, leadership style adjustment, supportive management, and conflict management. The themes reflect strategies the participants used to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Presentation of the Findings

Participant Overview

This qualitative research study addresses the following research question: What emotional self-awareness strategies do public sector middle managers use to reduce voluntary employee turnover? I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to allow participants to share detailed information about the emotional self-awareness strategies they use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. I interviewed six public sector middle managers in two regions, consisting of 26 counties throughout Georgia. Initially, the target number of participants was five, but data saturation was not reached at five participants. Therefore, I interviewed a sixth participant. I reached data saturation during the sixth interview. All participants were familiar with emotional self-awareness and they incorporated emotional self-awareness into their employee retention strategies.

Thematic Analysis

Data were collected using semistructured interviews with open-ended questions and by reviewing the organization's documents on employee turnover. I used a qualitative thematic analysis process that generated four themes related to the research question: What emotional self-awareness strategies do public sector middle managers use to reduce voluntary employee turnover? The four themes reflect the key components of managers' self-awareness strategies: efficient communication, leadership style adjustment, supportive management, and conflict management. I used the theme selection process recommended by Emmel (2015) to enhance theme selection while using NVivo

12 to follow Yin's (2015) five-step data analysis process. The themes provided insight into how the participants incorporated emotional self-awareness in their employee retention strategies.

Emergent Themes

The following section provides details of the themes and subthemes and interview quotations that support the themes. The generated codes and themes are shown in Table 1 and Table 2. I created a hierarchy of the themes and subthemes based on importance, which I determined by the word frequency.

Table 1

Codes and Themes for the Research Question/Theory

Codes	Themes and subthemes
1. Communication, listening, talk, interaction, feedback, reviews, ideas, express concerns	Managers use efficient communication to promote effective leadership
2. Personalities, approaches, needs, strengths, individual, lead	Managers adjust their leadership styles based on employees' personalities.
3. Support, team, hands-on, help, training	Managers use supportive management strategies to reduce employee turnover.
3.1 Empathy, yourself, situation, I would feel	Managers use empathy to build strong manager-employee relationships.
3.2 Gifts, recognition, value, appreciated, success	Managers recognize their employees to show them that they are valued.
4. Conflict, management, protocols, discuss disagreements, talk about it	Managers implement various strategies to manage conflict.

Table 2

Themes and Frequencies of Themes

Theme #	Theme	# of interviewees mentioning the theme	# of times the themes appeared across the interviews/data
1	Managers use effective communication to promote effective leadership.	5	55
2	Managers adjust their leadership styles based on individual personalities.	4	46
3	Managers use supportive management strategies to reduce employee turnover.	6	41
3.1	Managers use empathy to build strong manager-employee relationships.	5	12
3.2	Managers recognize their employees to show them that they are valued.	5	18
4	Managers implement various strategies to manage conflict.	5	29

Theme 1: Managers use Efficient Communication Strategies to Promote Effective Leadership

All six participants discussed efficient communication during their interviews. Efficient communication involves paying attention to the entire process, not just the message's content (Cohn, 2007). Leaders who listen efficiently facilitate an environment of communication satisfaction that fosters low voluntary employee turnover (Nwagbara et al., 2013). Verbal and nonverbal forms of communication are needed to influence

employees, making communication an essential aspect of leadership (Cunningham et al., 2020). The participants shared various communication strategies to promote effective leadership. The participants also shared that they encourage employee feedback.

Managers cannot be effective leaders without efficient communication. Efficient communication skills facilitate, foster, and create the understanding and trust that leaders need to encourage others to follow them (Barrett, 2006). Johnson and Hackman (2018) stated that leadership effectiveness depends on an individual's willingness to interact or communicate with others. For example, P5 stated that effective leadership means getting results, earning people's respect, sound decision-making, setting a good example, and effectively communicating. P5's description of leadership aligned with Barrett's (2006) description of leadership. Barrett (2006) indicated that leaders get results, control situations, and persuade others to follow them or pursue defined goals. P5 expressed that effective leadership and communication begin with active listening. Active listening refers to listening with all of one's senses (Cohn & Peetz, 2003). P5 said, "Listening to people is very important and I probably do more than most. I try to listen to people as much as possible." Similar to P5, P4 stated that they actively listen to employees. P4 expressed that active listening allows them to understand the difference between someone's inability to communicate appropriately and a personal attack. P4 stated that knowing the difference enables them to listen to employees without feeling attacked. Showry and Manasa (2014) indicated that self-aware leaders listen instead of becoming defensive, accept their weaknesses, and transform themselves to thrive as leaders. P2 shared similar sentiments by saying, "I listen to staff talk about their struggles and allow

them to vent without being defensive." Listening without judgment, interruptions, criticism, or being defensive is a part of active listening (Cohn & Peetz, 2003).

Emotional self-awareness aids leaders in communicating. An individual's emotions, attitude, credibility, and knowledge can impede whether or how one's message is received (Cohn, 2007); therefore, leaders must be aware of their and others' emotions. P4 described how they incorporate emotional self-awareness into active listening by saying,

> I interact with staff daily. Interacting with employees makes you aware of how you feel. If I'm not aware of my emotions, that can affect how that communication is received and perceived. You can't get the job done without effective communication.

P4 response was supported by Barrett's (2006) notion that emotional self-awareness aids leaders in interacting effectively and leading others.

Effective leadership requires being attuned to verbal and nonverbal communication. The participants discussed nonverbal communication during their interviews. According to Johnson and Hackman (2018), effective leaders use verbal and nonverbal behaviors to build employee confidence. Nonverbal communication is based on unspoken signals that are inspired by factors such as personality, environment, and culture (Ngo, 2017). Nonverbal cues are communicated through facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, body language, posture, and voice tones and convey meanings in face-to-face encounters. P6 described how they use nonverbal cues by saying:

I say hey and gage to see how the person is doing. Someone may be telling me they're having a good day, but you can see it on their face that they're not. That observation is important because nonverbal cues are important.

Ngo (2017) indicated that nonverbal communication conveys most of the information exchanged through communication activities. P1, P2, and P5 stated that they lead by example. Carter et al. (2019) noted that managers who lead by example motivate employees, establish the organization's pace, and set the overall tone of the organization's work environment. Leading by example involves influencing employees through verbal and nonverbal communication activities. Ngo (2017) indicated that leaders who understand nonverbal signals are personable and understand employees' unspoken needs to support them, increasing employee trust and satisfaction and ultimately reducing voluntary employee turnover.

In addition to listening and reading nonverbal cues, two of the participants used a team approach to communicate with employees. P1 said, "We as a team get together once a month, and we actually talk about difficult things and listen to individual concerns." A team approach to communication is highly efficient for accomplishing organizational goals (Cohn, 2007). When communicating with a team, leaders must clearly articulate the goals and every member of the team must be committed to achieving goals and objectives (Cohn, 2007). Like P1, P4 stated that they conduct team meetings and encourage team-building activities.

Five out of six participants stated that they have an open-door policy, which encourages an open line of communication between managers and employees. Shenhar

(1993) defined an open-door policy as the practice in which employees can approach managers at various levels and initiate meetings between them without managerial action or decision. Open communication between managers and employees promotes employee satisfaction, motivation, and loyalty and positively impacts work performance (Shenhar, 1993). P2 stated that an open-door policy lets employees know that they are always available to discuss any issues. P6 stated that they tell employees to feel free to talk to her about whatever, including P6's behavior. Similar to P2 and P6, P5 said, "I believe in an open-door policy. I tell them [employees] that they can talk to me about anything." Leaders who create an environment of open communication increase their sensitivity and respect for their employees. Open communication aids leaders in becoming familiar with their employees' attitudes towards work, personal desires and problems, and ensure that each individual is treated with dignity (Shenhar, 1993). P3 stated not having an open-door policy makes managers seem unapproachable; therefore, it is important in any establishment. An open-door policy increases managers' accessibility, provides employees with quick access to information, and encourages closer working relationships (Quast, 2013). Based on participant responses, an open-door policy is beneficial for leaders and employees. Leaders with an open-door policy facilitate efficient communication, allow employees to interact with them directly to seek assistance, freely discuss work-related issues, and obtain clarity about organizational goals and expectations.

All six participants stated that they encourage feedback. Managers use feedback to improve how they see themselves and understand how employees view them (Eurich,

2018). Managers also use feedback to improve employee performance and achieve

positive organizational outcomes (Gnepp et al., 2020). Effective leaders encourage and

provide positive feedback often. P3 stated that encouraging employee feedback makes

them [employees] more comfortable when talking about things. P5 expressed that they

encourage employees to voice their opinion and provide feedback. P1 and P2 echoed

those same sentiments by stating that they encouraged feedback. P2 also stated that they

ask for feedback about their leadership because they want to avoid creating a toxic

workplace. P2's response supported George and Sims's (2007) and Hartung's (2020)

suggestion that leaders independently and on their own seek feedback, especially from

trusted sources. Effective leaders seek feedback about how employees respond to their

behavior and adjust their behavior accordingly (Hartung, 2020; Johnson & Hackman,

2018). According to Luthra and Dahiya (2015), leaders must welcome suggestions and

ideas to improve their leadership styles and enhance learning. P6 stated that employee

feedback also enables them to learn and grow and do things differently in the future if

needed. Leaders who accurately evaluate their leadership performance are more self-

aware and adapt to specific circumstances as required based on employee feedback and

thus achieve more positive outcomes and effectivity (Atwater et al., 1998; Bratton et al.,

2011; Hartung, 2020). P3 and P6 stated that they use feedback to help achieve goals. P6

said, "feedback is important because it helps employees buy-in to the agency's goals."

There are times when managers must provide unfavorable feedback, which employees

usually do not accept (Gnepp et al., 2020). P3 described how they communicate with

individuals who do not readily receive feedback by stating,

I reframe things to make sure they have a clear understanding of what I was asking. If it appears that they are not willing to or do not easily accept criticism or feedback, I try to work it out with them to ensure the tasks get done. I ensure my tone is good when providing recommendations to someone who does not easily accept feedback. An individual's unwillingness to accept feedback makes me more attentive to how I give suggestions and recommendations.

P3 stated they use feedback to help determine challenges with completing tasks. Providing feedback allows managers to achieve organizational goals, improve managerial behavior, and help managers understand barriers to completing tasks.

Performance feedback is an essential component of management because it focuses on employee accomplishments and conduct and, when needed, improving work performance. Managers use annual performance reviews to provide performance feedback. Annual performance reviews are almost universal in modern organizations (Gnepp et al., 2020). P4 and P5 stated that they provide feedback during annual performance reviews, but they also provide feedback when needed. P4 stated that they often offer employee feedback so employees can improve before their annual performance reviews. P5 reported that they provide employee feedback after employees complete projects. Performance feedback helps managers determine their employee's needs, provides learning opportunities, recognizes and rewards improvements in behavior.

Based on a thorough analysis of participants' responses, leadership and communication are interrelated. The participant responses support the theme that

managers use efficient communication to promote effective leadership. The link between communication and leadership is considered an instrumental tool used by leaders to achieve organizational goals (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016). Communication is essential to leadership because it creates an environment of openness and trust, which helps managers retain employees (Cloutier et al., 2015; Singh, 2019). The participants' responses supported Cloutier et al.'s (2015) findings that employees accept the organization's vision, values, mission, and policies through efficient communication. Effective leaders clearly communicate goals, expectations, and feedback, are open to ideas for improvement, and actively listen to their employees.

In addition to conducting interviews, I reviewed official documents on the agency's turnover for the last 3 years, 2018-2020. I compared the documents to all the participants' responses about their turnover statistics during the same timeframe. Reviewing the agency's employee turnover documents provided insight into the participant's current employee turnover strategies' effectiveness and aided in data validation. The turnover documents validated that the participants had low employee turnover rates. The turnover documents included turnover statistics for 26 counties. The participants' responses did not account for their entire region. P3, P5, and P6 reported no voluntary turnover. P5 stated that they had the same team for the last 5 years. P1 and P4 reported that two employees voluntarily left the agency. P1 stated that one employee left to start their own business and the other employee was a student who left when they completed their degree. P2 stated that one of their team members voluntarily left the agency between 2018 and 2020. Each participant was able to say how many of their

employees voluntarily left the agency. Paying attention to their employee turnover

indicated that the participants are devoted to reducing voluntary employee turnover.

Additional information on the agency's employee turnover rates can be found in Tables 3

and 4.

Table 3

Turnover as Reported by the Participants

Participant #	Region	# of employees who voluntarily left	# of employees who retired	# of employees terminated
1	B	2	0	1
2	A	1	2	0
3	B	0	0	0
4	B	2	0	1
5	B	0	0	0
6	A	0	1	0

Table 4

Turnover Based on Turnover Documents

Region	# of employees who voluntarily left	# of employees who retired	# of employees terminated
A	1	2	0
B	12	3	6
Total	13	5	6

Connection to the Conceptual Framework. Leaders cannot communicate and

manage others without emotional self-awareness. Efficient communication depends on

understanding employees in all situations, understanding what drives them to listen and

what motivates them to act (Barrett, 2006). This understanding requires self-awareness

and awareness of others. Understanding what motivates employees to listen and act aids

leaders in understanding how to deliver a message and how employees receive and perceive the message. Leaders also need to understand their and their employees' emotions to motivate and inspire creativity (Cunningham et al., 2020). Emotional self-awareness increases nonverbal communication skills by improving one's awareness of others' feelings and understanding of body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice (Lee, 2017). A lack of emotional self-awareness can lead to a misunderstanding in communication (Barrett, 2006; Raeissi et al., 2019), decreasing employee satisfaction and loyalty.

Theme 2: Managers Adjust Their Leadership Styles Based on Their Employees' Personalities

Five out of six participants discussed changing their leadership styles based on their employees' personalities. The turnover documents validated that the participants' strategies were effective in that they all achieved low employee turnover rates. Managers should adjust their leadership style based on their employees' intellectual level, personalities, work stability, potential to achieve organizational goals, and tendency to manage complex situations (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). An employee's personality is a structure and propensity within them that explains their emotions, characteristic patterns of thoughts, and behavior (Supratman et al., 2021), which could indicate how well they fit with a particular manager or leadership style (Benoliel & Somech, 2014). P5 and P6 stated that they lead based on different personalities. P5 stated:

> I use a situational leadership style because individuals are so different. I try to get
> to know the people who work with me, their personalities and needs because each

employee has different needs. Each one has a different personality and a different

approach to their work. Some are very self-directed and need little supervision.

Others need more supervision, not because of a lack of knowledge; it is just best

for their personality. Being aware of employees' personalities and needs helps

managers.

P5 and P6's responses are consistent with Supratman et al.'s (2021) findings that

managers should adjust their leadership style based on employees' personalities.

Supratman et al. indicated that managers should know their employees' personality types

and adjust their leadership style accordingly because leadership style impacts employees'

work performance and job satisfaction. Wei et al. (2020) concluded that when managers

chose a suitable leadership style for employees and situations, they reduced employee

burnout, built manager-employee trust, provided organizational support, and created and

maintained a healthy organizational culture.

Situational leaders motivate and influence their employees by changing their

leadership styles based on different situations (Cunningham et al., 2020; Northouse,

2019). Northouse (2019) indicated that situational leaders focus on an appropriate

directive or supportive action for each situation. P6 stated that getting to know

employees, what makes them happy or sad, helps understand the employees' triggers and

how to handle certain situations. Cunningham et al. (2020) recommended that leaders

consider contexts such as personality, the nature of the tasks, employee behavior, leader-

employee interaction, and other factors when following the situational leadership

approach. Howard (2005) suggested that leaders assess their employee's strengths and

weaknesses to create a situation that leads to an appropriate leadership approach. P3 supported Howard's idea by stating that knowing employee's strengths and weaknesses helps determine how to approach them. P6 added that they consider employees' strengths when leading and delegating tasks. Leaders assess whether or not their employees are skilled enough to complete assigned tasks and their motivation for completing tasks (Cunningham et al., 2020). Effective leaders balance the needs of employees and tasks by adjusting their leadership styles.

Employees usually have a preferred method of receiving, processing, and communicating information based on their needs, personality, and situation. Managers who align their leadership approach with their employees' needs will be better positioned to achieve success. Public managers should understand each employee's needs and desires and respond to those needs and desires accordingly (Pitts et al., 2011). P1 supported Pitts et al.'s (2011) by saying, "I am always cognizant of what's going on with individual employees to support their individual needs." Employee retention and morale are low when managers ignore their employees' needs and reactions. Similar to P1, P4 described meeting employees' individual needs by saying, "You can't communicate with all of them [employees] in the same manner. You have to be aware of how to reach each one individually." Kossivi et al. (2016) indicated that the way employees are managed and their manager's leadership style directly impacts the organization's ability to maintain tenured employees. Managers who adapt their leadership style based on their employees' needs motivate them to remain with the organization.

The participants' responses revealed that managers adjust their leadership styles based on employee's personalities. An individuals' personality influences their desire to learn, readiness to accept feedback, perceptions, and willingness to remain with the organization. According to Adam et al. (2011) and Goleman et al. (2013), managers must learn their employees' personality type to meet their needs, open doors to opportunities, and determine what leadership style fits each employee. Managers motivate their employees and bring out the best in them by adjusting their leadership styles based on the situations. Goleman et al. and Maamari and Majdalani (2017) indicated that managers who change their leadership style based on the various situations take stock in their employees, consider workplace variables, and choose the leadership style that aligns with organizational goals and circumstances. Managers who adjust their leadership style based on employee personality are more successful than managers who do not adjust their leadership style (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). Managers who learn their employees' personalities and shape their leadership style accordingly to meet their employees' needs, promote employee development, increase job satisfaction, build strong manager-employee relationships, and reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Connection to the Conceptual Framework. Emotional self-awareness influences leadership style and leadership style influences receptive employees' feelings about the organization (Maamari & Majdalani, 2017). The ability to select the most effective leadership style for different situations requires emotional self-awareness to assess the situation correctly and determine the appropriate style for the context and employees (Barrett, 2006; Maamari & Majdalani, 2017). Understanding employee

personalities can help managers place them in situations where they thrive and select appropriate leadership styles for various circumstances to accomplish goals more effectively (Goleman et al., 2013). Managers who understand employees' personalities help them avoid stressful situations and motivate them to remain with the organization.

Theme 3: Effective Leaders use Supportive Management Strategies to Reduce Employee Turnover

The communication and supportive management discussions overlapped during interviews. Each participant discussed supportive management strategies to reduce employee turnover, with communication being a primary strategy. All six managers reported that listening to employees helps them provide the support employees need. The turnover documents validated the participants' evaluations of their turnover rates. Supportive leadership includes various behaviors that show consideration, acceptance, and concern for others' needs and feelings (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Supportive leaders use interpersonal communication skills that focus on employees' needs and well-being and creating a desirable environment for interaction (Johnson & Hackman, 2018). Sun and Wang (2016) concluded that supportive leadership reduced voluntary employee turnover. P1 supported Sun and Wang's (2016) notion of using supportive leadership to reduce voluntary employee turnover. P1 stated,

> I am more hands-on. I assist them [employees] with their workload. If I hear
> voices escalate, I will ask if I can take a call for them. If they are on the phone and
> the call goes to another level, I'll take over for them. I incorporate morale
> boosters such as allowing them [employees] to work from home, using

icebreakers, and sending daily jokes to relieve stress so that staff won't get burnt

out. Stress will cause individuals to seek different employment. I let staff know

that I am there for them by helping in any way I can. I try to be very supportive of

them.

P5 stated that supportive management reduces employee turnover because it lets

employees know they are there for them. P1 and P5's responses aligned with Frear et

al.'s (2017) and Maan et al.'s (2020) findings. Frear et al.'s research revealed that

supportive leadership increased organizational commitment. Maan et al. concluded that

perceived organizational support positively influenced job satisfaction. Employees who

feel their managers support them are more likely to have higher job satisfaction levels

than employees who do not think their managers support them (Maan et al., 2020).

Successful organizations promote a culture of support and communication (Stanley &

Lincoln, 2016). Employees with supportive managers are more likely to remain in their

positions than employees who lack managerial support.

Public sector employees experience constant service interactions, some of which

are stressful and intense. Supportive leadership is appropriate when tasks are stressful or

dissatisfying (Johnson & Hackman, 2018). P1 reported providing support to employees

immediately before high-stress customer interactions. Supportive management has a

stronger effect when tasks are stressful, very tedious, and dangerous (Yukl & Gardner,

2020). Li et al. (2016) found that leaders who prefer to provide support immediately

before high-stress interactions have higher EI levels than leaders who prefer after high-

stress interactions. Li et al. (2016) found the effectiveness of leadership in the form of

supportive management. Supportive management helps reduce work-related stress and increases job satisfaction.

Employees who view their managers as supportive feel their managers are concerned about their feelings and needs and help them develop their careers (House, 1981; Jin & McDonald, 2017). P5 supported the notion of assisting employees in developing their careers by stating,

> I have one staff person who is not degreed and I encourage them to get their degree to advance in the organization. I try to encourage my people to do the best they can regarding education, taking care of themselves, and doing whatever is necessary to be productive in the workplace. If I can help them, I will be glad to do that.

Al Mamun and Hassan (2017) indicated that effective leaders push employees to reach their potential. P5 also stated that they engage their employees daily to check on their well-being because it lets them know they support them. Effective leaders genuinely care about their employees' concerns and provide tools for personal and professional growth (Guion & Gottier, 1965). Maan et al. (2020) indicated that managers who are conscious about their employees' welfare increase their employees' job satisfaction levels. When employees feel that their manager genuinely cares for them, they appreciate them and have concern for themselves and others, creating a unity that emphasizes synergy and engagement (S. Cote, 2017). P3 stated that it helps control how they think of others and see them as humans who are bound to make mistakes. P4 echoed that same sentiment by stating that it's important to be aware that employees are human and have emotions.

Employees who feel that their managers care about them are more satisfied with their jobs than employees who do not feel that their managers care about them (Sun & Wang, 2016). Shaikh and Zahid's (2017) research determined that high job satisfaction increased employees' commitment to the organization.

P1 and P4 stated that they use a team approach to support employees. Team meetings provide opportunities for employees to encourage and support each other (Cohn, 2007). P1 stated that they meet team members once a month to discuss challenges and allow individuals to share their concerns. Team meetings allow managers to provide information to all employees at the same time while increasing team efficiency. Employees prefer managers who keep them informed and offer support (Bake, 2019). The team approach can reduce individual isolation and increase employees' sense of connection to their peers and belonging to the organization (Sun & Wang, 2016). Team members can influence each other by sharing ideas, challenging and agreeing with opinions, and listening (Johnson & Hackman, 2018). P4 stated that they implement team-building exercises into their team meetings to promote trust among employees. P4 said,

> We have to trust. Trust impacts the team. Trust goes throughout the team; it's not just about me; it's about the team trusting each other. Mistrust can result in tasks not being completed and organizational goals not being achieved. Cross-training employees and letting them know that everyone is an equal part of the team also builds trust. It's my job to keep the team together.

Trust and loyalty are the foundation of relations within the organization. Trust can strengthen organizational culture, facilitate consultations and collaboration, and increase

employee performance (Sabie et al., 2020). A team approach to support promotes a collaborative culture and increases trust and loyalty. Afsar et al. (2018) and Purba et al. (2016) found trust is an important antecedent in reducing turnover intentions among public sector employees. Afsar et al.'s findings revealed that employees who trusted their managers were committed to their managers, team, and the organization. When employees' level of trust is high, they feel obligated to reciprocate with greater organizational commitment levels and job performance (Afsar et al., 2018). When trust is low, employees are less motivated to remain with the organization (Afsar et al., 2018). A team approach to support enhances team efficiency, trust in managers and the organization, and organizational commitment.

Effective leaders provide opportunities for training and employee development. According to Cloutier et al. (2015) and Jannat et al. (2020), training and development encourage loyalty and creates a cohesive work environment. Similar to P4, P6 reported supporting employees by providing additional training. P6 stated that providing additional training helps employees improve their weaknesses. P6's response supported Jannat et al.'s (2020) findings that introducing additional training opportunities increased employees' career development opportunities. Employees can enhance their skills through ongoing targeted specific training (Cloutier et al., 2015). Jin and McDonald's (2017) concluded that employees perceived managerial support based on work-related learning opportunities. Al Mamun and Hassan (2017) and Singh (2019) indicated that employees must have career development opportunities and various training programs to positively impact the organization and be motivated to remain with the organization.

Supportive leaders show concern for employees by listening to their problems, offering encouraging words, fostering positive employee relationships (Johnson & Hackman, 2018). P6's response supported Johnson and Hackman's (2018) notion of supportive leaders. P6 said,

> We all have different lives and stories and stuff happens. If someone tells me that something happened last night, I try to give them comforting words about whatever they shared with me. I acknowledge that they have something going on, but I also make sure our goals are being met.

Supportive leadership behaviors include being considerate of employees' needs and feelings, being sympathetic when employees are upset, offering assistance when needed to deal with a personal problem, and being friendly and accepting (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Managers who engage in unsupportive behaviors will likely enforce an organizational culture that discourages employees from supporting each other (Kularathne & Senevirathne, 2020). P6 stated that if an employee experiences something that affects their work, they develop a plan to make sure the work gets done while being sensitive to whatever they may be experiencing. Supportive managers can improve organizational performance. Gupta et al. (2014) found that supportive managers create a supportive work environment, which in turn increases employee job satisfaction and organizational performance. P2 expressed that they support employees by listening and helping them when needed. P3 followed that same sentiment by saying, "I'm always willing to provide a listening ear and to assist if they're having some difficulty with a task or project." Similar to P2 and P3, P5 stated that they support employees by listening,

asking if they need assistance, and assisting with tasks when needed. Employees cannot complete tasks successfully or progress without managerial support and perspectives (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Listening and understanding employees' needs and challenges and providing support based on those needs and challenges is critical to organizational success.

The participants' responses indicated that effective leaders use supportive management strategies to reduce employee turnover and achieve organizational goals. The participants' strategies included team building, listening, providing training and employee development opportunities, and encouraging employees to meet their full potential. The participants' strategies foster strong workplace relationships. Supportive leadership is appropriate when employees are stressed, dissatisfied, and lack confidence, trust, and commitment (Johnson & Hackman, 2018). Supportive leaders promote employee engagement, trust, loyalty, and work performance and help employees decrease stress (Cloutier et al., 2015; Jin & McDonald, 2017; Nienaber et al., 2015). Supportive leadership can increase employees' acceptance of their managers, trust, and willingness to complete additional tasks (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Employees' perception of managerial support often impacts turnover intention (Akhtar, Shabir, et al., 2017; Arici, 2018; Cloutier et al., 2015). Employees who perceive their managers as supportive often stay in their current positions because they feel they care about them and are trustworthy.

Connection to the Conceptual Framework. Emotional self-awareness aids leaders in providing supportive management. Leaders with high emotional self-awareness can support employees and handle stressful work demands (Goleman, 2001; Goleman et

al., 2013). Emotionally self-aware managers encourage others to excel in their strengths and improve their weaknesses, improving job satisfaction and increasing productivity (Kay, 2018). Managers with high emotional self-awareness build trust and teamwork in their employees (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013). Usprech and Lam (2020) indicated that promoting emotional self-awareness in teams can enhance team efficiency. Employees feel supported when their teams are efficient. Supportive management fosters employees' well-being and positive relationships with their managers (Akhtar, Ghufran, et al., 2017). Emotional self-awareness aids managers in supporting and guiding employees while facilitating work objectives, maintaining cooperative relationships, and teamwork, which are essential components of effective leadership.

Theme 3.1: Managers use Empathy to Build Strong Manager-Employee Relationships.

Four out of the six participants discussed using empathy. Empathy is a desirable practice because empathetic leaders are highly effective (Usprech & Lam, 2020). Fianko et al. (2020) research revealed that empathy was a predictor of effective leadership in the workplace. Empathy is the ability to understand another person's motives, values, and emotions by relating to their situation (Batool, 2013; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). It is essential to developing and maintaining cooperative relationships between employees, managers, and peers (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). P1, P2, and P6 stated that they put themselves in their employees' positions. P1 stated that they put themselves in their employees' position without getting too emotional and using self-sacrificing techniques instead of sympathy and empathy. P2 stated that they think emotions are important in

leadership, especially when it comes to being empathic. P2 also said, "I always think about how I would feel in their position and determine how I respond." Empathic managers can read their employee's body language for emotion and continually attune to how they feel when communicating with them (Goleman, 2004). Similar to P2, P6 stated that they think about how they would feel in their [employees] position because they could be the person sitting across from their [P6's] desk. Fianko et al. (2020) indicated that managers who understand their employees' state of mind and empathize with them might establish an affective bond that is beneficial for leadership. Zenger and Folkman (2019) indicated that managers learn to empathize with employees by making adjustments and allowances for their personal situations, abilities, and skills. P5 supported Zenger and Folkman's notion by saying,

> I think showing empathy is very important. You realize that workers are a person and have family problems, sickness, or a family member's death. They have to be able to work and put aside as much as possible. So, you have to show some level of empathy, especially in situations beyond their control. Even though the person has a job to do, you want them to know that you appreciate them and that you empathize with them. I think about how I would feel in that situation.

Empathy is essential for understanding others' needs and feelings and determining how to provide support and sympathy (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Managers use empathy to understand employees' needs and professional and personal situations by placing themselves in their employees' positions, thus enhancing manager-employee relationships, trust, and loyalty.

Empathy is an essential component in retaining talented employees (Goleman et al., 2013). Of all the factors in an organization's control, dissonant, tuned-out leaders are among the main reasons talented employees leave their positions, taking the organization's knowledge with them (Goleman, 2004). Empathic leaders can recognize and meet the needs of employees and customers and get along with diverse employees, colleagues, and customers by understanding the importance of cultural and ethnic differences (Fianko et al., 2020). Empathy helps others cope with emotional distress, encourages acceptance of diversity, acts as a mediator or peacemaker, encourages forgiveness and reconciliation after divisive conflict (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Empathy-related processes motivate prosocial behavior and caring for others, inhibit aggression, and provide the foundation of moral judgment (Başoğul & Özgür, 2016). Goleman (2004) noted that managers use empathy to increase their ability and willingness to understand situations and accept proposed changes and their employees' opinions. Managers with empathy are open, approachable, and can listen and respond to employees' personal and professional situations appropriately.

Connection to the Conceptual Framework. Empathy is a natural ability to share and understand other's feelings and thoughts. It is a fundamental component of emotional self-awareness and plays a critical role in social interactions (Decety & Jackson, 2004). Managers with empathy can read and recognize their employees' emotions and perform essential leadership activities (Maamari & Majdalani, 2017). Managers with high emotional self-awareness manage their emotions and empathize with employees to

increase employee morale, reduce resistance to change, improve teamwork, and effectively communicate (Chen, 2006).

Theme 3.2: Managers Recognize Their Employees to Show Them That They are Valued.

Five out of six participants shared employee recognition strategies used to show employees that they are valued. Employee recognition is linked to employee retention (Vito, 2020). Vito (2020) indicated that employees are more likely to remain with their organizations when recognized and appreciated for their work. Fahim (2018) suggested that public managers should develop employee retention strategies that make employees feel respected and valued and ensure that they are treated fairly. Public sector managers can make employees feel valued by recognizing and praising their work performance. Performance appraisal is a tool used to manage employee performance and overall contribution to the organization. According to Sharma and Sharma (2017) and Shrivastava and Purang (2011), performance appraisal also accounts for a substantial portion of employee dissatisfaction in terms of perceived fairness and effectiveness. P1 described how they recognize and praise their employees by saying, "I always recognize their [employees] successes, individually and in front of everyone. I praise them, and I give them gifts." Like P1, P5 stated that they give employees holiday gifts, praise their performance, and recognize them in meetings. P5 added that even though the person has a job to do, you want them to know that you appreciate them. Mathimaran and Kumar (2017) found that a lack of employee recognition and performance appraisal decreases employee satisfaction, leading to employee turnover. Chenevert et al.'s (2021) research

determined that turnover intentions were lower among employees who received recognition from the organization and their managers. Recognition and performance appraisal motivates employees to remain with their organizations (Chenevert et al., 2021; Fahim, 2018; Singh, 2019). P3 described the importance of seeing the good or value employees bring to the team or company by stating,

> I try to inform each person how much they are appreciated for their talents and their value to the company. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge their worth in others' presence, such as in meetings, presentations, and office projects. I ensure that upper management is aware of their value.

P3's response was consistent with Jannat et al.'s (2020) suggestion that managers recognize employees for their innate qualities and expertise. Jannat et al.'s concluded that recognizing employees' qualities and contribution to the organization led to positive organizational behavior and increases employee job satisfaction and loyalty.

Mehta et al. (2014) research revealed that a good performance appraisal helps organizations track their employees, identify their strengths, and improve their performance in their weak areas. Fahim (2018) concluded that performance appraisal had a positive effect on employee retention. Performance appraisal increases employee morale, productivity (Fahim, 2018), attitudes, behaviors, and organizational effectiveness (Fahim, 2018; Sharma & Sharma, 2017; Singh, 2019). P4 described how they recognize employees by stating, "I try to let them know that they're the most important part of what I do. There is nothing I won't do for them or no chain I won't go up to assist them." Employees feel valued when managers acknowledge their efforts, talents, and strengths.

P6 shared that they recognize employees' strengths and provide opportunities for them to display their strengths to others. For example, if an employee is good at public speaking, they will offer the employee opportunities to lead presentations. Managers are responsible for allocating work according to the employee's abilities (Kossivi et al., 2016).

I analyzed the participants' responses and found that these public sector managers recognize their employees' talents and performances to show them know that they are appreciated. The participants shared that they acknowledge their employees individually and in meetings to show them that they are a valued part of the organization. Fahim (2018), Sharma and Sharma (2017), and Singh (2019) indicated that employee recognition and performance appraisal increases employee satisfaction, performance, and commitment to the organization. Fahim (2018), Sharma and Sharma, and Singh supported Al- Mamun and Hassan's (2017) and Chenevert et al.'s (2021) findings that employee recognition positively impacted employee turnover. According to Singh, a performance appraisal serves as an interface between management and employees and results in better manager-employee relationships. Employees are less likely to leave their positions when they feel valued and have a strong relationship with management.

Connection to the Conceptual Framework. Emotionally self-aware managers know how their emotions interfere with or improve their ability to make people feel valued. Self-aware individuals are humble, appreciate others' value, and applaud their accomplishments (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013). Managers' awareness of their emotions, needs, values, and achievements increases their desire to recognize others'

efforts and talents (Goleman et al., 2013). When employees are recognized and rewarded for their unique talents and efforts, they engage more, take on additional tasks, and are encouraged to provide better services to customers (Luthans, 2000; Montani et al., 2017; Sun & Wang, 2016). Reinforcing and encouraging others to perform superiorly is a critical aspect of effective leadership (Luthans, 2000). Emotionally self-aware managers recognize that they need others to succeed and value their employees' contributions to the organization. Managers who lack emotional awareness typically fail to recognize employees' need for recognition and performance appraisal. A lack of employee recognition can decrease employee morale and engagement, productivity, and enthusiasm to provide services.

Theme 4: Managers use Various Strategies to Manage Conflict

Managers face challenging work-related problems that require a range of skills; therefore, conflict management skills are needed to address and resolve differences between and within employees, groups, and management (Anastasiou, 2020). Public sector managers must have effective strategies to manage employee conflict (Bake, 2019). Five out of six participants shared how they resolve workplace conflict. The turnover documents supported the participants' reports of their resulting low employee turnover rates. Public sector managers need to identify the source of conflict, assess its impact, and make decisions that align with organizational goals (Rammata, 2019). Employee conflict can cause psychological and behavioral stress, reducing employee satisfaction and increasing employee turnover (Bake, 2019). P2 indicated that they identify and manage conflict by listening without getting defensive or thinking about

whose right or wrong and talking about the issue. P2 stated that taking the time to determine how to respond helps when addressing the conflict. According to Taboli et al. (2016), communication and perception are critical for successful conflict management. P5 expressed that if they disagree with employees' opinions, they talk about it and decide how they will handle their differences. Managers should identify and discuss differences to resolve conflict successfully. P3 reported that there had been no conflict but reiterated that they reframe their questions and watch their tone when addressing someone unwilling to accept criticism or feedback. P3 indicated that strategies such as easing the environment and being mindful of their approach could prevent or reduce conflict. Rammata's (2019) research revealed that conflicts must be addressed differently and systematically because of the potential negative impact on public services and organizational outcomes. P5's response aligned with Rammata's findings. P5 said,

> We have had situations where people had opposite personalities and did not agree on various subjects. When that happens, we try to resolve the conflict by meeting and discussing the issue. If that doesn't work, we have to reprimand people based on the situation. There was one situation when somebody was in someone's space, and that was overwhelming to the person. As a result, we had to implement protocols that indicated what was once acceptable is no longer acceptable. So far, the new protocol has worked.

P5's response also supported Ghanbari et al.'s (2020) findings that managers should establish solutions to resolve conflict and plan for adequate solutions in the event of conflict. Ghanbari et al. indicated that implementing resolution policies could reduce the

risk of conflicts. Managers who regulate conflict at an early stage can prevent it from being harmful to organizational performance (Rammata, 2019). Ignoring conflict at work could increase the level of competition and deter interpersonal relationships and teamwork, resulting in a reduction of effectiveness and low employee job satisfaction (Anastasiou, 2020; Kaitelidou et al., 2012). When conflict lingers, employees are distracted from their goals and the level of organizational commitment is low. Reducing conflict can increase the amount of time managers spend implementing goals and retention strategies that aid organizational success (Bake, 2019) and increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Emotional self-awareness is essential in selecting strategies used to resolve workplace conflict. Managers with high emotional self-awareness recognize the "what's" and "why's" of the conflict and how their responses affect others (Faltas, 2016). Emotionally self-aware managers recognize and control how their emotions affect their behavior and thoughts. It aids in managing conflict and allows managers to develop strong personal relationships with employees to become effective leaders (Butler et al., 2014). P2 supported that notion by saying,

> I try to think before I respond to something that a staff person has done to make me feel annoyed or angry or disappointed. I let the initial feelings of being disappointed or surprised, in most cases, dissipate, and then I look at it with new eyes. I think about how those feelings affect other people. I watch my angry emotions. If somebody else's attitude comes up, that makes you kind of feel an attitude as well. I always try to be aware of things that create a toxic workplace.

Managers use emotional self-awareness to manage conflict by understanding the determinants and consequences of their moods and emotions and how they develop and change over time (George, 2000; Suifan et al., 2015). P4 and P6 described using emotional self-awareness to manage conflict. P4 said,

> I don't take it personally because we are humans; we all have emotions. I give them an opportunity to speak. If it seems their emotions of getting the best of them, I separate and go back to it later. I explain why the meeting has to end and ask to set a time to come back and revisit the issue. I know their emotions can affect how they communicate and inhibit how they relay what they're trying to say to me.

P6 stated that thinking about responses and how their response affects someone is important to conflict management. P6 added that it helps to figure out the situation and process the information before responding. P6 said,

> If I'm having an off day or something happened that may have made me a little upset; I have to be aware that I have something going on that may make me respond differently from the day before. If I have a strong opinion about an issue, I try to figure out why I have a strong opinion and how I'm going to respond. I always take a few minutes to think about what I'm going to say and how it's going to affect someone. Because I may be trying to present the information one way, but it comes off the wrong way. I try to make sure that I provide the information in the best way possible.

P2, P4, and P6's responses were aligned with Younas et al.'s (2021) conclusion that

managers used emotional self-awareness to become cognizant of their negative emotions,

behaviors, and attitudes towards their employees and colleagues. Managers who

articulate, describe, and interpret emotional changes and differentiate between emotions,

should be able to help themselves and employees through challenging situations (Keller

et al., 2020; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Individuals with high emotional self-awareness can

regulate how they experience and express their emotions. According to Yukl and Gardner

(2020), awareness of emotional reactions to situations facilitates information processing

and decision making and helps maintain optimism and enthusiasm about tasks and the

organization's mission when faced with obstacles. When optimistic or caring colleagues

surround individuals, positive emotions are enhanced, and conflict and tension are pre-

empted (Guy & Lee, 2015). Emotional self-awareness makes it easier for managers to

understand their own needs and likely reactions to situations, thereby facilitating

alternative solutions to workplace conflict.

Awasthi and Yadav (2016) indicated that public sector employees with high EI

use the collaborating or problem-solving style of conflict resolution. Individuals who use

the collaborating style are assertive while cooperating with others to identify a solution

that pleases everyone. P5 and P6's responses on how they manage conflict were an

example of using collaborating conflict management. Chen et al. (2019) found that public

sector managers who regulate their emotions and use their emotions effectively can

resolve conflict with employees, supervisors, and peers. P4 and P6's responses supported

Awasthi and Yadav's and Chen et al.'s findings that emotionally intelligent public sector

employees are aware of their and others' feelings and monitor, manage, and control their emotions to manage conflict.

The participants' responses indicated that they manage conflict by identifying the problem, listening, collaborating, and using emotional self-awareness, all of which are problem-solving strategies. Ghanbari et al.'s (2020) examined the correlation between EI, conflict management strategies, and communication skills in health care centers. Ghanbari et al.'s research findings determined that problem-solving strategies were the most effective conflict management method. Workplace conflict could result in a lack of trust between employees and their managers, unproductive stress, decreased productivity and job satisfaction, work disruptions, and absenteeism (Anastasiou, 2020; Faltas, 2016; Rammata, 2019; Usprech & Lam, 2020), increasing voluntary employee turnover. Effective leaders reduce workplace conflict by identifying and resolving conflict when the problem arises (Rammata, 2019), openly communicating with and listening to their employees (Cohn & Peetz, 2003; Taboli et al., 2016), and using emotional self-awareness (Goleman, 2001; Jordan & Troth, 2004). Managers' emotions could influence their skills and abilities to listen, be flexible, solve problems, and manage conflict.

Connection to the Conceptual Framework. Emotional self-awareness aids managers in developing adaptive ways to manage conflict. Jordan and Troth (2004) indicated that emotional self-awareness is intertwined with the foundation of conflict management as conflicts are emotionally charged human interactions. Skills requiring emotional self-awareness such as interpersonal relations, problem-solving, and stress management are critical aspects of conflict management (Başoğul & Özgür, 2016).

Gorski and Ranf's (2019) research revealed a positive correlation between managers' emotional self-awareness and conflict management. Emotional self-awareness helps managers recognize and manage their emotions during tense situations (Gorski & Ranf, 2019). Usprech and Lam's (2020) concluded that promoting emotional self-awareness can reduce conflict. Gorski and Ranf's and Usprech and Lam's research confirmed Goleman's (1998) findings that individuals with high emotional self-awareness are more likely to manage conflict compared to individuals with low emotional self-awareness.

Application to Professional Practice

The findings from this research revealed that emotional self-awareness is a critical component of effective leadership and manager-employee relationships, which are essential in reducing voluntary employee turnover. The participants' responses indicated that efficient communication, including providing and receiving positive feedback and adjusting their leadership styles promote effective leadership. The participants responses also indicated that supportive management, conflict management, employee recognition, and empathy build strong manager-employee relationships. Public sector managers may implement and adjust these findings to suit their organizational needs and employee retention strategies.

Emotional self-awareness in the workplace enhances employee productivity, manager-employee relationships, and employee retention. According to Showry and Manasa (2014), managers who use emotional self-awareness in the workplace reflect on experiences and precisely assess their behaviors and skills as manifested in the workplace. Emotional self-awareness in the workplace impacts how managers build

relationships, communicate with their staff, perform, and process policies (Faltas, 2016). Self-awareness can help managers leverage opportunities, address daily challenges, develop better relationships with their employees, influence employees effectively, and have better-performing employees and teams (S. Cote, 2017). Self-aware managers have more satisfied employees than managers with low self-awareness (Sutton et al., 2015). Managers who incorporate emotional self-awareness into employee retention strategies effectively reduce voluntary than managers to do not utilize emotional self-awareness strategies.

Efficient communication is a leadership strategy that can reduce employee turnover by encouraging employee engagement, feedback, and job satisfaction. Efficient communication also decreases workplace conflict. Managers use emotional self-awareness to enhance their communication skills (Raeissi et al., 2019). Managers who communicate efficiently inspire, stimulate, and motivate their employees to work hard and achieve organizational goals (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). Cloutier et al. (2015) indicated that poor leader communication contributes to job dissatisfaction and employee turnover. Employee engagement is a crucial component of employee retention because it allows employees to learn and grow (Jin & McDonald, 2017). Effective leaders inspire and accept feedback from employees and provide positive feedback to improve employee work performance. Workplace conflict lowers employee morale, trust, and loyalty. Managers with high emotional self-awareness use efficient communication to engage and motivate employees and manage workplace conflict.

Kossivi et al. (2016) indicated that the impact of management on employee retention can be viewed through leadership style and management support. Christeen (2015), Corin et al. (2016), and Kularathne and Senevirathne (2020) and identified supportive management as a contributing factor to employee retention. The supportive management approach focuses on helping employees feel comfortable with themselves, providing support for social and emotional needs, and using a two-way communication process to achieve goals (S. Cote, 2017). Kularathne and Senevirathne concluded that organizational, manager, and co-worker support reduced employee turnover intentions. Supportive managers encourage teamwork, establish rapport, and develop their employees by changing leadership styles based on situations. Maamari and Majdalani (2017) concluded that leadership style directly impacted employees' feelings about the organizational climate, and organizational climate was positively linked to job satisfaction and commitment. Managers must realize that their leadership style can prevent them from achieving organizational goals and retaining employees. Managers who support their employees and change their leadership styles based on situations promote employee commitment.

Managers who recognize their employees' talents and efforts increase employees' organizational commitment. No resource is more vital to an organization's success than its workforce (Schmidt et al., 2018). Employee recognition lets employees know that they are a valued part of the organization. Tessema et al. (2013) research determined that employee recognition had a significant impact on job satisfaction. Satisfied employees display higher performance levels (Gnepp et al., 2020) and productivity (Fahim, 2018)

and are more likely to remain committed to their organization (Seyal & Afzaal, 2013; Tessema et al., 2013). Organizations cannot be successful without a satisfied employee workforce.

Empathy is critical to leadership and employee retention. Managers who use empathy foster trust and strong manager-employee relationships. According to Rahman (2017b), leaders use empathy to nurture relationships within the organization while empowering, inspiring, and encouraging employees to achieve organizational outcomes. Managers with empathy are approachable, sympathetic, and can respond suitably to employees' situations. Empathic responding is a crucial element in smooth social functioning and plays a pivotal role in prosocial and antisocial behaviors in a variety of context (Başoğul & Özgür, 2016). Empathy helps managers think beyond workplace limitations and adapt to different workplace dynamics (Rahman, 2017b). Managers should show their employees that they share and understand their feelings and thoughts. Employees who do not perceive their managers as empathic are less likely to remain with the organization than employees who perceive their managers as empathic.

Emotional self-awareness is a critical component of effective leadership and employee retention. The need for organizations to retain talented and tenured employees is essential for their ability to remain competitive (Kossivi et al., 2016). Managing employee retention includes strategic actions to keep employees motivated, productive, focused, and committed. Incorporating emotional self-awareness into employee retention strategies promotes productivity, job satisfaction, morale, and team efficiency. This study provides evidence to public sector managers and organizations on the importance of

using emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The findings

revealed that effective leadership, including efficient communication, supportive

management, conflict management, employee recognition, and empathy, could lead to

employee retention in public sector organizations. This study's findings supported

Serrat's (2017) and Seyal and Afzaal's (2013) findings that self-awareness reduced

voluntary employee turnover.

Implications for Social Change

This research study's primary objective was to identify and explore public sector

middle managers' strategies for using emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary

employee turnover. This qualitative single case study on emotional self-awareness and

voluntary employee turnover is significant to social change because managers who

promote effective leadership and build strong manager-employee relationships might

reduce voluntary employee turnover. High employee turnover leads to unemployment

and slow economic growth (Vasquez, 2014; Wilson, 2018). If employees remain with

their organizations, the economy will grow and stabilize over time (Vasquez, 2014).

Wilson (2018) concluded that leaders who reduce employee turnover create economic

growth and reduce unemployment by increasing profitability and organizational

expansion. Economic development creates jobs, increases income growth, and can

improve the quality of life of people in the community.

Public sector organizations have to spend more taxpayer dollars on recruiting,

hiring, and training new employees than private sector organizations. Employee turnover

in the public sector leads to internal and external customer dissatisfaction (Vasquez,

2014). Low employee retention results in a decline of customer service standards, attention to customer needs, and a reduction in the number of employees who can match customers with products or services (Goleman, 2001). This research study could help organizations reduce voluntary employee turnover and improve the quality of services, public goods, and governmental services that customers receive. Satisfied employees provide better quality services. Managers are responsible for bringing positive social change in the communities they serve (Brett et al., 2014). Managers who reduce employee turnover create opportunities that generate positive social change in their communities (Steiner & Atterton, 2014). The retention strategies revealed in the findings could help public sector organizations maintain experienced, knowledgeable employees, which adds value to the community. Reducing the amount of money spent on recruiting and training new employees would allow organizations to increase financial resources in the community. This study's findings could help current and future managers overcome employee retention barriers by implementing emotional self-awareness into their organizations' employee retention strategies.

Recommendations for Action

In this study, I aimed to educate managers and provide insight into how public sector managers use emotional self-awareness to retain employees. The participants revealed that they use emotional self-awareness to promote effective leadership and build strong manager-employee relationships. The participants promoted effective leadership through efficient communication and adjusting their leadership styles based on situations. The participants built strong relationships through supportive and conflict management,

employee recognition, and empathy. Based on the participant's responses, I outlined

recommendations for action that could help managers reduce voluntary employee

turnover. I plan to disseminate the findings of this research study through the publication

of this study, presenting the findings at conferences, and providing training on emotional

intelligence, emotional self-awareness, and voluntary employee turnover.

Public sector managers and employees must sustain interpersonal relationships

with employees, colleagues, and customers, use problem-solving skills and techniques, at

times assist hostile customers. Interpersonal skills require emotional self-awareness

(Başoğul & Özgür, 2016). Emotional self-awareness enhances interpersonal skills that are

needed to lead effectively. Organizations should implement emotional self-awareness

training to increase their interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Training public

workers on emotional self-awareness will also help them manage their emotions during

intense social interactions with customers (Raman et al., 2016). Highly emotionally

intelligent individuals are self-aware and self-aware individuals enjoy providing services

to customers. Organizations should seek to hire managers who are emotionally self-aware

(Hartung, 2020). One way to determine if a potential manager is emotionally self-aware

is to implement self-awareness questions during the interview process. Hiring managers

from within who completed the organization's emotional self-awareness training would

also benefit organizations.

Managers who engage in efficient communication encourage and provide

feedback. Managers will benefit from actively listening to employees and keeping the

line of communication open. Implementing emotional self-awareness practices into the

communication and feedback processes can help managers reduce voluntary employee turnover (Vratskikh et al., 2016). Managers who encourage feedback provide employees with the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their concerns. Providing feedback through semi-annual or annual performance reviews enables employees to grow and correct counterproductive behaviors that lead to termination. Employee feedback is effective in helping leaders see themselves as their employees see them (George & Sims, 2007; Hartung, 2020). Managers must be receptive to employee feedback because their feedback helps them grow, improves employee dissatisfaction, and provides ideas that could benefit the organization.

Organizations should identify the leadership style that is conducive to retaining valued employees. Employees have unique personalities, needs, strengths, and weaknesses, so managers must adjust their leadership styles to fit their employees and situations. Managers should use a leadership style that motivates, influences, and inspires their employees to remain with the organization. Emotional self-awareness aids managers in recognizing when to change leadership styles.

Managers should implement supportive management strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Iqbal et al. (2020) concluded that supportive management increased employee job satisfaction and reduced voluntary employee turnover. Iqbal et al.'s findings were consistent with Maan et al.'s (2020) findings. Supportive management enhances trust, teamwork, communication, and organizational commitment while reducing workplace stress. Incorporating emotional self-awareness into supportive management strategies helps managers identify their employees' needs (Akhtar, Ghufran,

et al., 2017). When managers are supportive, employees feel that they care about them, increasing their level of trust. A lack of teamwork can increase voluntary employee turnover. It is challenging to develop trust and support within teams when new employees are consistently being entered (Kularathne & Senevirathne, 2020). Supportive managers promote teamwork and trust by using team-building exercises. Team building exercises encourage employees to communicate with each other and work together to resolve problems. Managers can also support their employees by helping them improve in areas where they are weak.

Implementing emotional self-awareness or conflict management training will help managers and employees manage their emotions during conflict. Individuals with high emotional self-awareness are better equipped to handle conflict (Chen et al., 2019) because they recognize their angry emotions as they occur. Recognizing emotions as they occur aids individuals in responding appropriately, which can reduce conflict.

Organizations should consider employee incentives or reward programs for employee recognition. Performance-based programs are frequently used to address employee turnover (Jannat et al., 2020). Employee recognition programs motivate employees to go above and beyond to reach organizational goals and increase employee engagement. Managers can use employee recognition programs to recognize employee milestones such as anniversaries, project completions, and promotions. Performance appraisal and employee recognition programs can counter organizational pitfalls (Jannat et al., 2020), such as poor communication and feedback and lack of awareness. Employees who are recognized for their efforts have a sense that the organization values

and appreciates them (Fahim, 2018; Jannat et al., 2020). Employee recognition increases

employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Organizations that foster an environment of empathy facilitate an organizational

culture of understanding. Managers use empathy to understand their employees'

emotions and feelings and build strong manager-employee relationships. Goleman (1995)

indicated that empathy is pivotal for managers because it positively relates to employee

motivation. Empathy motivates, inspires, and leads others to greater success (Goleman,

1995). Managers who lack empathy cannot connect with their employees and inspire and

motivate them to achieve a shared vision (Fianko et al., 2020; Goleman et al., 2013).

Organizations could benefit from using empathy because it helps managers communicate

efficiently, manage conflict, and display sympathy and understanding.

Recommendation for Further Research

I explored strategies that public sector managers use to reduce voluntary

employee turnover. The recommendations for further research address areas that future

qualitative researchers should explore and the limitations of this research study. This

study involved the experiences and perspectives of middle managers in a public sector

organization. Continued investigation into emotional self-awareness and voluntary

employee turnover is necessary to understand the determinants of voluntary employee

turnover in public sector organizations. Future researchers should investigate employee

perspectives of their manager's emotional self-awareness. Future researchers should

explore retention strategies used by senior managers or middle managers from a private

sector organization. An alternative research study could introduce employee retention

strategies that include other EI components such as self-motivation, social awareness, and self-regulation. This study might not be generalized to all managers of public sector organizations in the state of Georgia or beyond. Future qualitative researchers should explore effective emotional self-awareness strategies in different geographical locations in and outside of Georgia. Investigating emotional self-awareness strategies in different geographical areas could contribute to a better understanding of voluntary employee turnover.

Quantitative researchers should consider analyzing the relationships between voluntary employee turnover and other variables such as self-motivation, social awareness, self-regulation, education, years of experience, gender, and training. A quantitative study would reduce the possible biases that could result from the researchers' presence. Future researchers could add to the limited literature on utilizing emotional self-awareness to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Reflections

Completing the Doctoral of Business Administration (DBA) process was a personal goal. I chose this research topic because of my experiences as a public sector employee in supervisory and nonsupervisory roles. Therefore, I bracketed my experiences to ensure that I separated my experiences from the participants' experiences. I was able to reduce bias by not comparing the participants' experiences with my own. I tried not to discuss my personal experiences during participant interviews. Maintaining a reflective journal also helped bracket my experiences. I encouraged participants to speak openly and honestly, and I asked follow-up questions to ensure I clearly understood the

participants' responses. The participants were professional and courteous, which increased my level of comfort during the interviews.

It was interesting to learn of the participants' experiences and strategies and to compare their responses to the literature on emotional self-awareness and voluntary employee turnover. Conducting this research study enabled me to gain new insight into EI competencies, especially emotional self-awareness, employee retention, and effective leadership. I plan to use my knowledge of EI in my personal life and to further my career.

The dissertation process was arduous and I thought about quitting many times. However, support and encouragement from family, friends, my dissertation chair, fellow scholars, professors, and others I met on this journey provided the motivation I needed to achieve my goal. Completing the DBA process is one of my greatest achievements and I could not have accomplished this without everyone who supported me on this journey.

Conclusion

Voluntary employee turnover is expensive for public sector organizations and it negatively affects the delivery of goods and services. Public sector organizations need knowledgeable employees to remain productive and competitive (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017; Gyensare et al., 2017). Managers must develop effective retention strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover and achieve organizational outcomes. Managing employee retention includes strategic actions to keep employees motivated, productive, focused, and committed. Managers should consider incorporating emotional self-awareness into their employee retention because it increases organizational commitment. Emotional self-awareness is one of the pillars of managerial abilities that predict

managers' effectiveness and leadership success (Showry & Manasa, 2014). The findings of this research study indicated that public managers who use emotional self-awareness might reduce voluntary employee turnover through communication, leadership style, supportive management, employee recognition, empathy, and conflict management.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introduction:
- Welcome participant and introduction
- Explain the general purpose of the interview and why the participant was selected
- Explain the process of the interview
- Explain the presence and purpose of the personal digital recorder and ask for permission to record the interview
- Inform the participant the interviewer will also take notes during the interview and may ask additional questions for clarity or based on their answers to a question
- Address the confidentiality
- Explain the member checking process and provide the private email address set up solely for this study

Guidelines for discussion:
The Interviewer:
Please respond directly to the interview questions and if there is a question that you do not understand, please let me. I will keep your identity, participation, and answers private. Please speak openly and please let me know if I ask a question that you prefer not to answer. The interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. With your permission, this interview will be digitally recorded to ensure that your responses are transcribed and analyzed accurately. You can stop the interview at any time for any reason. After I transcribe the interview, I will send you a confidential email requesting that you review the interview summary for accuracy. There will be no identifying information in the email. Please review the summary and let me know if everything is correct within seven days of receipt of the email.

General Instructions:
Please do not disclose any identifying information, such as your name or the names of others, when responding to the interview questions. Your identity will be kept confidential and any identifying information will be removed.
Do you have any questions?

(Go to interview questions)

The Interview questionnaire will contain the following:

- A heading (including date, time, & location of the interview)
  Instructions for the researcher to follow during each interview
  Interview questions
- Time for the researcher to ask participants to explain their answers in detail or to for the researcher to obtain clarity
- Time between responses so the interviewer can record the participants' answers

- A final thank- you statement to acknowledge the participant's time spent with the researcher

Appendix B: Interview Questionnaire

Date:_____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Participant unique ID #: _____ **(sync on all documents associated with this**

participant)

Demographics:

Title:_____Years of Experience:_____

Area Supervised: _____ # of employees supervised: _____

Researcher statement:

I am interested in how you use emotional self-awareness to reduce employee turnover as

a manager. For this study, EI is defined as: *An individual's ability to recognize their own*

and other people's emotions and feelings.

Emotional self-awareness is defined as:

Knowing one's own emotions and feelings and how those emotions and feelings affect

others.

Interview Questions:

1. What are the specific work experiences in your current position that helped develop your knowledge of emotional self-awareness?

2. How do you use emotional self-awareness to resolve workplace conflict?

3. What emotional self-awareness strategies have you implemented to decrease employee turnover?

4. How do you use the concepts of emotional self-awareness when developing and implementing strategies to reduce employee turnover?

5. How do your employees respond to your emotional awareness-based employee retention strategies?

Conclusion question

6. What additional information would you like to share about how you use emotional self-awareness strategies to reduce voluntary turnover?

Researcher: I would like to thank you again for taking the time to participate in this study. Please contact me if you would like a copy of the findings after the study has been completed. As previously stated, all participants' information is confidential and all data will be kept securely. I have provided my email address in the event you decide that you no longer want to take part in the study. There are no consequences to withdraw from the study.